

WEBINAR | OCTOBER 2026

2026 Legislative Session Review: New Child Welfare Laws and Budget Investments

ALLIANCE
for **CHILDREN'S**
RIGHTS

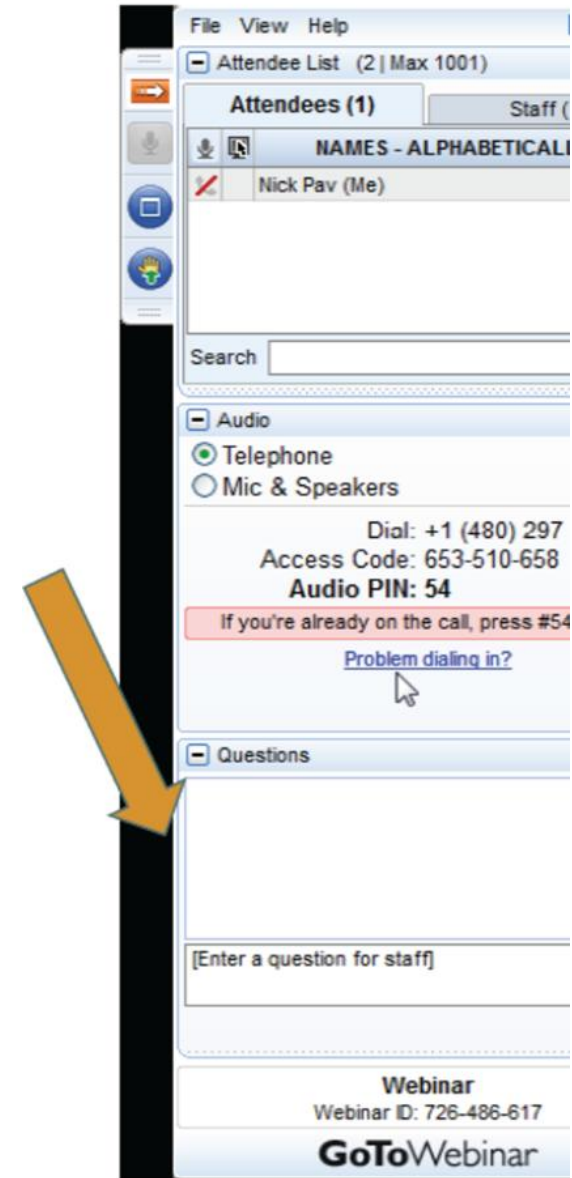


LOGISTICS

Webinar resources, including recording and supplemental materials, will be posted at <https://allianceforchildrensrights.org/resources/>

All attendees are muted during webinar.

Please submit questions using the “Questions” function on your GoToWebinar dashboard.



2026 CHILD WELFARE BUDGET ALLOCATIONS & NEW LAWS



FY 26-27 BUDGET

“balances the budget in both the 2026-27 and 2027-28 fiscal years, and significantly reduces the projected structural deficits in 2028-29 and 2029-30.”



ADOPTION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

- Revises and recasts, commencing 1/1/28, provisions governing payment of Adoption Assistance Program (AAP) benefits on behalf of a child residing in an in-state, out-of-home placement by, in part, **only permitting these payments if the child is residing in a licensed short term residential therapeutic program (STRTP) and limiting authorization to a 12-month cumulative period of time, subject to an extension of a one-time six-month cumulative period of time.**
- Authorizes, commencing 1/1/28, benefits to be paid for wraparound services in lieu of an out-of-home placement if, among other things, the responsible public agency has confirmed that the wraparound services are necessary for the child.
- **Permits the authorization of payment for wraparound services for a 12-month cumulative period of time, and permits consecutive reauthorizations of these services.**
- Prohibits the AAP rate for an in-state, out-of-home placement funded by AAP, or for wraparound services funded by AAP, from exceeding the rate paid for a foster care placement in a STRTP, or, until the three components of the Tiered Rate Structure (TRS) become operative and the Legislature makes an appropriation, and instead prohibits the AAP payment rate from exceeding the sum of the three components of the TRS.
- Requires CDSS to develop and distribute curriculum to counties no later than 1/1/28, that includes, at a minimum, education on maintaining AAP benefits, adolescent development and trauma, the importance of maintaining Medi-Cal, the benefits of using adoption-competent clinicians, and how to secure trauma-informed services and requires CDSS to consult with county placing agencies and community partners in the development of curriculum.
- Requires CDSS, subject to an appropriation by the Legislature, to, directly, or through contract with a service provider, ensure transition support services are made available to adoptive families, and requires the responsible public agency to refer the family to post-permanency services at the local level to support the adoptive family in navigating post-permanency services.
- Requires CDSS, subject to an appropriation by the Legislature, to interview adoptive parents who agree to submit the information regarding the reason an out-of-state placement was necessary and the current status of their adoptive children who returned to California on or after 7/1/25, and requires CDSS to submit a report to the Legislature.



