

FOSTER FAMILIES

Adopted by Convention Delegates May 1999

Reviewed by Board of Managers April 2010

- WHEREAS, PTA is concerned with the health and welfare of all children and their families; and
- WHEREAS, The pool of people willing to be traditional foster parents has decreased, leading to a foster care system in crisis; and
- WHEREAS, The recruitment of capably trained, educated and licensed foster parents is constantly on the decline, and retention of new foster homes is difficult without the financial and emotional support needed; and
- WHEREAS, The foster parent reimbursement is not sufficient to cover the actual cost of care, and liability insurance for foster parents does not exist in most counties; and
- WHEREAS, Kinship care (grandparents and other relatives) is supported at rates lower than foster parent rates; and
- WHEREAS, Upon reaching the age of 18, even though they may still be in high school, foster children must leave the foster care system with no support from state or county and are unprepared for independent living, now therefore be it
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA promote an awareness of the need for more trained foster families and for more people willing to provide supportive foster care, kinship care, and guardianship for children in the dependency system; and be it further
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA support legislation that would provide kinship care with the same remuneration as non-kinship foster care; and be it further
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA support legislation that would increase the reimbursement to foster parents and kinship foster parents to cover costs for the needs of the children in their care; and be it further
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA support the concept that foster children at the age of 18 may continue in foster care, kinship care or guardianship to complete their high school education and be prepared for independent living, and be it further
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA support the concept of the establishment of a support network for adult children leaving the foster care system as they transition into independent living situations.

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BACKGROUND SUMMARY

Historically, foster care dates back to the late 1870s, when it was considered to be an act of humanity and prudence. To guard against the pure mercenary who might attempt to become a foster parent, reimbursement of costs was always kept at a minimum. For years it was believed that foster parents were being well paid. At no time has payment covered all the costs. As costs of caring for children increase, as women move into the labor market, and as the number of single parents increases, the pool of people willing to be traditional foster parents results in a shortage of foster families. Many needy children do not have a foster family.

Foster families receive insufficient funds to take care of the simple needs of the children. Many of the foster children come from homes where mothers have abused drugs and the babies need special care or have other problems. The cost of child care is not provided for foster families, and a baby sitter must be a “licensed” baby sitter which represents an added cost to foster families. Last year, the Foster Families Association requested a 25% increase in payment. The Legislature agreed to a 6% increase.

During the past legislative session, several bills which would have made recruiting foster homes easier were vetoed by the Governor or failed passage in the Legislature.

- AB 1820 (Honda) Foster Children: Child Care—would have reimbursed foster parents working outside the home for the cost of licensed child care. In addition, child care costs would have covered foster parents participating in required foster parent training, or fulfilling necessary foster care-related administrative duties.
- AB 2043 (Goldsmith) Foster Care: Provider Reimbursement—would have increased the reimbursement rate by 19% effective January 1, 1999.

At the present time, foster children upon reaching the age of 18 must leave the foster care system with no support from state or county. Many are unprepared for independent living and may need skills to survive “on their own.” The Youth Connection group is looking for legislators to sponsor three bills:

- 1) to provide a stipend for higher education;
- 2) to extend MediCal to age 22; and
- 3) to extend foster care until age 21.

The California State PTA is concerned for the well-being of all children and youth. Support for foster families can help ensure that all children will have the opportunity to grow up in a caring family environment.