

AMENDED IN SENATE JUNE 1, 2009
AMENDED IN SENATE MAY 20, 2009
AMENDED IN SENATE APRIL 20, 2009

SENATE BILL

No. 118

Introduced by Senator Liu
(Principal coauthor: Assembly Member Beall)

February 2, 2009

An act to amend ~~Sections 16500.1 and~~ *Section 16501.1* of the Welfare and Institutions Code, relating to child welfare services.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 118, as amended, Liu. Child welfare services: incarcerated parents.

Under existing law, the state, through the State Department of Social Services and county welfare departments, is required to establish and support a public system of statewide child welfare services. ~~Under existing law, the state encourages the development of child safety approaches that meet prescribed requirements to achieve specified goals, including, among others, the speedy reunification of families when it can be safely accomplished.~~

Existing law also establishes that a case plan, which is required to be adopted by the county for each child receiving child welfare services and which includes prescribed information, is the foundation and central unifying tool in child welfare services.

~~This bill would add the requirement that the approaches to child safety protection include ensuring that an incarcerated parent receives services required by the court to reunify that parent with his or her children.~~

This bill would ~~also~~ require that the case plan include specified information, to the extent possible, about a parent's incarceration in

determining the reasonable services to be offered or provided to that parent's children. By expanding the duties of county officials, this bill would impose a state-mandated local program.

The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state. Statutory provisions establish procedures for making that reimbursement.

This bill would provide that, if the Commission on State Mandates determines that the bill contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement for those costs shall be made pursuant to these statutory provisions.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: yes.
State-mandated local program: yes.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

- 1 ~~SECTION 1. Section 16500.1 of the Welfare and Institutions~~
- 2 ~~Code is amended to read:~~
- 3 ~~16500.1. (a) It is the intent of the Legislature to use the~~
- 4 ~~strengths of families and communities to serve the needs of children~~
- 5 ~~who are alleged to be abused or neglected, as described in Section~~
- 6 ~~300, to reduce the necessity for removing these children from their~~
- 7 ~~home, to encourage speedy reunification of families when it can~~
- 8 ~~be safely accomplished, to locate permanent homes and families~~
- 9 ~~for children who cannot return to their biological families, to reduce~~
- 10 ~~the number of placements experienced by these children, to ensure~~
- 11 ~~that children leaving the foster care system have support within~~
- 12 ~~their communities, to improve the quality and homelike nature of~~
- 13 ~~out-of-home care, and to foster the educational progress of children~~
- 14 ~~in out-of-home care.~~
- 15 ~~(b) In order to achieve the goals specified in subdivision (a),~~
- 16 ~~the state shall encourage the development of approaches to child~~
- 17 ~~protection that do all of the following:~~
- 18 ~~(1) Allow children to remain in their own schools, in close~~
- 19 ~~proximity to their families.~~
- 20 ~~(2) Increase the number and quality of foster families available~~
- 21 ~~to serve these children.~~
- 22 ~~(3) Use a team approach to foster care that permits the biological~~
- 23 ~~and foster family and the child to be part of that team.~~
- 24 ~~(4) Use team decisionmaking in case planning.~~
- 25 ~~(5) Provide support to foster children and foster families.~~

1 ~~(6) Ensure that licensing requirements do not create barriers to~~
2 ~~recruitment of qualified, high-quality foster homes.~~

3 ~~(7) Provide training for foster parents and professional staff on~~
4 ~~working effectively with families and communities.~~

5 ~~(8) Encourage foster parents to serve as mentors and role models~~
6 ~~for biological parents.~~

7 ~~(9) Use community resources, including community-based~~
8 ~~agencies and volunteer organizations, to assist in developing~~
9 ~~placements for children and to provide support for children and~~
10 ~~their families.~~

11 ~~(10) Ensure an appropriate array of placement resources for~~
12 ~~children in need of out-of-home care.~~

13 ~~(11) Ensure that no child leaves foster care without a lifelong~~
14 ~~connection to a committed adult.~~

15 ~~(12) Ensure that children are actively involved in the case plan~~
16 ~~and permanency planning process.~~

17 ~~(c) (1) Each county shall provide the department with a disaster~~
18 ~~response plan describing how county programs assisted under Part~~
19 ~~B (commencing with Section 620) and Part E (commencing with~~
20 ~~Section 670) of Subchapter IV of Chapter 7 of Title 42 of the~~
21 ~~United States Code (Titles IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security~~
22 ~~Act) would respond to a disaster. The plan shall set forth~~
23 ~~procedures describing how each county will perform the following~~
24 ~~services:~~

