

2019 Children Now Key Legislation and Budget Items

A few key child welfare issues Children Now will focus in the coming year include:

1. **Family Urgent Response System (FURS)** – In moments of crisis, foster youth and caregivers need access to immediate in-home, trauma-informed support to help them navigate difficult situations and connect to ongoing services. With a cross-systems partnership, Children Now will elevate the need for a statewide coordinated response system, consisting of a 24/7 hotline and county mobile response units. Such a response system will help ensure youth and caregivers have the help they need to build lasting relationships, improve their access to trauma-informed services, promote placement stability, and reduce inappropriate reliance on law enforcement to respond in moments of crisis.
2. **Child Care Access for Foster Families** - Lack of access to affordable child care is one of the top barriers to the recruitment of caregivers for our youngest foster children and undermines the stability of foster children in committed family homes. Under the Emergency Child Care Bridge Program for Foster Children, vouchers are available to foster families to pay for the first 6-12 months of child care and navigators can help them secure longer-term subsidized care, however, more must be done. The existing funding is not enough to cover vouchers for all of the families who need them and the wait list for subsidized care is so long that 6-12 months may not be enough time for a family to secure long-term care. Children Now will work with child welfare and child care advocates to push for funding to ensure seamless access to child care throughout a child's time in foster care.
3. **Disaster Response** - For two consecutive years, major wildfires have wreaked havoc on the children and families served by California's child welfare system. Foster homes and other placements have been damaged and lost, children have had to be placed far from their homes, and mass evacuations have resulted in program disruptions and limited access to critical support services. Children Now will lead a multi-faceted state-level advocacy effort to: 1) raise awareness about the impacts of the recent disasters on child welfare systems; 2) improve community-level disaster planning for system-involved children and families; 3) enhance access to essential resources and services for children and youth in foster care and foster parents following a disaster; and 4) establish a statewide fund to address the immediate needs of the child welfare community.

Contact Information

Please contact Susanna Kniffen at 916.379.5256 ext. 124 or skniffen@childrennow.org for additional information or if you have any further questions.