



**California Alliance**  
OF CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**The California Alliance Applauds Governor's Support of Group Home Reform for Foster Youth**

Yesterday Governor Schwarzenegger signed into law a package of legislation designed to reduce barriers to service and extend benefits to children and youth in foster care and to help them achieve permanency. One important bill in this package of legislation will allow counties and private non profit agencies to transform the current system of group home care into a more comprehensive system of services which focus on developing and strengthening life-long permanent connections for every youth in foster care.

AB 1453, authored by Assemblymember Soto and sponsored by the California Alliance of Children and Family Services (the Alliance), will encourage counties to develop partnerships with non-profit agencies to test alternative programs to group home care, so that children with complex emotional and behavioral needs are matched with appropriate services, while staying connected to their communities. Youth currently in group home care often experience multiple placements resulting in a lack of consistent connections with family, schools, and communities. Casey Family Programs, in collaboration with the Alliance, has stepped forward to provide the technical support and evaluate results to help counties develop innovative programs.

The enrolled legislation marks a victory for the coalition of committed stakeholders and advocates working with the California Department of Social Services since 2004 to reassess the roles of group homes for children and youth. The diverse workgroup included family members, emancipated foster youth, child and family advocates, policymakers, researchers, care provider representatives, and county and state public officials from law enforcement, social service, child welfare, mental health, and education agencies and departments. Their efforts resulted in the development a framework for transforming the current system of foster care group homes into a system of child-centered, residentially-based services which will reduce lengths of stay for youth needing this level of care and services.

“The foundation of this reform is a growing knowledge base of best practices demonstrating fewer placements and better outcomes of foster youth. We know that if these kids receive the right services in the right amount at the right time, they can be connected or are re-connected with their families, schools, and communities as quickly and safely as possible,” stated Carroll Schroeder, Executive Director for the California Alliance of Child and Family Services.

Counties will be asked to opt in as a demonstration sites to test alternative programs and funding models as the first step towards statewide implementation of residentially-based services. While the number of children in group home facilities has steadily decreased within the last decade, there is an expectation of an increase in the demand for group home care, based on the implementation of juvenile justice realignment and the redirection of juvenile offenders to county supervision. As of 2006, 8% or 6,315 of California’s approximate 80,000 foster youth were living in group homes.

“Our goal is to encourage innovation and collaboration between agencies and providers that will result in safe, stable, permanent family connections as soon as possible. This initiative provides a unique opportunity to have a significant impact on the lives of children,” said Dr. David Sanders, Executive

Vice President of Systems Improvement of Casey Family Programs and former Director of the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services, the largest county system in the country.

The California Alliance of Child and Family Services (the Alliance) is a statewide association of more than 130 private nonprofit agencies that provide quality services and support to children and families. Member agencies offer a broad range of service options including adoption, family-based services, treatment foster care, mental health services, residential treatment, wraparound, nonpublic and charter school programs, and housing, services and support for transition age youth. The Alliance and its individual members are dedicated to advancing public policy that improves outcomes for vulnerable children and families. They recognize that achieving progressively better outcomes requires a wide array of effective, high quality and appropriately funded services. For more information, please go to [www.cacfs.org](http://www.cacfs.org).

Casey Family Programs is the largest national foundation whose sole mission is to provide and improve – and ultimately prevent the need for – foster care. The foundation draws on over 40 years of experience and expert research and analysis to improve the lives of children and youth in foster care in two important ways: by providing direct services and support to foster families, and by promoting improvements in child welfare practice and policy. The Seattle-based foundation was established in 1966 by United Parcel Service (UPS) founder Jim Casey, and has a current endowment of \$2.5 billion. For more information, please go to [www.casey.org](http://www.casey.org).

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