BUDGET ALLOCATION: COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE (CASA) PROGRAM

Allocates \$20 million for the CASA program, which supports children in the foster care and juvenile justice systems through volunteer advocates who advance the best interests of the children.



CALIFORNIA TRIBAL FAMILIES COALITION

AB 1824 (RAMOS) ICWA COMPLIANCE IN GUARDIANSHIP AND CONSERVATORSHIP

Clarifies and strengthens compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and California ICWA in probate guardianship and conservatorship proceedings by placing clear, enforceable requirements directly in the Probate Code.



BUDGET ALLOCATION: TRIBAL FOSTER CARE PREVENTION SERVICES

Ongoing General Fund appropriation of \$2.4 million to preserve families and prevent tribal children from entering foster care by funding the Tribal Foster Care Prevention Services Program.

CALIFORNIA ALLIANCE OF CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES



California
Alliance

Empowering lives. Enriching futures.

BUDGET ALLOCATION: 988 SUICIDE PREVENTION FOR LGBTQ+ YOUTH



- Allocates one-time \$20M funding to **restore the 988 Press 3 LGBTQ+ youth crisis suicide prevention hotline**, ensuring that LGBTQ+ youth have access to specialized life-saving crisis supports.

[Get Help - 988 Lifeline](#)



AB 2764 (AHRENS) – ENSURING EQUITABLE ACCESS TO EXTENDED FOSTER CARE STATEWIDE

Under AB 12, youth ages 18-21 who were in foster care on their 18th birthday are eligible for extended foster care (EFC) if they meet one of five federal participation requirements.



Youth are sometimes being held to stricter local requirements, (i.e. 40 hours per week of productivity through work or school, mandatory volunteer hours, or demonstration of independence skills), unintentionally excluding youth from EFC or specific placements such as THP-NMD.



AB 2764 would align eligibility requirements with federal law and newly released THP-NMD Regulations to eliminate confusion for providers and youth about eligibility across counties and prevent youth from losing placements due to changes in employment or other circumstances.

AB 1626 (GABRIEL) MENTAL HEALTH TRAINING FOR COACHES

- Requires California youth sports coaches to receive training in mental health informed practices to equip coaches to recognize early warning signs of mental health distress, especially for student athletes who are less likely to seek help, and provide practical tools, supportive communication, and referrals to school and community resources.
- Requires the California Department of Education, by 9/1/27, to identify an existing training or develop a model youth athletics behavioral and mental health training for coaches in youth sports organizations.





**Children
Now**



SB 1051 (MENJIVAR) EMERGENCY CHILD CARE BRIDGE

Allows Emergency Child Care Bridge Navigators to submit referrals to county child welfare agencies for approval of child care vouchers for eligible foster children and alleviates some of the pressure on social workers by allowing another trusted partner working with the child and family to leverage this critical support.



California

Coalition for Youth

SB 417 (LIMON AND RIVAS) VETERANS AND HOUSING BOND ACT/ PROPOSITION 1

Bond allocates a total of \$11.25 billion, of which \$150,000,000 will be used to create youth housing for current or former foster youth, homeless minors or youth, or youth at risk of homelessness, including, but not limited to, housing that assists them develop the skills and resources they need to make a successful transition to independent, self-sufficient adulthood.





