

## Abstract

### EXTENDING SERVICES AND INCREASING POSITIVE LIFE-LONG OUTCOMES: POLICY ANALYSIS OF EXTENDED FOSTER CARE (AB12) IN CALIFORNIA

This project is an analysis of Assembly Bill 12. Research was conducted to examine the effectiveness of this policy, and recommendations for change were formulated. Transitioning from adolescence to independent adulthood is a challenging time for young adults. Many receive support from parents and family, which often includes paying for their college tuition, providing a home where they can live rent-free, or even repairing the consequences of a poor choice that was made. However, youth who age out of foster care lack this safety net and support when they transition to adulthood. As a result, foster youth are more likely to encounter numerous adversities throughout their lives than other individuals. Over the years, policies and social welfare programs have been implemented to provide better well-being to youth as they transition into adulthood and out of the child welfare system.

Assembly Bill 12 was created to provide assistance to foster youth as they transition to adulthood. It was established to allow current and former foster youth to extend their foster care services voluntarily and remain in the foster care system until the age of 21 as non-minor dependents of the court. Studies have proved that youth who stay in foster care for a longer duration of time have better outcomes in all domains of their lives. These domains include education, employment, homelessness, incarceration, and parenthood. This analysis hopes to bring light to the need for the extension of AB 12 services. Emerging adulthood occurs between the ages of 19 through 25; this period is vital to former foster youth and the time they need the most support. Support that can be provided through foster care extension programs. AB 12 youth

and former foster youth have a limited time gap in the availability of services that are offered to them. Extending foster care supports non-minor dependents in advancing their education, increasing employment opportunities, and decreasing the risk of incarceration and homelessness. Therefore, if the purpose of AB 12 is to increase positive outcomes in all domains of their life, then extending the age limit from 21 to 25 is needed. Former foster youth need equity, and for some, the need for additional years after the age of 21 in extended foster care is pivotal. Extending AB12 services from age 21 to 25 and providing this population the opportunity to continue in services if they desire and need to can be what keeps them on their path to success.

A feasibility study can be conducted to consider all the factors needed to extend AB12 services from age 21 to 25. Some of the factors that need to be studied are the potential cost of extending AB12 service from age 21 to 25 years, the barriers, and risk assessment.

EXTENDING SERVICES AND INCREASING POSITIVE LIFE-LONG OUTCOMES: A POLICY  
ANALYSIS OF EXTENDED FOSTER CARE (AB12) IN CALIFORNIA

By  
Jazmine Lupercio

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For the Department of Social Work Education:

We, the undersigned, certify that the thesis of the following student meets the required standards of scholarship, format, and style of the university and the student's graduate degree program for the awarding of the master's degree.

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Jazmine G Lupercio

Project Author

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Marcus Crawford, Ph.D. (Chair)

Social Work Education

---

Ambar Castillo, MSW (Reader)

Social Service Supervisor

For the University Graduate Committee:

---

Dean, Division of Graduate Studies

## Acknowledgments

This has been a memorable journey. I did not think the day when I would be writing this page on my project would come. For the past two years, I have wished this very moment to come true because that would mean I would be done with my project and close to graduation. However, now that I am here, I cannot seem to find the words to write. I still remember the day I received the email saying I had been accepted. I was in bed scrolling on my phone when the email notification popped up on the top of the screen. I vividly remember seeing the subject line "Department of Social Work, CSU Fresno" and the following words before the rest of the message was cut off on the screen, "Dear Jazmine, thank you for submitting your application for the MSW program at CSU, Fresno. I would like to congr...".

I remember reading that part extremely fast before the notification disappeared. I was not sure if I had seen the word "congratulations"; my whole body was shaky because I was so nervous and scared to open the email. Once I did, I could not believe that I was accepted. I started crying because I felt so proud of myself. I was in shock that I got accepted into such a vigorous and academically challenging program and that I would be going straight through from undergrad. That year, many professors told us that getting accepted was challenging and that our chances were slim due to the high demand of applications and limited spots. I know many classmates got discouraged that did not apply; I told myself that even if I did not make it, I did not want to live with the "what if," what if I would have applied and been accepted? I am glad I listened to my instincts.

This was quite a journey; as the saying goes, "when it rains, it pours." I started the program mid covid pandemic, that alone brought its own challenges. I struggled feeling like I was not "smart enough" for this project, and it was mentally draining. During this time, my

family and I endured a few personal challenges that truly impacted our whole lives. Juggling all of that was not easy by any means, but here I am now writing this, knowing I am about to end this chapter of my life. I am incredibly grateful to my family for supporting me through my whole education, especially in grad school. Moving back home because of the pandemic and starting grad school and internship was challenging, but I could not have done it without the support of my family and my dog, Luna, of course.

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To my little sister, I feel like I missed out on you growing up because I was away for undergrad. Thank you for understanding when I could not always be there with you because I was busy with schoolwork

or tired from internship. Thank you for getting up at any time of the day to bring me snacks to my desk, for massaging my neck because it would hurt while I sat at my desk and wrote my papers, you might not know it but those little actions meant a lot. Thank you.

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I am beyond grateful to the Title IV-E program for seeing something in me during the initial interview and for giving me the opportunity to be part of this program. Thank you. I still have a whole lot to learn, but I am beyond excited for the next chapter in my life.

This journey taught me that I am capable of this and so much more. I will forever remember this time of my life, the internal and external struggles I overcame, and the friendships I made along the way. Thank you.





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## **Chapter 1**

### **Purpose Statement**

Every individual experience their own unique journey in life, some encounter more battles than other, however a youth that has grown up in the foster care system, these battles are amplified. If you ask two teacher that work for the same school to describe their educational journey, you are going to hear two completely different journeys. One might have dreamed about being a teacher since a young age and went straight through to a university after high school. The other might have not had the support therefore needed to work and save money for school, took time off before applying to college. However, they both ended up with the career they wanted. Many times, youth in foster care experience a variety of obstacles that block their path to education and a positive future. Services are implemented to help decrease those obstacles, although others might still need more help. This analysis is important because expanding AB12 services would benefit many former foster youths in all domains of their life.

### **Problem Identification**

Lacking the necessary familial and financial support, former foster youth often experience many challenges in making a smooth and successful transition to adulthood. Compared to their peers not part of the foster care system, emancipating foster youth are disproportionately burdened by the demands of adulthood (Dworsky, 2005; Hook & Courtney, 2011). For the 30,000 youth who turn 18 and "age out" or "emancipate" from foster care each year, the transition to adulthood is fraught with difficulties (Richardson, 2016). Youth aging out of the child welfare system report high rates of instability with housing and homelessness which is later associated with challenges in employment, education, and early parenthood.

Extended foster care is provided until the maximum age of 21 years, however that is insufficient time for youth to successfully complete a higher education degree if they desire. Emerging adulthood refers to the development period, which takes place between the ages of 19 through 25 years old. During this time period, youth explore adulthood and new responsibilities (Arnett, 2000). Providing a youth with only 3 years of extended assistance is not sufficient. They are being left vulnerable during the most crucial time in their adulthood.

### **Definition of terms**

**AB12-** California Extended Foster Care (EFC) Program which allows eligible youth in the child welfare and probation system to remain in foster care until age 21.

**Adverse Childhood Experience (ACES)** – Various forms of physical and emotional abuse, neglect, and household dysfunction experiences in childhood. ACES have been linked to premature death as well as to various health conditions, including those of mental disorders. The ACES Questionnaire is a 10-item measure used to measure childhood trauma.

**Aging Out-** Youth who will exit the foster care system at age 18 or older as independents

**Emancipation** – the process in which a youth in foster care is no longer considered a ward of the court or under its legal jurisdiction which may happen after or before turning 18.

**Former Foster Youth-** Someone over the age of 18 years old that turned 18 while in foster care.

**Foster Care** – Placement in foster family homes, relative care, group homes, emergency shelters, residential facilities, childcare institutions, and pre-adoptive homes.

