



Office of the Governor

ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER
THE PEOPLE'S GOVERNOR

PRESS RELEASE

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Governor Schwarzenegger Signs Legislation to Better Equip Youth in Foster Care with Resources and Information

Building on his commitment to youth in foster care, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger today signed legislation to ensure that youth in foster care aging out of the system are as equipped as possible to access resources and services, including financial aid, career services and other benefits.

"Our youth in foster care deserve the best California has to offer, which is why it's so important that we provide them with the tools they need to succeed," Governor Schwarzenegger said. "This bill will better equip our youth as they age out of the system by ensuring them access to resources and services so they can apply for jobs and financial aid for college."

AB 2310 by Assemblymember Bill Maze (R-Visalia) requires every county welfare department to make sure documentation that includes any known information regarding a youth's Indian heritage and family photographs are provided at the time they age out of the foster care system. It also requires that these youth be provided a "proof of dependency" letter that includes pertinent information and documentation to help them obtain benefits and services, such as extended Medi-Cal eligibility, and declares that a driver's license satisfies the requirement that youth exiting foster care are provided a form of state identification.

The Governor also signed AB 2483 by Assembly Speaker Karen Bass (D-Los Angeles), which requires that minor parents who are in the foster care system consult with their counsel prior to voluntarily placing their own child into foster care or into a family maintenance program. This will ensure they are aware of their rights and options as a parent in the process.

In addition to today's action, the Governor's Department of Social Services worked in conjunction with the United States Social Security Administration to quickly adopt a federal provision this year that will ensure implementation of AB 1331 by Assemblymember Noreen Evans (D-Santa Rosa), signed last year by the Governor. It will allow eligible disabled foster youth to apply for Supplemental Security Income benefits months before they turn 18, making it possible for them to leave foster care with approved benefits in place rather than waiting months to receive them.

The Governor also proclaimed May 2008 as "Foster Care Month" to applaud the foster families and public and private agencies that are working to build brighter futures for our children and youth in foster care.

Last year, the Governor signed a series of bills to further enhance foster care services in California. And in 2006, the Governor signed a package of legislation designed to improve California's foster care system and the safety of children entrusted to the state's care. Also in 2006, the Governor secured a first-of-its-kind federal waiver that provides unprecedented flexibility by allowing counties to use federal funds to support innovative strategies that keep children out of foster care and in safe, stable homes.