BUDGET ALLOCATION: HHAP

Includes \$890 million in FY 2026-27 for another round of state homelessness block grant funding – Round 7.



Children's Law Center **of California**

E x c e l l e n c e I n A d v o c a c y



AB 1688 (Carrillo)

Notice of Abuse in Foster Care Placements

Expands who is notified when abuse or neglect is substantiated in an out-of-home placement, so the attorneys for every child in the home, and the child's parents and their counsel, are informed.

Co-sponsors: CLC · Children's Advocacy Institute · Dependency Legal Services

AB 1688: A Reporting Gap Left Children at Risk

Prior law

Penal Code § 11166.1 required social service agencies to notify the child's attorney when there is reasonable suspicion the child was abused or neglected while in placement.

The gap

- Attorneys for other children in the same home were not told.
- Parents and their attorneys were not told.
- Other children could remain in an unsafe placement, and parents lost the chance to intervene or seek legal remedies.

Who Must Be Notified: Before and After AB 1688

When abuse or neglect is substantiated in a placement...

Prior law

Under AB 1688

Attorney for the child alleged to have been harmed



Attorneys for other children living in the same placement



Parents/legal guardians of the subject child, and their counsel



Parents whose parental rights have been terminated



 **Victim privacy is protected:** other children's attorneys learn only that a report was made, not the details of the allegation.



SB 534 (Padilla)

Maintaining Family Connections

Requires counties to give youth the last known whereabouts and contact information for their parents and siblings before juvenile court jurisdiction ends.

Co-sponsors: CLC · Children's Advocacy Institute

SB 534: Youth Left Care Without a Way Home

The challenge

- Youth exiting care often face housing instability, unemployment, and financial hardship, and many want to reconnect with family for support.
- Many lose touch with birth family while in care and leave without the contact information needed to reconnect.

Prior law

- Counties must give exiting youth key documents and support (ID, proof of citizenship, housing and employment help) but were not required to share family contact information, even when they had it and the youth asked.

What SB 534 Requires



1

When

At the youth's final review hearing before turning 18, NMD review hearings, and before the court terminates jurisdiction for nonminor dependents.



2

What

The county provides the last known whereabouts and contact information for the youth's parents and siblings.



3

Youth's choice

The youth may decline the information. Reconnection stays the youth's decision.

Why it matters

Identity

Supports youth in understanding their family history and sense of self.

Support network

Family ties can add stability during a particularly vulnerable transition.

Outcomes

Research links birth-parent connection to lower arrest risk, less homelessness, and better mental health.



JOHN BURTON
Advocates
for Youth

AB 2162 | Assemblymember Isaac Bryan (D-Culver City)



Preventing Homelessness Among Former Foster Youth by Maximizing Federal Housing Assistance

Sponsor: JBAY



Fact Sheet: <https://jbay.org/resources/ab-2162>



Aligns Age Eligibility

Raises upper age limit of the Housing Navigation & Maintenance Program (HNMP) from 24 to 28 to better align with the full duration of federal Housing Choice Vouchers through the Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) and Family Unification Program (FUP).



Improves Transparency

Requires county child welfare agencies receiving HNMP to report annually on the number of housing authorities they partner with and how many FYI/FUP vouchers are in circulation in their county.



Better Protects Programs from Budget Cuts

Establishes a statutory connection between HNMP and FYI/FUP vouchers. In times of state budget scarcity, state policy-makers will be aware that HNMP draws down federal housing assistance for former foster youth.

AB 2251 | Assemblymember Celeste Rodriguez (D-San Fernando)



Improving Access to Financial Aid

Co-sponsors: JBAY, California Student Aid Commission, UC Student Association, Cal State Student Association, TICAS, uAspire



Fact Sheet: <https://jbay.org/resources/ab-2251>



Improves Awareness of COA Adjustment Requests

Requires public postsecondary institutions to prominently display on their websites the data sources and assumptions used to calculate each component of the institution's COA budget, and the process for submitting an adjustment request, including timeline for review and decision, and who to contact for help.



