

# **NO FAMILY FOR THE HOLIDAYS IN SACRAMENTO**



**California's Capital Lags Far Behind Most Every  
Other Major California County in Placing  
Foster Children with Family Members.  
Most Harmed: Sacramento County's Black Children.**



## **“KINSHIP CARE” MEANS BEING CARED FOR BY FAMILY**

In the language of the foster care system, when a court finds that a child has been abused or neglected and must be removed from the home of their caregivers, “kinship care” describes placing the child with family members or known adults rather than being placed in the care of strangers.<sup>1</sup> “Different states, counties, and agencies refer to these practices under several names, including family finding, relative placement, relative care, kinship care, and kinship placement.

The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) often uses the term “kinship care.” The CDSS’s website defines “kinship care” as the “care of a foster child by a relative.”<sup>2</sup> The website goes further to explain that “[i]n California’s foster care system, kinship care includes nonrelative extended family members (NREFMs). Nonrelative extended family members are “any adult caregiver with an established familial or mentoring relationship with the child. The parties may include relatives of the child, teachers, medical professionals, clergy, neighbors, and family friends.”<sup>3</sup>

## **FINDING AND PLACING FOSTER CHILDREN WITH FAMILIES — THE STAKES FOR BLACK CHILDREN ARE FAR, FAR HIGHER THAN FOR ANY GROUP OF CHILDREN**

Black children in California make up 5% of the population,<sup>4</sup> Hispanic 52%, and White 24%. Astonishingly, in California the populations represented in foster care are 21% Black, 50% Hispanic, 22% White.<sup>5</sup> When it comes to Sacramento County, the numbers are worse. In Sacramento County more than a third of all foster children are Black while 11% of the County’s population is Black.<sup>6</sup> **Whether or not Sacramento County’s foster children are placed with their extended families is indisputably an issue that affects the County’s Black children more intensely than any other group of children.**

## **FAMILIES ARE BETTER FOR CHILDREN**

It is now widely understood that “[c]hildren placed into kinship care had fewer behavioral problems...than children who were placed into foster care. This finding supports efforts to

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<sup>1</sup> See (PL 110-351); Welf. & Inst. Code §§ 309(e), 628(d)(2).

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/foster-care/kinship-care#:~:text=Kinship%20care%20in%20the%20foster,to%20as%20formal%20kinship%20care.>

<sup>3</sup> Welf. & Inst. Code § 362.7.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.kidsdata.org/export/pdf?dem=13>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.kidsdata.org/topic/22/foster-in-care-race/table#fmt=19&loc=2,127,347,1763,331,348,336,171,321,345,357,332,324,369,358,362,360,337,327,364,356,217,353,328,354,323,352,320,339,334,365,343,330,367,344,355,366,368,265,349,361,4,273,59,370,326,333,322,341,338,350,342,329,325,359,351,363,340,335&tf=108&ch=7,11,8,10,9,44&sortColumnId=0&sortType=asc>

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.cwda.org/sites/main/files/file-attachments/sacramento\\_county\\_cultural\\_broker\\_program.original.1663464400.pdf?1666631726;https://www.kidsdata.org/topic/22/foster-in-care-race/table#fmt=19&loc=127,347,1763,331,348,336,171,321,345,357,332,324,369,358,362,360,337,327,364,356,217,353,328,354,323,352,320,339,334,365,343,330,367,344,355,366,368,265,349,361,4,273,59,370,326,333,322,341,338,350,342,329,325,359,351,363,340,335&tf=108&ch=7,11,8,10,9,44&sortColumnId=0&sortType=asc](https://www.cwda.org/sites/main/files/file-attachments/sacramento_county_cultural_broker_program.original.1663464400.pdf?1666631726;https://www.kidsdata.org/topic/22/foster-in-care-race/table#fmt=19&loc=127,347,1763,331,348,336,171,321,345,357,332,324,369,358,362,360,337,327,364,356,217,353,328,354,323,352,320,339,334,365,343,330,367,344,355,366,368,265,349,361,4,273,59,370,326,333,322,341,338,350,342,329,325,359,351,363,340,335&tf=108&ch=7,11,8,10,9,44&sortColumnId=0&sortType=asc)

maximize placement of children with willing and available kin when they enter out-of-home care.”<sup>7</sup>

An article published by the American Bar Association explains the many common sense reasons why placing already traumatized children with family members instead of strangers leads to better outcomes for children:

**“Minimizes trauma**

Placement with kin caregivers when children cannot live safely with their parents can minimize the trauma of removal. When children are removed they often lose everything they know—their parents, their home, their siblings, friends, school, pets, etc. Placing a child with family diminishes this loss. Additionally, relatives often are willing to take large sibling groups, live in the same neighborhood therefore allowing for continuity of school and community, and provide the comfort of living with someone the child knows and shares a relationship with.

**Improves children’s well-being**

Research confirms that compared to children in nonrelative care, children in kinship homes fare better, as measured by several child well-being factors. Children in the care of relatives experience increased stability, with fewer placement changes, decreased likelihood of disruption and not as many school changes. Relatives are more likely than nonrelatives to support the child through difficult times and less likely to request removal of problematic children to whom they are related. The children themselves generally express more positive feelings about their placements and are less likely to run away.