**Non-Minor Dependents (NMD)** – Youth over the age of who remain in foster care until the age of 21.

### **Population**

Foster youth are among the most at-risk groups in the United States, evidencing more severe and persistent vulnerabilities when they are compared to other at-risk groups, even those that are characterized by low socioeconomic status or minority group membership (Barrat & Berliner, 2013). Foster youth who turn 18 years old and former foster care youth are the primary groups that will be negatively impacted by the termination of extended care services at age 21. Studies have shown that more youth are staying home with the support of their parents up to the age of 26. Former foster youth are not an exception of the need to have support through those years of age. AB 12 youth and former foster youth have a very limited time gap of the availability of services provided to them.

### **Policy (AB 12)**

Assembly Bill 12 (AB12), also known as Extended Foster Care (EFC), allows eligible youth in the child welfare and probation systems to remain in foster care until the age of 21. Youth may leave EFC and later choose to re-enter the program up to the age of 21 (CDSS, 2021). Eligible youth are designated as "non-minor dependents" (NMDs). AB 12 was created with the intent to improve outcomes for youth in foster care who are transitioning to adulthood. AB 12 provides a safety net of support while the youth experience independence in a supervised living environment. In addition, EFC provides youth with extended time in care to address the effects of trauma, obtain higher education and employment training opportunities, and develop permanent connections to supportive adults (CDSS, 2021).

### **Conceptual Theoretical Framework**

AB 12 is will analyze through the lens of Resilience Theory. Resilience theory has its roots in the study of children who proved resilient adverse childhood environments (VanBreda, 2011). An individual's resilience at any moment is calculated by the ratio between the presence

of protective factors and the presence of hazardous circumstances (VanBreda, 2011). Youth in foster care tend to have less protective factors compared to other individuals, making their chances of resiliency challenging. Services have been created throughout the years to have provide additional support to youth in foster care to increase their protective factors.

### **Plans**

I plan to analyze AB12 using the framework I have created combining elements from Segal (2007), Karger and Stoesz (2002), Popple and Leighninger (2004), and Barusch. The goal of this analysis is to provide sufficient information that demonstrates the benefits of AB12 and why the age limit should be extended to 25 years old.

### **Significance of the Study**

AB 12 was created to provide assistance to foster youth as they transition to adulthood. Studies have proved that youth who stay in extended foster care for longer durations of time have better outcomes in all domains in their lives. These domains include education, employment, homelessness, incarceration, and parenthood. This study hopes to bring light to the need for the extension of AB 12 services. Emerging adulthood takes place between the ages of 19 through 25, this time period is vital to former foster youth and the time they need the most support. Support that is provided though foster care extension programs. Providing additional years of support will not only benefit the youth but society as a whole. It cost less financial expenses to pay for an education than incarceration.

### **Summary**

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to this vulnerable population, the problem and significance to social work. Foster youth are at risk of facing challenges after the age of 21 when there services are terminated. Chapter 2 focuses on a review of literature to understand youth

aging out of the foster care system. Literature will focus on outcomes, paths to adulthood, and programs that are designed to assist foster youth through this transition.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

Transitioning from a teen to a young adult is an overwhelming process. Teens rely on their parents or their stable caregiver for support during this transition. Transitioning to adulthood is not simply becoming independent. Youth aging out of the foster care system are typically not afforded the luxury of a gradual transition into adulthood or the safety net of a family if they find themselves unprepared for the challenges of independent living (Greenen & Powers, 2007). In California, the child welfare system provides non-minor dependents with support from extended foster care, known as AB 12 services. Assembly Bill 12 created California's Extended Foster Care (EFC) Program, which allows eligible youth in the child welfare and probation systems to remain in foster care until age 21 (CDSS, 2021). Youth may leave EFC and later choose to re-enter the program up to age 21 (CDSS, 2021). The maximum time limit in EFC is 21 years old, regardless of the status of the youth at that time.

One step in this transition can be attending higher education; however, a majority of individuals decide not to go to college. For those individuals who do, this new journey involves applying for higher education, monetary and emotional support to successfully complete their education, direct cash, and housing. This transition is stressful and overwhelming when teens have a solid support system. Now, for those youth who do not have the assistance of family, this transition can drastically negatively impact their future.

Foster youth experience unique challenges during the transition to adulthood and are more prone to experience adverse outcomes across a variety of domains, especially education,

employment, homelessness, incarceration, and early parenthood. The literature consistently highlights multiple risks associated with foster care youth aging out (compromised outcomes in education, employment, health, and housing). Prior to exploring these topics in the literature, I will present the theoretical foundation for this analysis found in Resilience Theory.

### **Theoretical Foundation**

Resilience has been most commonly defined as positive adaptation despite adversity (Fleming, J., & Ledogar, R. J., 2008). Dr. Emmy Werner a developmental psychologist and professor at the University of California noted that the more stress one experiences, the more protective process are needed (Werner, 1982., & Shean 2015). One of the landmark studies on the field of resilience, "Project Competence," was led by researcher Norman Garmezy, who stated the Government, by providing protective factors, enables some who would otherwise be lost to a fruitful life to move above the threshold of competence needed to survive in an increasingly complex, technological society (Garmezy, 1987; Shean, 2015). What this statement suggests is that Garmezy believed the environment around the child contributed significantly to the outcomes of children experiencing stress or any adversities (Shean, 2015).

### **Development of Theory**

Resilience Theory is a multifaceted field of study that has been addressed by social workers, psychologists, sociologists, educators, and many others over the past few decades. In essence, resilience theory addresses the strengths that people and systems demonstrate that enables them to rise above adversity (VanBreda, 2011). This theory has its roots in the study of children who proved resilient despite adverse childhood environments (VanBreda, 2011). Over the past four decades, resilience research has gone through several stages. From an initial focus



on the invulnerable or invincible child, psychologists began to recognize that much of what seems to promote resilience originates outside of the individual (Fleming, & Ledogar, 2008).

### **Application of the Theory in Social Work**

time, researchers have recognized that some protective factors were external to the individual (Fleming, & Ledogar, 2008). Rutter (1997) then Garmezy et al. (1984) described three levels of protective factors – the individual, the family, and the community (as cited by Fleming, & Ledogar, 2008). When an individual fails in some area of their life, society is quick to blame the individual for their failures; however, consideration is less often given to the obstacles that are in their pathway that make a succeeding that much more difficult. Youth in foster care experience numerous adversities throughout their time that negatively impacts their chances of succeeding in the future.

Being in foster youth lowers the chances of success due to all of the trauma and experience faced that led to the initial removal and throughout the years spent in foster care. Scannapieco et al. (2007) wrote that teens aging out of foster care have significant difficulties transitioning into independent living and self-sufficiency. Scannapieco et al. (2007) also stated the disproportion success within a variety of domains in life. Youth in care tend to be behind educationally compared to their peers, with as few as 33% graduating from school at the time of aging out to 50% (Scannapieco et al., 2007). More than 60% of females leaving the system have a baby within 4 years, almost always outside of marriage (Scannapieco et al., 2007).

As stated by Garmezy, "resilience is not a case of a heroic child" (Shean 2015). Given that resilience is not an inherent trait or personal quality, one would assume that resilience is a result of the interaction between the child and their environment (Shean, 2015).

Although research demonstrates the difficulty to succeed in life for foster youth, research also proves that they are capable of success. With the right tools and support, former foster youth are able to succeed in all domains in their life. There is no need to negatively stigmatize being in foster care. Resiliency is not a rare quality that only some individuals are gifted with. Resilience occurs when individuals are provided with the opportunity to utilize tools and programs that are available to them in order to have an equal opportunity at life.

### **Literature Review**

This literature review aims to understand the literature regarding youth aging out of the foster care, including outcomes and paths to adulthood and programs designed to assist them. More specifically, I will examine the education, employment, homelessness, incarceration, and parenthood outcomes of youth exiting the child welfare system in California.