Ensures Access to COA Adjustment Requests

Requires public postsecondary institutions to allow for an unlimited number of electronic or hard copy COA adjustment requests for any student expense category, and to submit a request at any point during enrollment, prohibiting institutions from imposing deadlines earlier than 3 weeks before end of term.

“Cost of Attendance” (COA) represents the total estimated cost of attending school and is a central factor in determining a student's financial aid eligibility and the maximum amount of aid they can receive. Federal and state policies allow institutions to adjust a student's COA to reflect special circumstances, however many students are unable to accept urgently needed assistance because they have reached their COA cap and aren't informed about or do not receive available adjustments.

AB 2765 | Assemblymember Patrick Ahrens (D-Silicon Valley)



Preventing Current and Former Foster Youth from Losing Federal Food Assistance

Co-sponsors: JBAY, SEIU California, End Child Poverty



Fact Sheet: <https://jbay.org/resources/ab-2765/>



Work Requirement Verification

For foster youth who are **employed at least 80 hours per month**, the bill uses administrative data from Extended Foster Care to automatically verify a foster youth's compliance with CalFresh work requirements.



Exemption Verification

For current and former foster youth who are **physically or mentally unfit for work**, the bill uses administrative data from Extended Foster Care and Medi-Cal to automatically verify a current or former foster youth's eligibility for an exemption from CalFresh work requirements.



CDSS Data Reporting

Starting January 15, 2027, requires **semi-annual reporting** on the number of CalFresh recipients subject to, exempted from, or discontinued from CalFresh due to newly enforced work requirements.



Takes effect once the necessary data automation has occurred.



AB 2766 | Assemblymember Patrick Ahrens (D-Silicon Valley)



Improving Housing Stability and College Completion for Students with Foster or Homeless Experience

Co-sponsors: JBAY, Student HOMES Coalition, UC Student Association, uAspire



Fact Sheet: <https://jbay.org/resources/ab-2766>



Priority Student Housing

Establishes priority housing at California Community Colleges (CCC) for students with foster or homeless experience.



Identification & Awareness

Requires CCC, CSU, and UC to identify eligible students on housing applications and publicize housing benefits online.



Fee Waivers & Deference

Requires CCC, CSU, and UC to waive housing fees and deposits for students with foster or homeless experience or defer fees until financial aid is disbursed.



Priority Course Enrollment

Aligns age eligibility for priority enrollment with the CCC NextUp foster youth support program (allows NextUp participants over age 25 to access priority enrollment)



Takes effect January 1, 2027. Relevant provisions take effect for UC campuses only to the extent that the UC Regents by appropriate resolution, make these provisions applicable.

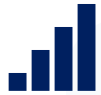
SB 1421 | Senator Mike McGuire (D-Sonoma)



Improving County and State Accountability for Outcomes Among Older Foster Youth



Fact Sheet: <https://jbay.org/resources/sb-1421>



New Data Measures

Requires the C-CFSR to include data measures related to utilization of programs for non-minor dependents designed to reduce poverty and increase postsecondary education, specifically, SB 12 measures related to FAFSA completion.



Continued Improvement

Permits additional TAY-related measures to be added via input from stakeholders.

The **California Child and Family Services Review (C-CFSR)** is the primary accountability system used by the state to measure county child welfare system performance.



CWDA

Advancing Human Services
for the Welfare of *All* Californians



AB 1846 (STEFANI) RELATIVE PLACEMENT PREFERENCE

Clarifies that the preference to place a foster child with a relative extends through the length of the case and does not end at the dispositional hearing.



AB 2478 (SCHULTZ & SOLACHE) KINSHIP FAMILY APPROVAL PROGRAM

Building on direction previously enacted by the Legislature in AB 2830 (Rivas), implements a streamlined Kinship Family Approval pathway and clarifies emergency placement rules so children can be placed more quickly with safe caregivers who already know and care about them.

AB 2684 (NGUYEN) NMD OUT-OF- STATE VIRTUAL VISITATION

- Allows an NMD to opt-into virtual visitations with their social worker if they live out of state.
- Requires social workers to visit at least 4 times per year.