25 ~~(A) Identify, locate, and continue availability of services for~~
26 ~~children under state care or supervision who are displaced or~~
27 ~~adversely affected by a disaster.~~

28 ~~(B) Respond, as appropriate, to new child welfare cases in areas~~
29 ~~adversely affected by a disaster, and provide services in those~~
30 ~~cases.~~

31 ~~(C) Remain in communication with caseworkers and other~~
32 ~~essential child welfare personnel who are displaced because of a~~
33 ~~disaster.~~

34 ~~(D) Preserve essential program records.~~

35 ~~(E) Coordinate services and share information with other~~
36 ~~counties.~~

37 ~~(2) The department shall review its disaster plan with respect~~
38 ~~to subparagraphs (A) to (E), inclusive, of paragraph (1), and shall~~
39 ~~revise the plan to clarify the role and responsibilities of the state~~
40 ~~in the event of a disaster.~~

~~(3) The department shall consult with counties to identify opportunities for collaboration between counties, and between the county and the state, in the event of a disaster.~~

~~(d) In carrying out the requirements of subdivisions (b) and (c), the department shall do all of the following:~~

~~(1) Consider the existing array of program models provided in statute and in practice, including, but not limited to, wraparound services, as defined in Section 18251, children's systems of care, as provided for in Section 5852, the Oregon Family Unity or Santa Clara County Family Conference models, which include family conferences at key points in the casework process, such as when out-of-home placement or return home is considered, and the Annie E. Casey Foundation Family to Family initiative, which uses team decisionmaking in case planning, community-based placement practices requiring that children be placed in foster care in the communities where they resided prior to placement, and involve foster families as team members in family reunification efforts.~~

~~(2) Ensure that emergency response services, family maintenance services, family reunification services, and permanent placement services are coordinated with the implementation of the models described in paragraph (1).~~

~~(3) Ensure consistency between child welfare services program regulations and the program models described in paragraph (1).~~

~~(e) The department, in conjunction with stakeholders, including, but not limited to, county child welfare services agencies, foster parent and group home associations, the California Youth Connection, and other child advocacy groups, shall review the existing child welfare services program regulations to ensure that these regulations are consistent with the legislative intent specified in subdivision (a). This review shall also determine how to incorporate the best practice guidelines for assessment of children and families receiving child welfare and foster care services, as required by Section 16501.2.~~

~~(f) The department shall report to the Legislature on the results of the actions taken under this section on or before January 1, 2002.~~

~~SEC. 2.~~

~~SECTION 1. Section 16501.1 of the Welfare and Institutions Code is amended to read:~~

16501.1. (a) (1) The Legislature finds and declares that the foundation and central unifying tool in child welfare services is the case plan.

(2) The Legislature further finds and declares that a case plan ensures that the child receives protection and safe and proper care and case management, and that services are provided to the child and parents or other caretakers, as appropriate, in order to improve conditions in the parent's home, to facilitate the safe return of the child to a safe home or the permanent placement of the child, and to address the needs of the child while in foster care.

(b) (1) A case plan shall be based upon the principles of this section and shall document that a preplacement assessment of the service needs of the child and family, and preplacement preventive services, have been provided, and that reasonable efforts to prevent out-of-home placement have been made.

(2) In determining the reasonable services to be offered or provided, the child's health and safety shall be the paramount concerns.

(3) (A) In determining the reasonable services to be offered or provided, the case plan shall include information, to the extent possible, about a parent's incarceration in a county jail or the state prison during the time that a minor child of that parent is involved in dependency care. Once a consistent data entry field or fields have been designated in the statewide child welfare database, social workers shall make reasonable efforts to collect and update necessary data regarding a child's incarcerated parent or parents.

(B) In order to further the goals of this paragraph, the Legislature encourages the State Department of Social Services to consult with the county welfare directors regarding the best way to incorporate the information specified in subparagraph (A) as a required field in the statewide database. The Legislature also encourages the Department of Justice, the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, county welfare departments, and county sheriffs to develop protocols for facilitating the exchange of information regarding the location and sentencing of the incarcerated parent or parents of a minor child who is in dependency care.