#### **Emerging adulthood**

Developmental theories stress that emerging adults, ages 18-25, must navigate a specific set of developmental tasks inherent to this stage in the life course (Arnett, 2004, 2015). EFC's maximum age limit of support is age 21. However, transitioning to adulthood does not stop at age 21, especially youth in foster care who have experienced adverse childhood trauma; on the contrary, age 21 is where they need the most support. Given the changes in the transition to adulthood, it is imperative that researchers and policy makers understand and acknowledge barriers to receiving support among a more diverse group of young people who must navigate a range of disadvantages (Pryce et al., 2017). Youth aging out are more likely than their peers to

have poor outcomes in domains including housing, education, employment, substance abuse, justice system involvement and early parenting (Courtney et al., 2001, 2011; Courtney & Dworsky, 2006; Pecora et al., 2006; Reilly, 2003).

Many youth in foster care can express that they grew up without parents because they were not with them throughout their childhood. As youth transition into adulthood, once again their parents may not support and care for them at the same level of their peers' parents (Berzin et al., 2014). Emerging adulthood refers to the development period, which for most individuals takes place between the ages 18 and 25, where youths explore adult roles and responsibilities (Arnett, 2000). Adolescent brains are not fully developed until the mid-twenties, when important changes in the brain functioning take place such as a strengthening of activity in self-regulation brain systems, responses to rewards, and increased brain regions responding to arousing stimuli during late teens and early twenties (Steinburg, 2013, as cited in Summer et al., 2018). Although teens are capable of making mature decisions before the mid-twenties, they are less likely to make those mature decisions when they are experiencing emotional arousal or are subjected to peer pressure (Steinburg, 2013, as cited in Summer et al., 2018). Youth in foster care are more likely to be experiencing emotional arousal and may be at an increased risk to make poor choices due to the abuse or neglect that have experienced by a parent.

A Longitudinal research by Courtney and others (see Courtney & Dworsky, 2006; Courtney et al., 2011; Courtney et al., 2004) provides a comprehensive look of the experience of young people exiting the child welfare system in three Midwestern states. Using longitudinal data, this study followed more than 600 foster youth from ages 19 to 26 (Courtney et al., 2011). The results suggest the youth have faced difficulties in emerging adulthood compared with youth in the general population, and that extending care to age 21 is associated with gains in some

areas (Berzin et al., 2014). Youth who were older while receiving independent living services showed better education and employment outcomes (Scannapieco et al., 2016, as cited in Summers et al., 2016) as well as youth who were enrolled on programs for longer periods of time (Barnow et al., 2013, as cited in Summers et al., 2013). Youth in a state where foster care extends to 21 were almost four times more likely to have attended college (Courtney, Dworsky, & Pollock, 2007, as cited in Summers et al., 2018). As stated by Barnow et al. (2013), youth that entered into transitions services at or after age 17 and who stayed longer in the program had the best educational and employment results.

### **Policy (AB 12)**

Assembly Bill 12 (AB12), also known as EFC, allows eligible youth in the child welfare and probation systems to remain in foster care until the age of 21. Youth may leave EFC and later choose to re-enter the program up to the age of 21 (CDSS, 2021). Eligible youth are designated as "non-minor dependents" (NMDs). AB 12 was created with the intent to improve outcomes for youth in foster care who are transitioning to adulthood. AB 12 provides a safety net of support while the youth experience independence in a supervised living environment. In addition, EFC provides youth with extended time in care to address the effects of trauma, obtain higher education and employment training opportunities, and develop permanent connections to supportive adults (CDSS, 2021).

### **Adverse Childhood Experiences**

Research has demonstrated that youth who age out or emancipate from foster care face deleterious outcomes across a variety of domains in early adulthood (Rebbe et al., 2017). Compared to their peers, foster care youth are more vulnerable due to the number and chronicity of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). An adverse childhood experience is "a maltreatment

act or series of acts of commission or omission by a parent or other caregiver that results in harm, potential for harm, or threat of harm to physical, sexual, and psychological abuse and neglect" (Leeb, Paulozzi, Melanson, Simon, & Arias, 2008, p.11, as cited in Jones, 2017).

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) research indicates that greater numbers of early life exposures to significant stresses are significantly associated with greater mental and physical health problems in the adolescents and adult age periods (Anda, Felitti, Bremner, Walkerm Whitfield et al., 2006; Mclaughlin, Conron, Koenen, & Gilman 2010; as cited in Rebbe et al., 2017).

ACEs can create toxic stress, which can be intensified by being in foster care (Jones, 2017). ACEs have been associated with emotional and behavioral functioning problems (Dorsey et al., 2012; Greeson et al., 201; as cited in Jones, 2017). As the number of ACEs increase the evermore lasting their effects can be. Common patterns of ACEs in foster care youth include maltreatment, neglect, sexual, physical, emotional and psychological abuse, as well as exposure to violence and living in a dysfunctional family with caregivers who experience domestic violence and have a criminal record and/or mental illness (Allen et al., 2000; Clarkson Freeman, 2014; Dorsey et al., 2012; Kolko et al., 2010; Stein et al., 2001; as cited in Jones, 2017).

## **Education**

Youth in foster care represent one of the most academically vulnerable populations in schools today (Zetlin, 2006). Children and youth in foster care experience an academic journey full of challenges. Some of the challenges children and youth in foster care endure include but are not limited to frequent placement disruptions, neglect, and abuse. Assembly Bill 216 was enacted in support of foster youth and challenges that arise that affect their education. AB 216 states that foster youth who transfer high schools after their second year may be graduate by

completing the minimum state graduation requirement (California Legislative Information, 2013).

Teens not in foster care continue to live with their parents or rely on their financial support to get them through higher education. On average, it takes roughly 4-6 years to complete and graduate from higher education. Meaning if a former foster youth attends higher education at the age of 18 or 19, they will graduate between the ages of 23-25 years old. EFC only supports these young individuals until the age of 21. The rest of the years needed to complete their education would be left with zero support and possibly jeopardize the years of hard work in their already completed education journey. Education is crucial in life, especially in the lives of former foster youth.

Education appears to play an integral role in positive outcomes across adulthood. In fact, years of education predict a wide range of positive attitudes and behaviors (Kingston et al., 2003) and increased earnings (Becker, 2009; Naccarato et al., 2010). Although, as stated above, Assembly Bill 216 acknowledges and is aware of the struggles foster youth endure and lowered the credit requirement specifically for them, how is higher education any different? Being realistic, if a youth wanted to complete higher education, it is challenging to be done prior to their 21st birthday in order for AB 12 services to fully support them throughout the entire process.

## **Employment**

Transitioning to adulthood is a challenging time for youth, even more so for foster youth. Foster youth experience multiple placements during their stay in foster care, this means they receive inconsistent schooling, mentoring, and support, and they face limited opportunities to work or save money due to disruptions in social and educational networks that can facilitate

employment (Collins et al., 2010; Dion, 2013; Edelstein & Lowenstein, 2015). Not only is it a necessity, but employment provides an individual with a sense of pride and self-satisfaction by reaffirming that they can support themselves.

A study by Stewart et al. (2014) used data from three states, California, Minnesota and North Carolina to study the employment rate outcomes of former foster youth. The findings of this study showed that low rates of employment and earning persisted for age-out youth compared to the low-income and national samples through age 24 in all three states and age 30 for North Carolina (Stewart et al., 2014). Although federal and state initiative have focused over time on the extension of foster care to age 21, the finding of this study suggest that former foster care youth continue to struggle even up to age 30 (Stewart et al., 2014). Suggesting that extending foster care just to age 21 is not sufficient.

This sense of pride is needed and often times desired by foster youth. Foster youth live their life from one home to the next, building feelings of unworthiness and unlove to themselves. Having a job and knowing they do not need to rely on a care provider or anyone else fills them with pride. For young adults, longer durations of unemployment were associated with higher levels of depressive symptoms of (Mossakowski, 2009). Feelings of depression can lead to substance usage to avoid those feelings, which is often associated with criminal activity. Criminal activity leads to incarceration, and the slippery slope continues from there.

