



CWDA

Advancing Human Services
for the Welfare of *All* Californians

Emergency Response (ER) Enhancement & Flex Family Supports

County Use, Outcomes, and Policy Implications

Prepared by the County Welfare Directors Association of California (CWDA)

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Executive Summary

Emergency Response (ER) Enhancement and Flexible Family Supports funding provided counties with targeted, flexible resources to stabilize the front end of the child welfare system. ER Enhancement funds supported staffing increases and operational improvements during a period of sustained demand and increasing case complexity. Flexible Family Supports funding allowed counties to provide concrete supports to promote family-based care, particularly with relatives and kin-like connections. County responses demonstrate that both funding streams were actively used to strengthen safety, support family-based care, and improve system stability. The tables below provide specific examples of how counties utilized these funds.

Emergency Response (ER) Enhancement Funding

Emergency Response (ER) programs operate 24/7 to respond to reports of child abuse and neglect. The State Budget Acts of 2021 and 2022 provided \$100 million in one-time General Fund (set to expire June 2026) to increase ER staffing and improve investigation timeliness. During this period, counties continued to face high demand, with over 403,000 referrals and nearly 179,000 in-person investigations in FY 2024–25. ER Enhancement funding was primarily used to increase staffing capacity, improve supervision, manage investigative backlogs, and strengthen early safety and kin engagement practice.

Use of Enhancement Funds	Sample Counties with this target	Key Outcomes reported by these counties
Retention & Pay Differentials	Alameda, Kern, Tulare, Mendocino, San Bernardino, Sutter	Vacancy reductions (e.g., Kern 19.7% - 9%), retention bonuses (San Bernardino 78% - 91.4%), reduced workforce turnover (Alameda only 3 departures), improved morale
Hiring Additional ER Social Workers	Amador, Glenn, San Luis Obispo, Yuba, Stanislaus	Reduced caseloads, increased timeliness (Amador open investigations reduced from 206 to 80, Tulare 10-day timeliness improved from 49.3% compliance to 91.5% compliance)
Support Staff / SSA / Case Aides	Lake, Santa Barbara, San Mateo, Solano, Kings	Improved investigation timeliness, reduced admin burden, increased safety plan documentation
Hotline / Intake Stabilization	Santa Clara, Yuba, San Bernardino, Solano	Improved State Measure 2B timeliness to investigation, improved referral screening, increased Structure Decision Making tool completion (a state tool used to guide investigations).
Training & Professional Development	Los Angeles, Imperial, Mono, Santa Cruz	Reduced turnover, improved safety planning, improved Immediate In-Person response, improved incident reduction
Prevention / CFT / Diversion Efforts	Sacramento, Sonoma, Napa, Colusa	Reduced referrals (Sacramento dropped by 8.8%), increased number of families who received safety planning through Child and Family Team meetings to avoid foster care entry, decreased recurrence, reduced removals
Technology Improvements	Los Angeles, Madera, Shasta	Faster documentation, reduced manual workload, improved tracking of referrals and investigations

Flexible Family Supports

Flexible Family Supports funding supports placement stability and family-based care by addressing needs not covered by caregiver rates. This one-time funding was provided through the State Budget Acts of 2022 and 2023 (also set to expire June 2026) and was targeted to four primary categories: respite care, enrichment activities, supportive connections, and concrete costs. Expenditures beyond those specified categories required State Department of Social Services approval.

Use of Funds	Counties reporting use of this support	Example of Reported Outcomes / Illustrative Impact
Respite Care (Caregiver Stabilization)	Amador, Butte, El Dorado, Fresno, Glenn, Humboldt, Imperial, Kern, Kings, Lake, Los Angeles, Marin, Merced, Napa, Orange, Sacramento, San Diego, San Francisco, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Santa Clara, Shasta, Siskiyou, Solano, Stanislaus, Trinity, Ventura, Yuba	Prevented 14-day notices (Butte), 29 youth served in respite (Sacramento), reduced caregiver burnout, maintained placement stability
Enrichment & Normalcy Activities	Amador, Butte, El Dorado, Fresno, Glenn, Humboldt, Imperial, Kern, Kings, Lake, Los Angeles, Madera, Merced, Napa, Orange, Riverside, Sacramento, San Benito, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Francisco, San Joaquin, San Luis Obispo, San Mateo, Santa Barbara, Santa Clara, Siskiyou, Solano, Stanislaus, Tulare, Ventura, Yolo, Yuba, Shasta	442 youth sent to summer camps (San Bernardino), 3,248 individuals served (Fresno), 2,037 enrichment requests processed (San Diego), increased self-esteem, school engagement, and placement stability
Housing Stability & Concrete Placement Supports	Butte, El Dorado, Fresno, Humboldt, Imperial, Mariposa, Merced, Napa, Nevada, Orange, San Bernardino, San Francisco, San Joaquin, Santa Barbara, Santa Clara, Stanislaus, Tulare, Ventura	Over 10 kin placements enabled through pool fence installation (Tulare), sibling sets preserved through rental assistance (Merced), prevented STRTP placement (Butte, El Dorado)
Kinship, Family & Tribal/Cultural Connections	Butte, Fresno, Humboldt, Imperial, Kern, Los Angeles, Madera, Merced, Monterey, Napa, Orange, Riverside, Sacramento, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Francisco, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Santa Clara, Solano, Stanislaus, Ventura, Yuba, Shasta	Supported tribal regalia and events (Fresno), funded travel for sibling and family visits (Merced, Yuba), strengthened ICWA compliance and cultural identity
Transportation & Family Visitation Supports to support sibling, family and tribal connections	Butte, Fresno, Humboldt, Imperial, Kern, Los Angeles, Madera, Merced, Monterey, Napa, Orange, Riverside, Sacramento, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Francisco, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Santa Clara, Solano, Stanislaus, Ventura, Yuba, Shasta	Increased out-of-state family visits, strengthened permanent connections, maintained sibling bonds
Workforce & Youth Development Supports (NMD)	Los Angeles, San Bernardino, Stanislaus	600 technology packages distributed (San Bernardino), workforce stipends and Youth@Work programming (LA), job readiness and driver's education support
Immediate Needs / Emergency Placement Support	Monterey, Marin, Solano, San Joaquin, Stanislaus	28 emergency gift cards issued to kin/kin-like caregivers to enable emergency placements (Monterey), supported first placements for kin, addressed essential needs during SNAP shutdown (Stanislaus)