(C) *Nothing in this paragraph shall be interpreted to require the department to create a new dedicated field in the statewide database for incorporating the information specified in subparagraph (A).*

1 (4) Reasonable services shall be offered or provided to make it
2 possible for a child to return to a safe home environment, unless,
3 pursuant to subdivisions (b) and (e) of Section 361.5, the court
4 determines that reunification services shall not be provided.

5 (5) If reasonable services are not ordered, or are terminated,
6 reasonable efforts shall be made to place the child in a timely
7 manner in accordance with the permanent plan and to complete
8 all steps necessary to finalize the permanent placement of the child.

9 (c) (1) If out-of-home placement is used to attain case plan
10 goals, the decision regarding choice of placement shall be based
11 upon selection of a safe setting that is the least restrictive or most
12 familylike and the most appropriate setting that is available and
13 in close proximity to the parent's home, proximity to the child's
14 school, consistent with the selection of the environment best suited
15 to meet the child's special needs and best interests, or both. The
16 selection shall consider, in order of priority, placement with
17 relatives, tribal members, and foster family, group care, and
18 residential treatment pursuant to Section 7950 of the Family Code.

19 (2) In addition to the requirements of paragraph (1), and taking
20 into account other statutory considerations regarding placement,
21 the selection of the most appropriate home that will meet the child's
22 special needs and best interests shall also promote educational
23 stability by taking into consideration proximity to the child's school
24 attendance area.

25 (d) A written case plan shall be completed within a maximum
26 of 60 days of the initial removal of the child or of the in-person
27 response required under subdivision (f) of Section 16501 if the
28 child has not been removed from his or her home, or by the date
29 of the dispositional hearing pursuant to Section 358, whichever
30 occurs first. The case plan shall be updated, as the service needs
31 of the child and family dictate. At a minimum, the case plan shall
32 be updated in conjunction with each status review hearing
33 conducted pursuant to Section 366.21, and the hearing conducted
34 pursuant to Section 366.26, but no less frequently than once every
35 six months. Each updated case plan shall include a description of
36 the services that have been provided to the child under the plan
37 and an evaluation of the appropriateness and effectiveness of those
38 services.

39 (1) It is the intent of the Legislature that extending the maximum
40 time available for preparing a written case plan from 30 to 60 days

1 will afford caseworkers time to actively engage families, and to
2 solicit and integrate into the case plan the input of the child and
3 the child's family, as well as the input of relatives and other
4 interested parties.

5 (2) The extension of the maximum time available for preparing
6 a written case plan from the 30 to 60 days shall be effective 90
7 days after the date that the department gives counties written notice
8 that necessary changes have been made to the Child Welfare
9 Services Case Management System to account for the 60-day
10 timeframe for preparing a written case plan.

11 (e) The child welfare services case plan shall be comprehensive
12 enough to meet the juvenile court dependency proceedings
13 requirements pursuant to Article 6 (commencing with Section 300)
14 of Chapter 2 of Part 1 of Division 2.

15 (f) The case plan shall be developed as follows:

16 (1) The case plan shall be based upon an assessment of the
17 circumstances that required child welfare services intervention.
18 The child shall be involved in developing the case plan as age and
19 developmentally appropriate.

20 (2) The case plan shall identify specific goals and the
21 appropriateness of the planned services in meeting those goals.

22 (3) The case plan shall identify the original allegations of abuse
23 or neglect, as defined in Article 2.5 (commencing with Section
24 11164) of Chapter 2 of Title 1 of Part 4 of the Penal Code, or the
25 conditions cited as the basis for declaring the child a dependent of
26 the court pursuant to Section 300, or all of these, and the other
27 precipitating incidents that led to child welfare services
28 intervention.

29 (4) The case plan shall include a description of the schedule of
30 the social worker contacts with the child and the family or other
31 caretakers. The frequency of these contacts shall be in accordance
32 with regulations adopted by the State Department of Social
33 Services. If the child has been placed in foster care out of state,
34 the county social worker or a social worker on the staff of the
35 social services agency in the state in which the child has been
36 placed shall visit the child in a foster family home or the home of
37 a relative, consistent with federal law and in accordance with the
38 department's approved state plan. For children in out-of-state group
39 home facilities, visits shall be conducted at least monthly, pursuant
40 to Section 16516.5. At least once every six months, at the time of

1 a regularly scheduled social worker contact with the foster child,
2 the child's social worker shall inform the child of his or her rights
3 as a foster child, as specified in Section 16001.9. The social worker
4 shall provide the information to the child in a manner appropriate
5 to the age or developmental level of the child.