### **Incarceration**

Studies that follow foster youth over time find that they are more likely than others to experience incarceration and that incarcerated adults are disproportionately more likely to have been in foster care (Youngmin & Wildeman, 2018). Foster youth aging out of care report high levels of engagement in delinquent behaviors and legal system involvement. Some of this

involvement can include but is not limited to, arrests, convictions, and incarceration during their juvenile years and they are at high risk for continued engagement in criminal activity as adults (Courtney et al., 2011; Reilly, 2003; Southerland, Casanueva, & Ringeisen, 2009; Vaughn, Shook, & McMillen, 2008, as cited in Lee et al., 2015).

The main reason for a child to be removed from their homes is due to abuse and neglect. Research indicates that the experience of abuse and neglect is related to legal criminal involvement (Vaughn et al., 2008). Gangs provide that sense of family that foster teens are in need of. If a youth ages out of care with no support system, they will look for one themselves, and this leads to criminal activity. Fifteen percent of prisoners aged 18 to 21 reported ever being in foster care (Youngmin & Wildeman, 2018).

Every human being has the need and desire to be loved, wanted, appreciated, and have a sense of belonging. Desiring these feelings is no different for youth in foster care, on the contrary, the need for those feeling is expanded. These youth were separated from their loved ones and are left feeling as if they do not belong. It is human instinct to navigate toward what or who will fill the void we desire, and many times we do not pay attention to whether it is good for us or not. This is often times why teens and young adults lean towards gang affiliation activity.

### **Homelessness**

As youth age out of the child welfare system, they are more likely than their peers to experience housing instability and homelessness (Schelbe, 2018). For most young people, the transition to adulthood is a gradual process that includes family members' social and emotional support. As a result, they become less dependent on their parents and more prepared to meet their own needs over time. However, when a youth does not possess any social support, they do not



have family they can fall back on during difficult times. Regardless of age and history, most individuals have family members they can ask for help during difficult times.

For example, if they fall ill and cannot keep up with their employment, most individuals have a support system that can offer them a place to stay until they recover and can land on their own two feet once again. Unfortunately, former foster youth do not share this luxury; many were removed at young ages, leaving them with little communication to their family of origin, or they simply know that going back to their family was not a healthy environment for them. Research has found youth aging out of foster care experience a high level of housing instability with over 40% of youth in one study experiencing housing instability in the first two years after leaving care (Schelbe, 2018). Narendorf et al. (2020) states that young adults experiencing homelessness have been found to have high rates prior involvement with the foster care system.

Foster youth in the U.S often face a multitude of adverse outcomes, including elevated rates of adult poverty, and disproportionately high levels of adult homelessness (Nadon, 2020). Among the populations at greatest risk for becoming homeless are the 25,000 to 30,000 youth who age out of the foster care system each year (Dworsky et al., 2013). An estimated 3.5 million young adults experience homelessness in any given year with approximately one-third of those youth reporting previous experience with foster care (Morton, Dworsky, & Samuels, 2017, as cited in Narendorf et al. (2020). Homelessness is not simply being homeless; homelessness brings on other negative consequences, such as substance abuse to survive the cold winters and burning summers, being exposed to criminalization, and women being victims of sexual abuse. As mentioned by Dworsky et al. (2013), youth who become homeless after aging out of the foster care system appear to experience many of the same problems as other homeless

individuals, such as high rates of mental health disorders, a high risk of physical or sexual victimization, and a lack of access to health care services.

A study completed by Dworsky et al. concluded that youth aging out of the foster care system are at higher risk of becoming homeless during their transition to adulthood (2013). This study resulted in nearly one-third of the study participants were homeless at some point after leaving foster care (Dworsky et al., 2013). The higher relative risk of becoming homeless associated with being male is consistent with the results of a study by Boesky et al., 1997 They found that the risk of becoming homeless declines for females but rises for males during the transition to adulthood (Dworsky et al., 2013). In the Midwestern Study, a longitudinal study of youth aging out of care in three Midwestern states, 31% of young adults who had aged out reported at least one night not having a place to stay or "couch surfing," staying with someone temporarily and often sleeping on a couch (Courtney et al., 2011). In a study completed by Narendorf et al. (2020) found that young adults experiencing homelessness without a history of foster care involvement had significantly lower childhood trauma scores and lower rates of lifetime mental health diagnoses compared to the youth that had foster care system involvement.

## **Parenthood**

There are endless amounts of reasons why young individuals choose to create a family of their own. However, in foster care, youth are more prone to experience parenthood early on with research suggesting a greater risk for early pregnancy or parenthood for this population (Svoboda, 2012). Aside from becoming parents at a young age, research has shown there to be higher risk for young mothers and their children. International medical and social research has consistently found that teenage parenthood is associated with higher risk for a number of negative outcomes for both mothers and children (Olausson, Cnattingius, & Goldenbergm 1997,

as cited in Vinnerljung et al., 2007). Some of these negatives consist of adverse pregnancy outcomes, like low birth weight, pre-term delivery, child maltreatment, low educational attainment among offspring, and intergenerational transmission of early parenthood (Vinnerljung et al., 2007).

Pregnancy among women in this population is nearly double national averages, with one third becoming pregnant by age 17 and nearly half of those experiencing repeat pregnancies by age 19 (Rouse et al., 2020 & Dworsky, 2009). Research suggests that remaining in care through extended foster care may protect against early pregnancy (Dworsky & Courtney, 2010); therefore, simply allowing youth to remain in care beyond age 18 years may translate into birth rate reductions. Young mothers aging out of foster care have high rates of repeat pregnancies; approximately 30% of teen mothers gave birth a second time before age 20 (Dworsky & DeCoursey, 2009; Putnam-Horstein & King, 2014, as cited in Radey et al. 2016). Recent research shows that by age 26, about half of young men who aged out of care in Illinois, Iowa, and Wisconsin are fathers compared to only about one quarter of similarly aged men interviewed in the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health; Harris et al., 2009, as cited by Hook & Courtney, 2013)

EFC has proven to reduce early parenthood in young foster youth; extending the option of obtaining services from age 21 to age 24 will provide further reduction to early parenthood rates. Youth desire a family, foster children that did not grow up with a sense family fall into the statistic often parenthood because they desire to have a family of their own. Many times, this is due to the fact that they age out of the system with no support system. If youth are enabled the opportunity to choose to stay in extended foster care up to the age of 24, this will grant them more time with resources and support.

## **Summary**

Foster youth experience multiple barriers to achieving a successful adult life. Young adults who do not have a history in foster care and come from advantaged backgrounds have a rigorous time navigating this transition with family support. Young adults with prior foster care history, extensive trauma, and mental health issues need extra support and resources for a longer duration to help them navigate their early adult life if they choose to. The interrelation between educational achievement, employment, incarceration, homelessness, and early parenthood are complexly intertwined and tend to predict a numerous life outcomes for youth in foster care.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Policy Analysis**

Chapter 3 offers a policy analysis of AB 12 including its intended impact, goals and historical analysis. Chapter 3 also examines past social welfare programs that have been implemented over the years to provide a better well-being to youth as they transition into adulthood and out of the child welfare system. The final section of Chapter 2 offers recommendations for change to AB 12.

In this chapter, I developed a policy framework to evaluate Assembly Bill 12. I have created my own framework combining elements from Segal (2007), Karger and Stoesz (2002), Popple and Leighninger (2004), and Barusch. The components of this framework are as follows:

- The problem (Segal 2007)
- Population Affected (Segal 2007)
- Implementation of Social Welfare Programs (Segal 2007)

- Intended Impact (Segal 2007)
- Historical Analysis (Karger and Stoesz 2002; Poppo and Leighninger 2004)
- Policy Description (Karger and Stoesz)
- Recommendations for Change

### **The Problem**

Transitioning from adolescence to independent adulthood is a challenging time. Although legally, adulthood starts at age 18 in the United States, most young adults rely on their parents and family members for significant support and guidance until their 20s and even beyond (Kimberlin, 2008). The support provided by parents and family often includes paying their college tuition, providing a home where they can live rent-free, or even repairing the consequences of a poor choice that was made. Parents and family provide a safety net and launchpad for most young adults entering adulthood (Kimberlin, 2008); however, youth who age out of foster care lack this safety net and support when they transition to adulthood. As a result, foster youth are more likely to encounter numerous adversities throughout their lives than other individuals. As discussed in Chapter 1, many eventually fall into homelessness, incarceration, unemployment, government assistance, poor mental and physical health, and unplanned pregnancy (Berzin, Rhodes, & Curtis, 2011, as cited in Greenson et al., 2020).

