



ADVANCING
MENTAL HEALTH
POLICY &
INSPIRING
LEADERSHIP

the **WOMEN'S
FOUNDATION
of CALIFORNIA** | Women's
Policy
Institute

ACTION ALERT: California's Foster Youth Need You Now!

Foster children are three to six times more likely than children not in foster care to experience emotional, behavioral and developmental challenges. Experts estimate that up to 85 percent of children and youth in foster care live with a mental illness. Yet, foster youth placed across county lines often experience lengthy delays or denials in accessing mental health services which exacerbates very difficult life situations for these children who have already suffered neglect or abuse and have been removed from the care of their families.

Because California's public mental health system is county-based, a child who resides out-of-county is also out of network for mental health care, with all of the service delivery challenges that entails.

AB 1299 shifts default responsibility for providing or arranging for specialty mental health services under Medi-Cal from the county where a foster youth entered care to the county where the child resides. The bill also ensures that Medi-Cal funding will follow the child so that any net change in costs to a county will be reimbursed through the regular funding allocation process for 2011 Realignment dollars. Finally, the bill allows for exceptions to the transfer of responsibility in order to assure continuity of care or improve child welfare outcomes.

FAX AND call Governor Brown and ask him to sign AB 1299. You may use the scripts below to help draft your message.

If you have any questions please contact Lynn Thull at lthull@cacfs.org and if you have time, please email Lynn a copy of your letter to the governor so we can track your efforts.

Letter:

Letter template to be FAXed to Governor:

The Honorable Jerry Brown
Governor
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

FAX: (916) 558-3160

Re: AB 1299 (Ridley-Thomas) – SUPPORT

Dear Governor Brown,

As (position, organization affiliation, former foster youth, parent, etc.), I am writing in support of AB 1299 by Assemblymember Ridley-Thomas and to respectfully urge you to sign this piece of legislation when it comes to your desk.

AB 1299 would ensure that foster children who are placed outside of their counties of original jurisdiction, are able to access medically necessary mental health services in a timely manner by requiring the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) to issue policy guidance that establishes the presumptive transfer of responsibility for providing or arranging for mental health services to foster youth from the county of original jurisdiction to the foster child's county of residence.

The author and co-sponsors have engaged in an extended stakeholder process with the Secretary of Health and Human Services, the Department of Health Care Services, the Department of Social Services, the County Supervisors Association of California, the County Behavioral Health Directors Association, and the County Welfare Directors Association to address their concerns. AB1299 has also received the unanimous support of the legislature throughout the legislative process and wide ranging support by advocates, youth, family members, education, attorneys for foster children, and providers across the state.

AB 1299 is especially important to me because _____ (1-3 sentences about your personal or professional experience with how the current delays or denials in accessing mental health services caused by out of county placement has affected you or children and youth with whom you have worked or who you have known.)

Thank you for considering this important piece of legislation. Your signature on AB 1299 will make a huge difference for our most vulnerable young people.

Sincerely,

(Your signature)

(Your name, position and affiliation)

Phone:

Governor Jerry Brown
Phone (916) 445-2841

Phone script:

My name is _____ and I am (position, organization affiliation, former foster youth, parent, etc.). I am calling about AB 1299 by Assemblymember Ridley-Thomas which is waiting for the Governor's signature. More than 75 public and private organizations from across California are in strong support of AB 1299 and I'm calling to urge the Governor to sign the bill.

This bill will:

- Overcome the barriers to care under existing law and ensure that foster children who are placed out of their county of original jurisdiction are able to access mental health services in a timely manner
- Require DHCS to issue policy guidance that establishes the presumptive transfer of responsibility for providing or arranging for mental health services to foster children from the county of original jurisdiction to the foster child's county of residence.
- Provide for conditions and exceptions to presumptive transfer.

- Utilizes the state's existing system, by which 2011 Realignment funds are allocated to county mental health plans based on actual paid claims, to cover the costs of services provided to youth placed out-of-county. A foster youth transferred to the mental health plan of the county in which the foster youth resides would be considered part of the county of residence caseload for purposes of funds allocation from the 2011 Realignment Behavioral Health Subaccount and the Behavioral Health Services Growth Special Account.

AB 1299 is especially important to me because _____ (1-3 sentences about your personal or professional experience with how the current delays or denials in accessing mental health services caused by out of county placement has affected you or children and youth with whom you have worked or who you have known.)

I know that Governor Brown cares about California's foster youth and wants to ensure that they receive timely access to the mental health care they need. Thank you for passing my message on and for taking time with me today. The Governor's signature on AB 1299 will make a huge difference for our most vulnerable kids.

THANK YOU!