6 (5) (A) When out-of-home services are used, the frequency of
7 contact between the natural parents or legal guardians and the child
8 shall be specified in the case plan. The frequency of those contacts
9 shall reflect overall case goals, and consider other principles
10 outlined in this section.

11 (B) Information regarding any court-ordered visitation between
12 the child and the natural parents or legal guardians, and the terms
13 and conditions needed to facilitate the visits while protecting the
14 safety of the child, shall be provided to the child's out-of-home
15 caregiver as soon as possible after the court order is made.

16 (6) When out-of-home placement is made, the case plan shall
17 include provisions for the development and maintenance of sibling
18 relationships as specified in subdivisions (b), (c), and (d) of Section
19 16002. If appropriate, when siblings who are dependents of the
20 juvenile court are not placed together, the social worker for each
21 child, if different, shall communicate with each of the other social
22 workers and ensure that the child's siblings are informed of
23 significant life events that occur within their extended family.
24 Unless it has been determined that it is inappropriate in a particular
25 case to keep siblings informed of significant life events that occur
26 within the extended family, the social worker shall determine the
27 appropriate means and setting for disclosure of this information
28 to the child commensurate with the child's age and emotional
29 well-being. These significant life events shall include, but shall
30 not be limited to, the following:

31 (A) The death of an immediate relative.

32 (B) The birth of a sibling.

33 (C) Significant changes regarding a dependent child, unless the
34 child objects to the sharing of the information with his or her
35 siblings, including changes in placement, major medical or mental
36 health diagnoses, treatments, or hospitalizations, arrests, and
37 changes in the permanent plan.

38 (7) If out-of-home placement is made in a foster family home,
39 group home, or other child care institution that is either a
40 substantial distance from the home of the child's parent or out of

state, the case plan shall specify the reasons why that placement is in the best interest of the child. When an out-of-state group home placement is recommended or made, the case plan shall, in addition, specify compliance with Section 7911.1 of the Family Code.

(8) (A) If out-of-home services are used, or if parental rights have been terminated and the case plan is placement for adoption, the case plan shall include a recommendation regarding the appropriateness of unsupervised visitation between the child and any of the child's siblings. This recommendation shall include a statement regarding the child's and the siblings' willingness to participate in unsupervised visitation. If the case plan includes a recommendation for unsupervised sibling visitation, the plan shall also note that information necessary to accomplish this visitation has been provided to the child or to the child's siblings.

(B) Information regarding the schedule and frequency of the visits between the child and siblings, as well as any court-ordered terms and conditions needed to facilitate the visits while protecting the safety of the child, shall be provided to the child's out-of-home caregiver as soon as possible after the court order is made.

(9) If out-of-home services are used and the goal is reunification, the case plan shall describe the services to be provided to assist in reunification and the services to be provided concurrently to achieve legal permanency if efforts to reunify fail. The plan shall also consider in-state and out-of-state placements, the importance of developing and maintaining sibling relationships pursuant to Section 16002, and the desire and willingness of the caregiver to provide legal permanency for the child if reunification is unsuccessful.

(10) If out-of-home services are used, the child has been in care for at least 12 months, and the goal is not adoptive placement, the case plan shall include documentation of the compelling reason or reasons why termination of parental rights is not in the child's best interest. A determination completed or updated within the past 12 months by the department when it is acting as an adoption agency or by a licensed adoption agency that it is unlikely that the child will be adopted, or that one of the conditions described in paragraph (1) of subdivision (c) of Section 366.26 applies, shall be deemed a compelling reason.

1 (11) (A) Parents and legal guardians shall have an opportunity
2 to review the case plan, and to sign it whenever possible, and then
3 shall receive a copy of the plan. In any voluntary service or
4 placement agreement, the parents or legal guardians shall be
5 required to review and sign the case plan. Whenever possible,
6 parents and legal guardians shall participate in the development
7 of the case plan.

