



For Immediate Release
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Vast Improvements for Abused and Neglected Children and Youth Wiped Out by Governor's Veto, Continued Cuts

PPIC report finds California has made significant strides in foster care system

Sacramento – Abused and neglected children are spending less time in the foster care system and more often being placed with relatives, according to a Public Policy Institute of California report released today. But all those improvements are already being wiped out as a result of the Governor's \$133 million veto to child welfare services, advocates for abused and neglected children said.

The PPIC report – *Foster Care in California: Achievements and Challenges* – called the achievements in the child welfare system since 2000 “unmistakable.” Among the findings: children are experiencing shorter stays in the foster care system, more children are staying in their first placements, and more children are being placed with relatives or extended family.

The report found a 45 percent drop in the share of California children in the system, “a reduction achieved largely through shortening the time that most children spend in foster care.” In more than half the counties, the number of children in foster care declined by 10 percent between 2000 and 2009.

“Finally, California has something to be proud of – significant improvements in the last decade to a system that serves our most vulnerable children,” said Frank Mecca, Executive Director of the California Welfare Directors Association. “But now, we’re seeing major setbacks and devastation for abused and neglected children as a result of the Governor’s \$133 million veto to child welfare services. How can we continue to build on the improvements to these children’s lives if we don’t make the commitment to invest in them?”

While the PPIC report found children were experiencing more stability between 2000 and 2009, since the Governor’s veto last fall, placement changes are already trending upward again, increasing 5% since last summer, according to a survey of county social service departments.

Additionally, counties are reporting that the cut – which the Governor is proposing to continue – means family reunifications are on hold, child abuse investigations aren’t happening quickly, court hearings are delayed, there are fewer foster families, and there’s no support for youth transitioning to adulthood

“Given the vast amount of research and the stories we hear from foster children and youth on the important role child welfare services play in their lives, we cannot stand by and allow tough budget decisions to further devastate their lives,” said Speaker Emeritus Karen Bass. “These children are our responsibility, and we must make them a priority.”

Unfortunately, the number of children emancipating out of the foster care system at age 18 has not declined, the PPIC report found. These youth have few resources to help them transition to adulthood, and often become homeless, don’t earn their high school diploma, and end up in the criminal justice system.

Data from the California Department of Social Services shows less than half (49.5%) of foster youth exit care with a high school diploma, only 29% of youth have employment when leaving care, only 15% of youth live in some kind of supportive transitional housing, and nearly 10% of youth have no means of financial support at all. This data was recently released in *Insights*, a publication of the California Child Welfare Co-Investment Partnership.

“The Governor’s cut has only exacerbated the situation for foster youth who age out of the system,” said Chantel Johnson, Legislative and Policy Coordinator for California Youth Connection. “These youth are eager to make it on their own – to hold jobs, go onto college and to be productive members of their communities. But they can’t do it without support and programs that help them learn the life skills most people learn from their parents.”

About Us

Protect Our Children. Protect Our Future. is a broad-based coalition committed to protecting California’s abused and neglected children. For more information about the coalition, visit www.protectourchildrenca.org.

Reports

Foster Care in California: Achievements and Challenges, a report by Public Policy Institute of California
<http://www.ppic.org/main/publication.asp?i=905>

Insights, a publication of the California Child Welfare Co-Investment Partnership
www.co-invest.org