Involvement in foster care is strongly correlated with low education outcomes, increased substance use problems, and incarceration (Jung & LaLoonde, 2016, as cited in Santhiveeran et al., 2020). It is vital that foster youth are taught independent living skills due to their higher rates of incarceration and adverse childhood experiences that leave them at risk (Santhiveeran et al., 2020). Research conducted by Kerman, Barth, and Wildfire (2004) found that foster youth who utilized extended services had better outcomes than those who did not; however, a rapid decline

in functionality was seen after age 22 (Santhiveeran et al., 2020). After age 21, those receiving educational subsidies must take responsibility for their own tuition, in addition to housing and other costs (Santhiveeran et al., 2020).

### **Population Affected**

Foster youth can experience numerous negative impacting events, such as multiple placements, re-victimization, abuse, neglect, or trauma, in addition to the experiences that brought them to the attention of the child welfare system (Bender, Yang, Ferguson, & Thompson, 2015, as cited in Jones, 2019). This inconsistency often leads to a lack of preparedness for independent living and a delay in developing the life skills that are needed to transition into independent adulthood and become self-sufficient as adults (Naccarato & DeLorenzo, 2008, as cited in Jones, 2019). Youth in foster care constitutes one of the most educationally vulnerable populations at greater risk of school failure than children that are not in foster care (Davis, 2009). Research shows that non-minor dependents (NMDs) who go through the child welfare system have higher rates of unstable housing, low academic achievement, and lack of positive support (Rosenberg & Abbott, 2019, as cited in Jones, 2019).

AB12 youth and former foster youth have a limited time gap in the availability of services that are offered to them. When foster youth are unable to obtain essential life skills upon exiting child welfare services, they often wind up in legal trouble (Courtney et al., 2011, as cited in Santhiveeran et al., 2020). Despite the positive outcome for foster youth that participates in extended foster care services, no federal mandates provide funding for foster youth after age 21.

### **Implementation of Social Welfare Programs**

Over the years, policies and social welfare programs have been implemented to provide better well-being to youth as they transition into adulthood and out of the child welfare system.

These programs were designed to improve the well-being outcomes related to education, employment, housing, health/mental health, and relationships (Greeson et al., 2020). Since 1985, adolescents in foster care have been acknowledged as needing services and programs that are different than those provided for younger children in care (Courtney et al., 2017, as cited in Greeson et al., 2020). Governmental responsibility for children in foster care is shared between the federal, state, and local governments (Kimberlin, 2008).

Laws enacted at multiple levels of government have recognized the responsibility and the need to promote the successful adult functioning of youth as they leave the foster care system (Kimberlin, 2008). Since 1986, the federal government has funded an assortment of initiatives that are intended to support youth transitioning out of foster care to independent adulthood. The Independent Living Program was the first federal investment that was created to meet the needs of transition-age youth in foster care (Kimberlin, 2008)

### **The Independent Living Program (ILP)**

The Independent Living Initiative was the first policy that specifically aided former foster youth in the foster care system (Pasztor et al., 2017). This federal law was voluntary and provided funds to states that were willing to assist foster youth in developing independent living skills (Pasztor et al., 2017). Foster care started with the intent only to be temporary; youth would exit the system at the age of 18 without any independent life skills, abilities, or resources to live on their own (Davis, 2009). In 1986, under President Ronald Reagan, the Title IV-E Independent Living Initiative (Public Law 99-272) was signed into law. The Independent Living Program (ILP) was authorized under the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act, which provided started with funding to develop independent living services to foster youth between the ages of 16- 21 (Health and Human Services, 2008, as cited in Davis, 2009). The age limit was

originally 18 years old, but it was increased to 21 years of age because funding for ILP services expanded from \$70 million to \$140 million.

### **John H. Chafee Foster Care Act 1999**

The John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Act expanded a federal funding stream for independent living/transition services offered to youth ages 14 and older that were in or transitioning from foster care (Greeson et al., 2020). The Chafee Grant is a federal and state-funded grant subject to yearly available funds. It offers monetary support for current or former California foster youth to help pay for college or career and technical training (California Student Aid Commission, 2022). This grant does not have to be paid back. This grant is often used by youth to pay for childcare, rent, and transportation while they assist school. To qualify, the youth must be a current or former foster youth, have not reached their 26<sup>th</sup> birthday as of July 1<sup>st</sup> of the award year, and have not participated in the program for more than 5 years (whether consecutive or not) (California Student Aid Commission, 2022).

### **Transitional Housing Program**

The Transitional Housing Placement Program (THPP) was created in 1998 in response to the need for successful emancipation outcomes for emancipated foster youth (Davis, 2009). It is a licensed placement opportunity for youth in foster care between the ages of 16 and 18 years old. The goal of THPP is to help participants emancipate successfully by providing a safe environment for youth while they learn skills that can make them self-sufficient (CDSS, 2022). Support and supervision are provided by THPP agency staff, county social workers, and ILP coordinators.

### ***Transitional Housing Program - Plus***



The THP-Plus program was created by the California State Legislature and is overseen by the California Department of Social Services (Kimberlin, 2008). This program was designed in response to the alarming rates of homelessness among former foster youth (Food et al., 1997). The goal of THP-Plus is to provide a safe living environment while helping youth develop life skills for successful independent living. It offers up to 24 months of affordable housing or age 24, whichever comes first. Senate Bill 1252 allows an extension of the THP-Plus duration for 36 cumulative months and not more than 25 years of age (Food et al., 1997). To qualify for this extension, youth must be completing secondary education or attending post-secondary education, and this can also be an accredited vocational school (Food et al., 1997).

### **Intended Impact**

Assembly Bill 12 was established to allow current and former foster youth to extend their foster care services voluntarily and remain in the foster care system until the age of 21 years as non-minor dependents of the court (NMD). The main goal of AB12 is to increase positive outcomes for NMDs by providing the support and tools needed to transition into self-sufficient adults, to improve NMD's educational outcomes, develop independent living skills, and alleviate the ongoing housing barriers that many NMDs encounter throughout their life (California Department of Social Services, 2020, as cited in Jones, 2019). A study of former foster youth across three states in the Midwest found that support provided by these types of extended foster care services successfully reduced arrest incidence among this group (Lee, Courtney, & Hook, 2011, as cited in Santhiveeran et al., 2020).

A longitudinal study of 732 former foster youth conducted by Okpych and Courtney (2019) found that for each additional year spent in foster care past the age of 18, foster youth had a higher expectancy of enrolling in college, thereby promoting a more hopeful future

(Santhiveeran et al., 2020). Overall, various research on AB12 has found a positive impact on the outcomes of California foster youth who were able to continue child welfare services until age 21 (Santhiveeran et al., 2020).

### **Historical Background of The Policy- Karger and Stoesz 2002**

California Fostering Connections to Success Act, known more commonly as AB12, was first initially signed into law by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger on September 30th, 2010. AB12 was written by Assembly Member Jim Beall Jr. in conjunction with Speaker-Emeritus Karen Bass (Farina, 2019). California is one of the country's largest foster care populations, and it was also one of the first states to opt into its federal funding opportunity with its enactment of Assembly Bill 12 (Courtney, Dworsky, & Napolitano, 2013; The Alliance for Children's Rights et al., 2014, as cited in Farina, 2019). Throughout the years, AB12 and its extension of foster care benefits have been implemented over a three-year period (CAI, 2013, as cited in Farina, 2019).

