

Assembly Bill 2043

The Family Urgent Response System for Foster Youth and Caregivers

Assemblymember Dr. Joaquin Arambula

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ISSUE

Children in the foster care system have experienced significant trauma from the abuse and neglect which brought them to the attention of the child welfare system. For youth, this trauma often manifests itself in behavioral, emotional, and social difficulties. As caregivers of foster youth and children seek to develop a family relationship, they are often left alone to navigate misunderstandings and frustrations without the immediate guidance and support they need to create a nurturing environment.

This bill would establish a statewide hotline and mobile response system to provide immediate support for foster families and youth during times of crisis, and link youth and families to needed services in their communities.

CURRENT LAW

AB 403 (Stone), Chapter 773, Statutes of 2015, enacted Continuum of Care Reform, which effectively ends the placement of foster youth in group homes. This Reform effort builds on years of policy changes to improve outcomes for youth in foster care.

BACKGROUND

Caregivers and the children in their homes need real-time assistance during moments of crisis and uncertainty. Without supports and services available on demand, caregivers can feel helpless and unable to manage critical situations, leading them to give up. Sometimes their only option is to call the police to help them manage trauma-induced behaviors. These actions can lead to inappropriate criminalization of the foster child with lifelong consequence, and leave child feeling even more abandoned and traumatized.

THIS BILL

The Family Urgent Response System for Foster Youth and Caregivers:

1. Establishes a statewide, toll-free hotline available 24 hours a day and 7 days a week for caregivers and foster youth who are experiencing emotional, behavioral or other difficulties and need immediate help. The hotline will be staffed with operators trained in conflict resolution and de-escalation who will provide immediate assistance to help defuse the crisis and determine whether mobile, in-home support is needed.
2. Requires counties to establish mobile response teams to provide face-to-face, in-home response on a 24/7 basis to help stabilize the living situation, assess the caregiver's and child's needs and develop a plan of action. Counties will provide the family with ongoing services through the existing local network of care.

The Response System established by this bill will provide children and families with the support they need to maintain their family unit, which in turn will help children and their caregivers develop strong and healthy relationships. This approach will also reduce calls to law enforcement and ensure fewer contacts between foster youth and the criminal justice system.

SPONSORS

California Behavioral Health Directors Association (CBHDA),
California Welfare Directors Association (CWDA)
Children Now

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