



## Legislation Text

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**File #:** 15-0708, **Version:** 1

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Health and Human Services Agency, Social Services Division (HHSA), recommending the Board approve HHSA - Child Welfare Services to opt-in to the Approved Relative Caregiver (ARC) Program.

**FUNDING:** ARC - State General Fund, Social Services Realignment.

### **DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION**

Opting into ARC will provide counties with base funding (State General Fund) to cover the cost of supporting youth who are currently not eligible for federal foster care funding while placed in the home of a relative. Annual base funding is reviewed and adjusted based on County caseload, along with an annual California Necessities Index (CNI) increase, which is the same inflationary adjustment provided to existing Foster Family Home rates. The caseload established for the County of El Dorado 2015 allocation of approximately \$48,500 was based on July 2014 total of ten cases. Social Services Realignment funds will be utilized for cases exceeding the base allocation, and may be eligible for reimbursement from the State, depending on the availability of funding.

The ARC Program may result in increased placement, stability and improved child outcomes. The deadline to opt-in to the ARC Program with the California Department of Social Services is June, 30 2015.

### **DISCUSSION / BACKGROUND**

The ARC Program enacted by Senate Bill (SB) 855 (Chapter 29, Statutes of 2014), effective January 1, 2015, provides for payments to children placed in foster care with relative caregivers when the children are not eligible for federal foster care benefits.

Federal and State laws require that preferential consideration for placement be given to an approved relative caregiver when a child is removed from the physical custody of a parent. An approved relative caregiver in California must meet health and safety standards that mirror those for a licensed foster parent, such as undergoing criminal background checks and clearance from the child abuse index.

Although placement with a relative is the preferred placement, the funding associated with that placement depends on whether the child is eligible to receive federal Aid to Families with Dependent Children - Foster Care (AFDC-FC). While an approved relative may receive AFDC-FC payments on behalf of a *federally* eligible foster child, an approved relative caring for a *non-federally* eligible foster child is ineligible for AFDC-FC. For a non-federally eligible child in foster care, an approved relative may apply to receive California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) benefits on behalf of the child. Unlike AFDC-FC, typical CalWORKs grants are not a per-child payment, but are based on the size of the family as a whole, and are less than the AFDC-FC rate, providing less support to the foster child and creating a financial hardship for the relative caregiver.

To address this disparity, California has enacted the ARC Program. This program provides State

funding to enable participating counties to make payments equal to the basic foster care rate to approved relative caregivers with whom a non-federally eligible foster child is placed. Such a child must reside in California and be under the jurisdiction of the California juvenile court.

### **ALTERNATIVES**

Should the Board decide not to opt-in to the State ARC Program, foster children ineligible for Federal funding may continue to be placed with Foster Family Agencies due to the financial hardship on relative caregivers who do not meet the Federal funding requirements.

### **OTHER DEPARTMENT / AGENCY INVOLVEMENT**

N/A

### **CAO RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Board approve this item if it wants the Relative Caregiver Program to continue.

### **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

There is no Net County Cost associated with this agenda item. Sufficient appropriations are included in the Health and Human Services Agency Fiscal Year (FY) 2014-15 budget, and will be included in future FY budget requests as appropriate.

### **CLERK OF THE BOARD FOLLOW UP ACTIONS**

Provide one (1) Certified Minute Order indicating approval of this Program, for submission to the California Department of Social Services.

### **STRATEGIC PLAN COMPONENT**

Health and Human Services Agency Strategic Plan Project 2.4, Objective 1 "Maximize Realignment Funding to provide the best range of services to EDC Clients," as well as Objective 2 "Maximize and stabilize available resources for mandated programs."

### **CONTACT**

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