On January 1st, 2012, foster youth in California who turned 18 years of age while in care had the option to stay in care until their 19<sup>th</sup> birthday. Despite the implementation of previous policies put into place, the youth continued to experience high rates of homelessness, poor educational achievement, and unemployment, which all continued to act as barriers to their ability to achieve independence (Jones, 2019). The need for youth needing services after the age of 19<sup>th</sup> was apparent; therefore, on or after January 1st, 2013, the age limit increased to 20 years old. The final extension of services was increased to age 21 as of January 1st, 2014 (Farina, 2019). By extending foster care services to the age of 21 years, foster youth had more time under the jurisdiction of the Child Welfare system to better prepare them for when they exit the system (Jones, 2019).

As the years passed, AB12 has had a series of subsequent amendments, including Assembly Bill 212 in 2011, Assembly Bill 1712 in 2012, Senate Bill 1013, and most recently, Assembly Bill 787 (CAI, 2013, Courtney et al., 2013; The Alliance for Children's Rights et al., 2014, as cited in Farina, 2019). These varieties of bills clarified certain provisions and regulations of AB12 while also addressing edibility gaps and re-entry (CAI, 2013, Courtney et al., 2013; The Alliance for Children's Rights et al., 2014, as cited in Farina, 2019).

### **Description of the policy - Karger and Stoesz 2002**

Assembly Bill 12 allows for current dependents or wards of the Juvenile Court to continue to have an open Social Service or Probation care and re-enter care up to the age of 21 if specific criteria are met. To qualify for AB12 services, foster youth must meet at least one of the following:

- Working towards completing high school (diploma, GED, High School Proficiency Certificate)
- Enrolled in college classes or a vocational school
- Enrolled in a program that helps you get a job
- Work at least 80 hours per month
- Be unable to participate in any of the activities listed above as a result of a medical condition (CDSS, 2021).

The benefits of AB12 participation include continued support towards education/employment, support to develop permanent connections with caring adults when applicable, ongoing Independent Living Program (ILP) services, case management, including monthly social worker contact, and continued funding for housing (CDSS, 2021).

## **Recommendations for Change**

Based on this analysis, the following recommendations are made:

1. Extension of AB12 services to age 25
2. Feasibility Study
3. Pilot Program

### **Extension of AB12 Services to Age 25**

The intention of AB12 is to provide former foster youth assistance and support to increase favorable outcomes for non-minor dependents by preparing and supporting them in their transition into becoming self-sufficient adults. Additionally, extended foster care supports NMDs in advancing their education, increasing employment opportunities, and decreasing the risk of incarceration and homelessness. Therefore, if the purpose of AB12 is to increase positive outcomes in all domains of their life, then extending the age limit from 21 to 25 is needed.

#### ***Educational outcomes***

Most degrees take 4-5 years to complete. More time can be added depending on the circumstances. For example, classes might be impacted; therefore, students need to wait an additional semester to enroll in that class. Other circumstances might include needing to be part-time in their education to work or manage life responsibilities with children. After the age of 21, NMDs should be able to have the opportunity to decide if AB12 is beneficial to them and if they want to continue as they finish their education. Realistically, completing higher education by age 21 is not common. It is more challenging for this population as youth are also coping with traumatic events they endured throughout their life.

#### ***Employment***

Any individual entering the workforce with just a high school degree will likely start off with a minimum wage salary. Being new to the workforce and the only source of income is from that job, living on your own will be difficult. Paying rent, buying groceries, paying for transportation to work, and paying for your basic needs all on minimum wage is difficult. Most commonly, that individual has support of immediate or extended family members that are there in case they need first and months' rent or transportation. Whatever the case might be, they have some sort of support as a safety net if needed. Former foster youth lack that familiar support a high percentage of the time.

Once former foster youth they age out, it is just them looking out for themselves. If they decide to continue in extended care, they have that support aside from their paycheck. Eventually, all employees are eligible for a raise or a higher position within their employment; however, that usually occurs after a few years of working in that specific employment position. Extending foster care services from age 21 to 25 allows youth that are just focusing on work, to have a livable income and support aside from their minimum wage paycheck while they qualify for a raise or higher position.

### ***Incarceration and homelessness***

Extending AB12 to increase educational outcomes has other positive benefits such as lowering the risk of incarceration and homelessness and increasing the employment rate. AB12 provides more than the opportunity to succeed in life; youth are also given the support of services that can decrease their obstacles to success. The longer the time these youth have in EFC, the more time they have to establish lasting positive relationships and connections that can become part of their support system. The longer this population is in EFC, the more stable

relationships they will build with other classmates, college counselors, and other former foster youth that they might meet during their social service agency activities.

The more meaningful relationships they establish, the less likely they are to become homeless or participate in criminal activity, because they will have a support system to lean on if needed. These meaningful relationships will become their safety net, they might not have their blood family to support them, but they will have the family they chose and created. Extending services allows for this to happen because youth are focused on their education, working, and attending services. They are not worried about where they might sleep, when they will eat, or worried about their future with no education or job. EFC allows them to focus on their well-being and future and make healthy connections in the process.

### **Feasibility Study**

A feasibility study can be conducted to consider all the factors needed to extend AB12 services from age 21 to 25. Some of the factors that need to be studied are the potential cost of extending AB12 service from age 21 to 25 years, the barriers, and risk assessment. In addition, this study can analyze the viability of this proposed recommendation to determine if it can be successful and beneficial in the long run.

### **Pilot Program**

A pilot program can be created to test out the efficiency of extending service and how beneficial it can be in the long run. This pilot program can have a change in the original eligibility criteria by having it open for youth that are in college. Having this pilot program available to former foster youth that are at the age of 21 and still pursuing their education is an ideal starting point. Depending on the overall success of this pilot program, criteria can be extended to those that might not be pursuing their education but are currently employed and still

need the services provided by AB12. If the pilot program proves to be overall providing beneficial support to this population, the permanent extension of AB12 services can be established.

### **Conclusion**

Assembly Bill 12 is pivotal in the lives of many individuals. Throughout the years and after considerable research conducted, AB12 has proven to be beneficial in the lives of those that participate. In addition, it has provided better positive outcomes of success for many former foster youths in all domains of their lives. Former foster youth need equity, and for some, the need for additional years after the age of 21 in extended foster care is pivotal. Extending AB12 services from age 21 to 25 and providing this population the opportunity to continue in services if they desire and need to can be what keeps them on their path to success.

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## Appendix

Appendix A

**Assembly Bill No. 12**  
**CHAPTER 559**

An act to amend Section 17552 of the Family Code, to amend Sections 1501.1 and 1505 of, and to add Section 1502.7 to, the Health and Safety Code, and to amend Sections 241.1, 293, 295, 297, 303, 317, 358.1, 360, 361.45, 361.5, 366, 366.21, 366.22, 366.25, 366.3, 366.4, 388, 727.2, 785, 10609.4, 11008.15, 11155.5, 11253, 11363, 11376, 11400, 11401, 11401.1, 11401.4, 11402, 11403.2, 11405, 11450, 11450.16, 11454.5, 11461, 11464, 11465, 11466.23, 11466.24, 13754, 13757, 16120, 16123, 16501, 16501.1, 16501.25, 16503, 16504.5, 16507.3, 16507.4, 16507.6, and 16508 of, to amend, repeal, and add Sections 391 and 11403 of, to add Sections 300.3, 366.31, 10101.2, 11217, 11253.3, 11401.05, and 11402.2 to, to add Article 4.7 (commencing with Section 11385) to Chapter 2 of Part 3 of Division 9 of, to repeal and add Section 11401.5 of, and to repeal and add Article 4.5 (commencing with Section 11360) of Chapter 2 of Part 3 of Division 9 of, the Welfare and Institutions Code, relating to foster children.

[ Approved by Governor September 30, 2010. Filed with Secretary of State September 30, 2010. ]

**LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST**

AB 12, Beall. California Fostering Connections to Success Act.

(1) Existing law provides for the out-of-home placement of children who are unable to remain in the custody and care of their parent or parents, and provides for a range of child welfare, foster care, and adoption assistance services for which these children may be eligible.

Existing federal law, the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008, revises and expands federal programs and funding for certain foster and adopted children.

