

Continue Supporting Families Through Emergency Caregiver Funding at Time of Placement During the Entire Resource Family Approval Process

SUMMARY

Resource Family Approval (RFA) is the process whereby a caregiver is approved to care for children in a foster home. A relative or extended family member can accept placement of a child prior to approval to allow a child to be immediately placed with someone they know and to maintain their connection to community and family.

However, until last year, funding for the placement did not start until the point the family was approved. The delay in funding until approval resulted in widespread hardship and placement disruptions, particularly because in its first year of implementation, the RFA process was taking far longer than the anticipated 90-day timeframe to complete.

Responding to the desperate calls from individuals who stepped up in a moment of crisis to take in a child before they were approved as a resource family, the Legislature acknowledged and addressed the financial chaos through the enactment of AB 110 (Chapter 8, Statutes of 2018), which provided short-term relief for families who were caring for a child pending approval through the end of fiscal year 2017-18.

The Legislature further signaled support for emergency caregivers and the children in their care through enactment of AB 1811 (Chapter 35, Statutes of 2018), which provides emergency caregiver funding at the foster care basic rate at the time of placement for families who accept placement prior to approval after July 1, 2018.

For the remainder of this fiscal year, emergency caregiver funding is available for

up to 180 days (and in some cases up to 365 days) or until the RFA application is approved or denied, whichever occurs first.

ISSUE

For FY 2019-20 and beyond, emergency caregiver funding is limited to 90 days, unless the Legislature takes additional action to extend the timeframes beyond 90 days.

The limitation in funding starting July 1, 2019 will hold emergency caregivers hostage to a timeline not always within their control and leave them vulnerable to a hiatus in funding that could significantly impact their ability to continue to care for the children in their home. Counties are still learning to streamline the RFA process and it is unrealistic to expect that all families will be processed within a 90-day timeframe.

PROPOSAL

Continue the existing timeframes for emergency caregiver funding in effect for Fiscal Year 2018-2019 for an additional year to ensure that families receive support at the time of placement for 180 days (and allow for extensions to 365 days) to promote placement stability and remove the threat of financial chaos for families.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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