**SB 1143
(CABALLERO)
CHILD
WELFARE
FORENSIC
INTERVIEWS**

Clarifies that if a county utilizes a Child Advocacy Center (CAC) to conduct a forensic interview in a child abuse investigation, law enforcement, county counsel, and child welfare can access the recording of the forensic interview.

ALLIANCE *for* **CHILDREN'S** **RIGHTS**

AB 1689 (QUIRK-SILVA) STREAMLINING GUARDIANSHIP TRANSITIONS

- Helps children living with a temporary guardian get the support and protection they need more quickly.
- Gives juvenile courts more flexibility to change or end a temporary guardianship when it is in the child's best interest, helping children access foster care services and appropriate placements without unnecessary delays.

OTHER CHILD WELFARE RELATED PROPOSALS



AB 1886
(ELHAWARY)
ENDING
ENDLESS
PROBATION
FOR ALL
YOUTH

- Reverses the previous exclusion of foster youth on probation and youth coming out of Secure Youth Treatment Facilities (SYTFs), ensuring all youth on non-custodial wardship probation receive structured timelines and developmentally appropriate standards.



AB 2768 (AHRENS) DEFERRING ENROLLMENT- RELATED COSTS

Requires CSUs, CCCs, and private and independent institutions of higher education that receive state financial assistance and requests UCs commencing with the 2027-2028 academic year, to waive unpaid portion of enrollment fees or other costs, or defer fees or costs until the student has received an initial disbursement of their financial aid award for current or former foster youth upon initial enrollment.



SB 1017 (REYES) ACCESS TO SCHOOL RECORDS

Ensures foster youth age 14 and older have direct access to their own school records.

AB 2524 (GIPSON) WORK PERMITS

- Authorizes county probation departments and county child welfare agencies to issue **work permits** to youth under the jurisdiction of the juvenile court.
- Establishes requirements governing the issuance, recognition, notification, and revocation of those work permits and authorizes educational rights holders and attorneys representing eligible youth to request work permits on behalf of those youth.





Adds and clarifies rights within the Foster Youth Bill of Rights:

- creates the right to have a foster youth's personal belongings transported during placement changes and other moves in a manner that preserves the youth's property and dignity,
- and clarifies that the right to have storage space for private use also includes the right to maintain reasonable access to and use of personal belongings, clothing, and personal items.

SB 1345 (WAHAB) FOSTER YOUTH BILL OF RIGHTS

SB 577 (LAIRD AND ALLEN) CHILDHOOD SEXUAL ABUSE LITIGATION

- Makes a series of changes to relevant law (AB 218, Chapter 861, Statutes of 2019) to mitigate the fiscal impact of childhood sexual assault claims against public entities and to diminish the prevalence of childhood sexual abuse.
- Changes evidentiary and liability rules for some childhood sexual abuse claims against public entities while adding new prevention requirements.

RESOURCES

- Alliance for Children's Rights - <https://allianceforchildrensrights.org/policy/>
- California Alliance of Children and Family Services - <https://www.cacfs.org/advocacy>
- California Coalition for Youth - <https://calyouth.org/>
- California Tribal Families Coalition - <https://caltribalfamilies.org/>
- Children's Law Center of California - <https://www.clccal.org/our-work/legislation-and-policy/>
- Children Now - <https://www.childrennow.org/childwelfare/>
- County Welfare Directors Association of California - <https://www.cwda.org/state-budget-priorities>
- John Burton Advocates for Youth - [Advocate With Us | John Burton Advocates for Youth \(jbay.org\)](https://www.jbay.org/)

ALLIANCE
for **CHILDREN'S**
RIGHTS



CALIFORNIA
TRIBAL FAMILIES
COALITION



Children
Now



Children's Law Center
of California
Excellence In Advocacy



CWDA

Advancing Human Services
for the Welfare of All Californians



JOHN BURTON
Advocates
for Youth



WEBINAR RESOURCES, INCLUDING RECORDING AND SUPPLEMENTAL
MATERIALS, WILL BE POSTED AT
[HTTPS://ALLIANCEFORCHILDRENSRIGHTS.ORG/RESOURCES/](https://allianceforchildrensrights.org/resources/)