Existing law, the California Community Care Facilities Act, provides for the licensure and regulation of community care facilities, including facilities that provide care for foster children, by the State Department of Social Services. A violation of these provisions is a misdemeanor.

Existing law authorizes the placement of children with varying designations and varying needs in the same facility under specified circumstances.

This bill would extend these provisions to also include non-minor dependents commencing January 1, 2012. The bill would define the term "non-minor dependent" and related terms for purposes of the bill.

This bill, commencing no later than July 1, 2012, would require the department, in consultation with specified government and other entities, to revise regulations regarding health and safety standards for licensing foster family homes and community care facilities in which non-minor dependents of the juvenile court are placed under the responsibility of the county welfare or probation department or an Indian tribe that has entered into a specified agreement with the department.

Under existing law, the California Community Care Facilities Act does not apply to designated categories of facilities, including, among others, the home of a relative caregiver or nonrelative extended family member of a child placed by a juvenile court, as specified.

This bill would include, on and after January 1, 2012, a supervised independent living setting, and a THP-Plus-Foster Care placement, as established by the bill, for a non-minor dependent placed by the juvenile court on the list of facilities to which the act does not apply. The bill would require the department to convene a workgroup to establish a new rate structure for THP-Plus-Foster Care placements, and would require counties to submit to the department a plan setting forth how the county would provide for the THP-Plus-Foster Care program, as specified. By requiring counties to perform additional duties with respect to implementation of the THP-Plus-Foster Care program, this bill would impose a state-mandated local program.

(2) Existing law establishes the jurisdiction of the juvenile court, which is permitted to adjudge certain children to be dependents of the court under certain circumstances.

This bill would expand the jurisdiction of the juvenile court, effective January 1, 2012, to include a child who had been previously removed from the custody of his or her parent and placed in foster care, who was also declared a delinquent ward of the court, as specified. The bill would authorize a court to modify an existing order with respect to the delinquent ward under these circumstances and assert dependency jurisdiction, as specified.

Existing law authorizes a juvenile court to retain jurisdiction over any person who is found to be a dependent child of the juvenile court until the ward or dependent child attains 21 years of age.

Existing law places certain minors for whom a guardianship has been established within the jurisdiction of the juvenile court.

This bill would expand the court's jurisdiction to include, on and after January 1, 2012, a non-minor dependent who is receiving specified kinship guardian assistance payments.

This bill would extend the court's jurisdiction to a ward who has been placed into foster care or a dependent who reaches the age of majority before jurisdiction is terminated until the non-minor reaches 21 years of age. The bill, commencing January 1, 2012, would allow a non-minor who left foster care at or after the age of majority to petition the court to have dependency or delinquency jurisdiction resumed, in accordance with a provision of existing law. The bill would authorize a local entity to obtain specified background information regarding a non-minor who may be placed in a foster care setting with minor dependent children under these circumstances. By making various conforming changes in provisions relating to the duties of local agency employees in dependency and delinquency proceedings, this bill would create a state-mandated local program.

(3) Existing law authorizes a social worker to place a child whom the court has ordered to be removed from his or her home into one of 7 designated placements, including the home of a noncustodial parent or the approved home of a relative.

This bill would add to this list of approved placements, on and after January 1, 2012, a supervised independent living setting, as defined by the bill, for a non-minor dependent between 18 and 21 years of age.

(4) Existing law authorizes a change in the placement of a child on an emergency basis due to the sudden unavailability of a foster caregiver.

This bill, on and after January 1, 2012, would require, under these emergency circumstances, when a non-minor dependent is placed in the home of a relative or nonrelative, that the home be approved using the health and safety standards established by the department for the placement of non-minor dependents, as required by the bill. The bill would require the department, in consultation with specified stakeholders, to prepare for the implementation of these provisions by publishing all-county letters or similar instructions from the director, pending the adoption of emergency regulations, as specified.

(5) Existing law requires the status of dependent children to be periodically reviewed, and requires the court to consider the safety of the child and make certain determinations.

This bill similarly would require a status review for every non-minor dependent who is in foster care to be conducted pursuant to specified provisions. This bill, commencing January 1, 2012, would require the court to ensure that the child's transitional independent living case plan includes a plan for the child to meet one or more criteria that would allow the child to remain a non-minor dependent, and to ensure that the child has been informed of his or her right to seek the termination of dependency jurisdiction.

This bill, on and after October 1, 2012, would authorize a court to continue jurisdiction over a non-minor dependent with a permanent plan of long-term foster care, and would designate the responsibilities of the court in this regard.

(6) Existing law establishes procedures for a hearing to terminate the court's jurisdiction over a dependent child who has reached the age of majority.

This bill would delete the existing hearing procedures as of January 1, 2012, and would set forth revised hearing requirements for determining whether to terminate or continue dependency jurisdiction. The bill would require the court to continue dependency jurisdiction for a child participating in certain educational or vocational activities. This bill would impose various duties on county welfare departments in connection with the hearing process, thereby creating a state-mandated local program.

This bill would require a court to authorize a trial period of independence from foster care, as defined, when it terminates dependency jurisdiction over a non-minor dependent youth, as authorized by specified federal law.

(7) Existing law requires the State Department of Social Services to develop statewide standards for the Independent Living Program for emancipated foster youth, which is established and funded pursuant to federal law to assist these individuals in making the transition to self-sufficiency. Under existing law, the department is required to develop and adopt emergency regulations that counties are required to meet when administering the program, that are achievable within available resources.

This bill would require the department to develop and adopt the Independent Living Program regulations on or before July 1, 2012, and would specify that the regulations be achievable within both available program resources and available federal funds for case management and case plan review provided for in the federal act. The bill would require the department, by a specified date, to



review and develop modifications to the Independent Living Program to also serve the needs of non-minor dependent youth, as specified.

(8) Existing law prohibits benefits under the CalWORKs program from being paid to or on behalf of any child who has attained 18 years of age, unless the child is engaged in specified educational or training activities.

This bill, on and after January 1, 2012, also would authorize a non-minor dependent, as defined, to receive CalWORKs aid, as specified.

(9) Existing law authorizes a child who is declared a ward or dependent child of the court who is 16 years of age or older, to retain specified cash resources and still remain eligible to receive public social services.

This bill would apply this provision, on and after January 1, 2012, to a current or former dependent child or ward of the court between 18 and 21 years of age, who is participating in a transitional independent living case plan pursuant to the federal act.

(10) Existing law, through the Kinship Guardianship Assistance Payment Program (Kin-GAP), which is a part of the CalWORKs program, provides aid on behalf of eligible children who are placed in the home of a relative caretaker. The program is funded by state and county funding and available federal funds. Existing eligibility requirements for the Kin-GAP Program include a requirement that a child has been living with a relative for at least 12 consecutive months.

This bill would reduce the above requirement to 6 months, consistent with federal law. To the extent that this would increase duties of counties administering the Kin-GAP program, this bill would impose a state-mandated local program.

This bill would revise the Kin-GAP Program, by repealing the existing program and enacting similar provisions, effective on the date that the Director of Social Services executes a declaration, as required by the bill, declaring that increased federal financial participation in the Emergency Contingency Fund for State TANF Programs is no longer available pursuant to the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) (Public Law 111-5), or subsequent federal legislation that maintains or extends increased federal financial participation to provide state-funded assistance for youth not eligible under the federally funded program and would require the state to exercise its option under specified federal law to establish a kinship guardianship assistance payment program, with components as set forth in the bill, for youth eligible for federal financial participation. This bill would require, as a condition of receiving payments under the revised Kin-GAP Program provisions, that a county welfare agency, probation department, or Indian tribe, as applicable, negotiate and enter into a written, binding kinship guardianship assistance agreement with the relative guardian of an eligible child, as prescribed. The bill also would specify the state's share of cost for the support and care of children eligible for Kin-GAP benefits. The bill would make related conforming changes.