8 (B) Parents and legal guardians shall be advised that, pursuant
9 to Section 1228.1 of the Evidence Code, neither their signature on
10 the child welfare services case plan nor their acceptance of any
11 services prescribed in the child welfare services case plan shall
12 constitute an admission of guilt or be used as evidence against the
13 parent or legal guardian in a court of law. However, they shall also
14 be advised that the parent's or guardian's failure to cooperate,
15 except for good cause, in the provision of services specified in the
16 child welfare services case plan may be used in any hearing held
17 pursuant to Section 366.21 or 366.22 as evidence.

18 (12) A child shall be given a meaningful opportunity to
19 participate in the development of the case plan and state his or her
20 preference for foster care placement. A child who is 12 years of
21 age or older and in a permanent placement shall also be given the
22 opportunity to review the case plan, sign the case plan, and receive
23 a copy of the case plan.

24 (13) The case plan shall be included in the court report and shall
25 be considered by the court at the initial hearing and each review
26 hearing. Modifications to the case plan made during the period
27 between review hearings need not be approved by the court if the
28 casework supervisor for that case determines that the modifications
29 further the goals of the plan. If out-of-home services are used with
30 the goal of family reunification, the case plan shall consider and
31 describe the application of subdivision (b) of Section 11203.

32 (14) If the case plan has as its goal for the child a permanent
33 plan of adoption or placement in another permanent home, it shall
34 include a statement of the child's wishes regarding their permanent
35 placement plan and an assessment of those stated wishes. The
36 agency shall also include documentation of the steps the agency
37 is taking to find an adoptive family or other permanent living
38 arrangements for the child; to place the child with an adoptive
39 family, an appropriate and willing relative, a legal guardian, or in
40 another planned permanent living arrangement; and to finalize the

1 adoption or legal guardianship. At a minimum, the documentation
2 shall include child-specific recruitment efforts, such as the use of
3 state, regional, and national adoption exchanges, including
4 electronic exchange systems, when the child has been freed for
5 adoption.

6 (15) When appropriate, for a child who is 16 years of age or
7 older, the case plan shall include a written description of the
8 programs and services that will help the child, consistent with the
9 child's best interests, prepare for the transition from foster care to
10 independent living. The case plan shall be developed with the child
11 and individuals identified as important to the child, and shall
12 include steps the agency is taking to ensure that the child has a
13 connection to a caring adult.

14 (g) If the court finds, after considering the case plan, that
15 unsupervised sibling visitation is appropriate and has been
16 consented to, the court shall order that the child or the child's
17 siblings, the child's current caregiver, and the child's prospective
18 adoptive parents, if applicable, be provided with information
19 necessary to accomplish this visitation. This section does not
20 require or prohibit the social worker's facilitation, transportation,
21 or supervision of visits between the child and his or her siblings.

22 (h) The case plan documentation on sibling placements required
23 under this section shall not require modification of existing case
24 plan forms until the Child Welfare Services Case Management
25 System is implemented on a statewide basis.

26 (i) When a child who is 10 years of age or older and who has
27 been in out-of-home placement for six months or longer, the case
28 plan shall include an identification of individuals, other than the
29 child's siblings, who are important to the child and actions
30 necessary to maintain the child's relationship with those
31 individuals, provided that those relationships are in the best interest
32 of the child. The social worker shall ask every child who is 10
33 years of age or older and who has been in out-of-home placement
34 for six months or longer to identify individuals other than the
35 child's siblings who are important to the child, and may ask any
36 other child to provide that information, as appropriate. The social
37 worker shall make efforts to identify other individuals who are
38 important to the child, consistent with the child's best interests.

39 (j) The child's caregiver shall be provided a copy of a plan
40 outlining the child's needs and services.

(k) On or before June 30, 2008, the department, in consultation with the County Welfare Directors Association and other advocates, shall develop a comprehensive plan to ensure that 90 percent of foster children are visited by their caseworkers on a monthly basis by October 1, 2011, and that the majority of the visits occur in the residence of the child. The plan shall include any data reporting requirements necessary to comply with the provisions of the federal Child and Family Services Improvement Act of 2006 (Public Law 109-288).

(l) The implementation and operation of the amendments to subdivision (i) enacted at the 2005–06 Regular Session shall be subject to appropriation through the budget process and by phase, as provided in Section 366.35.

~~SEC. 3.~~

SEC. 2. If the Commission on State Mandates determines that this act contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement to local agencies and school districts for those costs shall be made pursuant to Part 7 (commencing with Section 17500) of Division 4 of Title 2 of the Government Code.