

PARENTING FOSTER YOUTH:

A Closer Look at a Neglected Population

BACKGROUND:

Foster youth who are parenting make up a particularly vulnerable population in California. They are a population for whom data is lacking and difficult to track, resources are scarce, and needs are complex. Parenting foster youth need more placement options, mental health support, and financial resources.



PARENTING FOSTER YOUTH:

There are approximately 1,000 parenting foster youth in California. Within their first three years of life, roughly 50 percent of those children are the subject of a CPS report and 19 percent are removed by the child welfare system. Between January 2022 and September 2023, 210 youth received the Expectant Parent Payment (issued three months prior childbirth), and between September 2022 and September 2023, 1,455 foster youth received the infant supplement, which begins the month the infant is born and continues as long as the non-dependent

infant continues to reside with the parent in an eligible placement.

PLACEMENT:

Parenting foster youth who do not have familial relationships or have more complex needs have far fewer options than other foster youth. Resource Families and Short Term Residential Therapeutic Programs may meet their needs but there are not enough of them. In California, there are only 10 licensed residential programs that serve this population and they provide only a total of 49 beds for mothers living with their children.

MENTAL HEALTH:

Up to 80 percent of foster youth are living with mental health issues. Studies have found that 90 percent of foster youth have experienced trauma and an additional study found that about 2/3 of parenting foster youth had experienced sexual abuse.

CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION (CSE):

While child maltreatment leads to involvement in the child welfare system, it can also lead to the same characteristics that are targeted by exploiters in sex traffic. Almost one in seven young people were in an open child welfare case when CSE concerns were first documented. While this population is difficult to study, reports show that between 50 and 80 percent of CSE youth have been involved in the child welfare system. CSE can lead to symptoms of trauma, system involvement, and pregnancy, among many impacts.

LACK OF RESOURCES:

Resources for parenting foster youth such as placement and mental health support vary widely across counties in California. While there are financial supports in place for this population in the Expectant Parent Payment and the Infant Supplement, the rates no longer cover the costs. The infant supplement rate has not been increased in eight years despite dramatic increases in the cost of living, diapers, formula, and other supplies.



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