This bill, under the revised Kin-GAP Program provisions, also would require a county, at the time of the annual redetermination of state-funded Kin-GAP benefits, to determine whether a child was receiving federal AFDC-FC benefits before receiving Kin-GAP, while a dependent child or ward of the juvenile court. The bill would require the county to reassign these children to the county social worker for information regarding transition to the federal Kin-GAP program.

By increasing county responsibilities, this bill would impose a state-mandated local program.

(11) Existing law establishes the Aid to Families with Dependent Children-Foster Care (AFDC-FC) program, under which counties provide payments to foster care providers on behalf of qualified

children in foster care. The program is funded by a combination of federal, state, and county funds. Under existing law, AFDC-FC benefits are available, with specified exceptions, on behalf of qualified children under 18 years of age. Existing law requires a county to annually redetermine AFDC-FC eligibility, as specified.

This bill would require the department to amend its foster care state plan required under specified federal law, to extend AFDC-FC benefits, commencing January 1, 2012, to specified individuals up to 21 years of age, in accordance with a designated provision of federal law. The bill would repeal the existing annual redetermination requirement.

This bill would extend AFDC-FC benefits to non-minor dependents, as specified, on and after January 1, 2012, including revising AFDC-FC rate provisions to apply to these individuals.

This bill would require an annual review of a child's or non-minor's payment amount, as specified. The bill also would require a county to contribute to the cost of extending aid to eligible non-minor dependents who have reached 18 years of age and who are under the jurisdiction of the county, and to the cost of providing permanent placement services and administering the AFDC-FC program, as specified. The bill would provide that the county's total contribution for these purposes would not exceed the amount of savings realized by the county as a result of the implementation of the federally funded Kin-GAP Program.

By expanding eligibility and duties under the county-administered AFDC-FC program, the bill would impose a state-mandated local program.

(12) Under existing law, in order to be eligible for AFDC-FC benefits, a child must be placed in one of 8 designated placements.

This bill would add to the eligible AFDC-FC placements, with respect to an otherwise eligible youth over 18 years of age, a supervised independent living setting. By increasing county duties in administering the AFDC-FC program, the bill would impose a state-mandated local program.

(13) Under existing law, a minor between 16 and 18 years of age who is eligible for AFDC-FC benefits and who meets other specified requirements is eligible for certain transitional housing placement program services in a participating county.

This bill, commencing January 1, 2012, would make a non-minor dependent who is eligible for AFDC-FC benefits also eligible for transitional housing benefits.

This bill would revise existing provisions relating to the resolution of certain foster care overpayments to apply to Kin-GAP guardian homes and payments on behalf of non-minor dependents residing in supervised independent living settings.

(14) Under existing law, a parent or caretaker relative is ineligible to receive CalWORKs aid when he or she has received aid for a cumulative total of 60 months. Existing law excludes from this calculation months when designated conditions exist.

This bill, commencing January 1, 2012, would additionally exclude from the above calculation months when a recipient is a non-minor dependent participating in educational or training activities, as prescribed.

Moneys from the General Fund are continuously appropriated to pay for a portion of CalWORKs aid grant costs, and for the state's share of AFDC-FC costs.

This bill would provide that no appropriation from the General Fund would be made for the purposes of implementing these provisions.

By increasing duties of counties administering the AFDC-FC program, this bill also would impose a state-mandated local program.

(15) Existing law, the federal Social Security Act, provides for benefits for eligible beneficiaries, including survivorship and disability benefits and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits for, among others, blind and disabled children. The act authorizes a person or entity to be appointed as a representative payee for a beneficiary who cannot manage or direct the management of his or her money. Existing law also provides for State Supplemental Payments (SSP) in supplementation of SSI benefits.

Existing law, the Foster Care Social Security and Supplemental Security Income Assistance Program, requires the county to apply to be appointed representative payee on behalf of a child beneficiary in its custody when no other appropriate party is available to serve.

This bill would additionally require the county, when a child beneficiary reaches 18 years of age and elects to remain in the custody of the county as a non-minor dependent, to provide specified information to the youth regarding the process for becoming his or her own payee, and to assist the youth in this process, unless becoming his or her own payee is not in the youth's best interests, as specified. It would, as part of this process, express the intent of the Legislature that the county ensure that the non-minor receive direct payment of SSI benefits at least one month each year.

Existing law requires every youth who is in foster care and nearing emancipation to be screened by the county for potential eligibility for SSI benefits, as prescribed. Existing law authorizes a county, under certain circumstances, to forgo a youth's federally funded AFDC-FC benefits in the month of application for SSI benefits, and instead to use state resources to fund the placement, in order to ensure that the youth meets all of the SSI eligibility requirements.

This bill would establish similar requirements for a county child welfare agency, with respect to a non-minor dependent who has been approved for SSI payments but is receiving an AFDC-FC or Kin-GAP benefit that includes federal financial participation in an amount that exceeds the SSI payment, causing the SSI payment to be placed in suspense.

By placing new duties on county child welfare agencies, this bill would impose a state-mandated local program.

(16) Existing law provides for the Adoption Assistance Program (AAP), to be established and administered by the State Department of Social Services or the county, for the purpose of benefiting children residing in foster homes by providing the stability and security of permanent homes. The AAP provides for the payment by the department and counties, of cash assistance to eligible families that adopt eligible children, and bases the amount of the payment on the needs of the child and the resources of the family to meet those needs. Existing law sets forth eligibility requirements for the AAP, including that a child must be under 18 years of age, or under 21 years of age with a mental or physical disability that warrants continued assistance.

This bill would additionally include children under 21 years of age who turned 16 years of age before the adoption assistance agreement became effective, and is involved in designated education or employment activities, or is incapable of engaging in these activities due to a medical condition. Payment of adoption assistance would be available for these individuals commencing January 1, 2012, as long as specified federal funds remain available and the state continues to exercise its option to extend payments up to 21 years of age, pursuant to the federal act.

(17) Existing law requires the state, through the department and county welfare departments, to establish and support a public system of statewide child welfare services. Under existing law, the

term "child welfare services" includes various services provided on behalf of children alleged to be the victims of child abuse, neglect, or exploitation. Existing law establishes the case plan as the foundation and central unifying tool in the provision of child welfare services.

This bill would revise the definition of child welfare services to include transitional independent living services, as needed in connection with the provision of other permanent placement services. The bill would revise the requirements for the case plan, effective January 1, 2012, with respect to non-minor dependents, to address the developmental needs of young adults, as specified. The bill would also require the case plan to specify why a group home placement, if made, is necessary for the non-minor dependent's transition to independent living, and would require the non-minor dependent to participate and develop, and to sign, his or her case plan, commencing January 1, 2012. By increasing the duties of counties in preparing case plans, the bill would impose a state-mandated local program.

This bill would revise the definition of a whole family foster home, to include a home that provides foster care for a non-minor dependent parent and his or her child, for purposes of the AFDC-FC program. Effective January 1, 2012, the bill would require that the same rate be paid for the care and supervision of the child of a non-minor dependent as is paid for the child of a teen parent in a whole family foster home. The bill would make other provisions applicable to a teen parent, for purposes of the child welfare services program, also applicable to certain non-minor dependents living in a whole family foster home.

Existing law limits child welfare services for voluntarily placed children to a period not to exceed 6 consecutive months, as specified.

This bill would, instead, limit the services to a period not to exceed 180 days, and would make conforming changes.

(18) (A) This bill would incorporate additional changes in Section 11402 of the Welfare and Institutions Code proposed by SB 1214, that would become operative only if SB 1214 and this bill are both chaptered and become effective on or before January 1, 2011, and this bill is chaptered last.

(B) The bill would also incorporate additional changes in Section 16501.1 of the Welfare and Institutions Code proposed by SB 945 and SB 1353, to be operative only if this bill and one or both of the other bills are chaptered and become effective on or before January 1, 2011, and this bill is chaptered last.

(19) 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 with regard to certain mandates no reimbursement is required by this act for a specified reason.

With regard to any other mandates, this bill would provide that, if the Commission on State Mandates determines that the bill contains costs so mandated by the state, reimbursement for those costs shall be made pursuant to the statutory provisions noted above.