



CALIFORNIA STATE ASSEMBLY  
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ASSEMBLYMEMBER, DISTRICT 76

## Fact Sheet

### PROPOSED BILL

**AB 1074** updates the CalWORKs Family Reunification Program to remove barriers that prevent parents from continuing to receive cash aid and services while their children are temporarily placed outside the home. This allows the state to better achieve its goal of family reunification.

### BACKGROUND

The California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids program (Cal WORKs) is a welfare-to-work program that provides cash aid, social services, and employment assistance to eligible very low or low-income families with children. The CalWORKs Family Reunification Program allows parents who are receiving CalWORKs benefits to continue to receive aid and services even when their children have been removed from the home and placed in foster care or the home of a relative. The goal of the program is to reunify children with their families.

### PROBLEM

Four problems in the CalWORKs reunification program impede the ability of parents to reunify with their children:

- 1) It is not clear whether CalWORKs parents must have all children removed from their homes before they can receive the reunification aid and childcare services that are part of the reunification process. This has led to parents being denied these provisions so long as they have at least one child in the house.
- 2) For parents to receive this aid, all children must receive all age-appropriate immunizations. This requirement remains even after a child is in the foster

3) Even when a parent isn't on the grant (e.g., they receive SSI), the child's eligibility places the family in CalWORKs, and removing all aid upon the child's removal cuts off the resources needed to address problems and facilitate reunification. This undermines the program's core goal of stabilizing families so children can return home safely.

4) State policy grants counties the option of having two separate plans, one for reunification and one for welfare-to-work. In the counties that have two, a parent can be sanctioned and lose all or a portion of the CalWORKs aid if they fail to comply with one set of requirements, regardless of how duplicitous. This approach creates additional barriers to unification as parents struggle to meet competing demands from the two systems instead of having a coordinated response.

Altogether, these barriers impede access to key aid. Given that financial constraints are the most common reason for a CalWORKs child to be taken from their parents, removing the aid that would help parents address the cause for removal and create a stable family environment is counterproductive to the goal of reunification.

### SOLUTION

AB 1074 helps to fulfill the State's goal of reunifying CalWORKs families with their children by removing unnecessary barriers in five key ways:

- 1) Eliminates the requirement that all CalWORKs-eligible children must be removed from a household before a family can receive aid and child care eligibility and that a CalWORKs-eligible child joining a family excludes them from this aid and care.

2) Eliminates the immunization requirement once a child is no longer in the custody of the CalWORKs family.

3) Clarifies that families remain eligible for their current CalWORKs benefit level, even if the parent is not personally receiving aid. This ensures families maintain essential income and can continue working toward reunification after their child is removed.

4) Implements a single statewide policy stating that parents must navigate only one set of requirements that covers both reunification and welfare-to-work CalWORKs requirements.

5) Clarifies that the Department of Social Services (DSS) cannot exercise the discretion in existing law to shorten the period of family reunification cash aid and services to eligible families.

## **SUPPORT**

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Western Center on Law and Poverty (Sponsor)  
Advokids  
Alliance for Children's Rights  
California Community College CalWORKs Association  
California Family Resources Association  
Child Abuse Prevention Center  
California Family Resource Association  
Coalition of California Welfare Rights Organizations  
Dependency Advocacy Center  
Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County  
Public Counsel

## **OPPOSITION**

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None

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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