**Increases permanency for children**

Kin caregivers also provide higher levels of permanency and children experience less reentry into foster care when living with kin. Relatives are more likely to provide a permanent home through guardianship, custody or adoption. Currently about 32% of children adopted from foster care are adopted by relatives. Another 9% exit foster care to some form of guardianship with kin. Under the Fostering Connections Act, 33 states, the District of Columbia, and six tribes have taken the option to operate federally funded Guardianship Assistance Programs designed for children and youth who have been in foster care with a relative for at least six months. This subsidized permanency option allows existing kin caregivers to become legal guardians of children with much-needed financial assistance and without the need to remain in the foster care system.

**Improves behavioral and mental health outcomes**

Children in kinship homes have better behavioral and mental health outcomes. One study showed children in kinship care had fewer behavioral problems three years after placement than children placed into traditional foster

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<sup>7</sup> *The Impact of Kinship Care on Behavioral Well-being for Children in Out-of-Home Care*, Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2654276/>

care. This study also found children who moved to kinship care after a significant time in foster care were more likely to have behavioral problems than children in kinship care from the outset. The long-term effects of these relationships was also studied and the formation of a close relationship with an adult, such as a kinship caregiver, was found to predict more positive mental health as an adult.

#### **Promotes sibling ties**

One important benefit of kinship care is the increased likelihood of living with or staying connected to siblings. Data from the Illinois Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being (ISCAW), a statewide study of well-being and service delivery for children involved in substantiated child maltreatment investigations, showed that in 2013, 80% of children with one or two siblings in care were placed together as compared to 66.9% for children placed in traditional foster homes. For children with three or more siblings in care the disparity is even greater with 53.5% of siblings placed together in kinship homes and only 1.8% placed together in traditional foster homes.

#### **Provides a bridge for older youth**

The connection to family or another supportive adult is critical for older youth. Research shows it is key for youth to have permanent, emotionally sustaining and committed relationships to reach self-sufficiency and to reduce the risk of negative outcomes such as homelessness and criminal involvement. A key recommendation from the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute report *Never Too Old: Achieving Permanency and Sustaining Connections for Older Youth in Foster Care* was to increase efforts to recruit, support and utilize relatives by promoting kinship adoption and subsidized guardianship, and explore subsidized guardianship and adoption.”<sup>8</sup>

### **FEDERAL AND STATE LAW RECOGNIZE THAT FAMILIES ARE BETTER FOR CHILDREN**

Both federal law and California law require child welfare systems to “prioritize placing children with grandparents, relatives, or close family friends, known as kinship care. Pursuant to 42 U.S.C. 671, states must ‘consider giving preference to an adult relative over a nonrelated caregiver when determining placement for a child, provided that the relative caregiver meets all relevant state child protection standards.’ ... Additionally, the federal Fostering Connections Act to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 acknowledges the important role relatives play in the life of a child and encourages states to connect foster children with their relatives.”<sup>9</sup>

California law, too, repeatedly instructs counties and CDSS to strive to place children with relatives or NREFMs. For example:

- Welfare & Institutions Code § 309(e) provides that, if the child is removed from their

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<sup>8</sup> Epstein, H., *Kinship Care is Better for Children and Families* (2017)

[https://www.americanbar.org/groups/public\\_interest/child\\_law/resources/child\\_law\\_practiceonline/child\\_law\\_practice/vol-36/july-aug-2017/kinship-care-is-better-for-children-and-families/](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/public_interest/child_law/resources/child_law_practiceonline/child_law_practice/vol-36/july-aug-2017/kinship-care-is-better-for-children-and-families/)

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

parent's custody after being taken into emergency custody, a county social worker must conduct, within 30 days, an investigation to identify and locate all grandparents, parents of a sibling of the child, if the parent has legal custody of the sibling, adult siblings, other adult relatives of the child, as defined, and, if there is reason to know that the child is an Indian child, any extended family members. The social worker must provide any person so located of specified information, including information regarding the child's removal, how to become a resource family, and contact information for the child.

- Welfare & Institutions Code § 319 requires, at the initial petition hearing on a petition to make a child a dependent of the juvenile court following the child's removal from the custody of their parent or Indian custodian, the social worker to report to the court on why the child was removed from custody, the need, if any, for continued detention, the available services and the referral methods to those services that could facilitate the return of the child to the custody of the child's parents or Indian custodian, and whether there are any relatives who are able and willing to take temporary physical custody of the child. If it is known or there is reason to know the child is an Indian child, the social worker must include additional specified information.

County social workers are tasked with making the required efforts to identify and locate any relatives of the child, to determine whether they are willing and able to take custody of the child on a temporary or, if parental rights are ultimately terminated, permanent basis.<sup>10</sup>

## **SACRAMENTO COUNTY — THE COUNTY WHERE THESE LAWS ARE EXECUTED, PASSED, AND OVERSEEN — HAS THE WORST RECORD OF KINSHIP PLACEMENT OF THE MAJOR CALIFORNIA COUNTIES**

### **A. Statewide County Average of Children Placed with Relatives According to CCWIP**

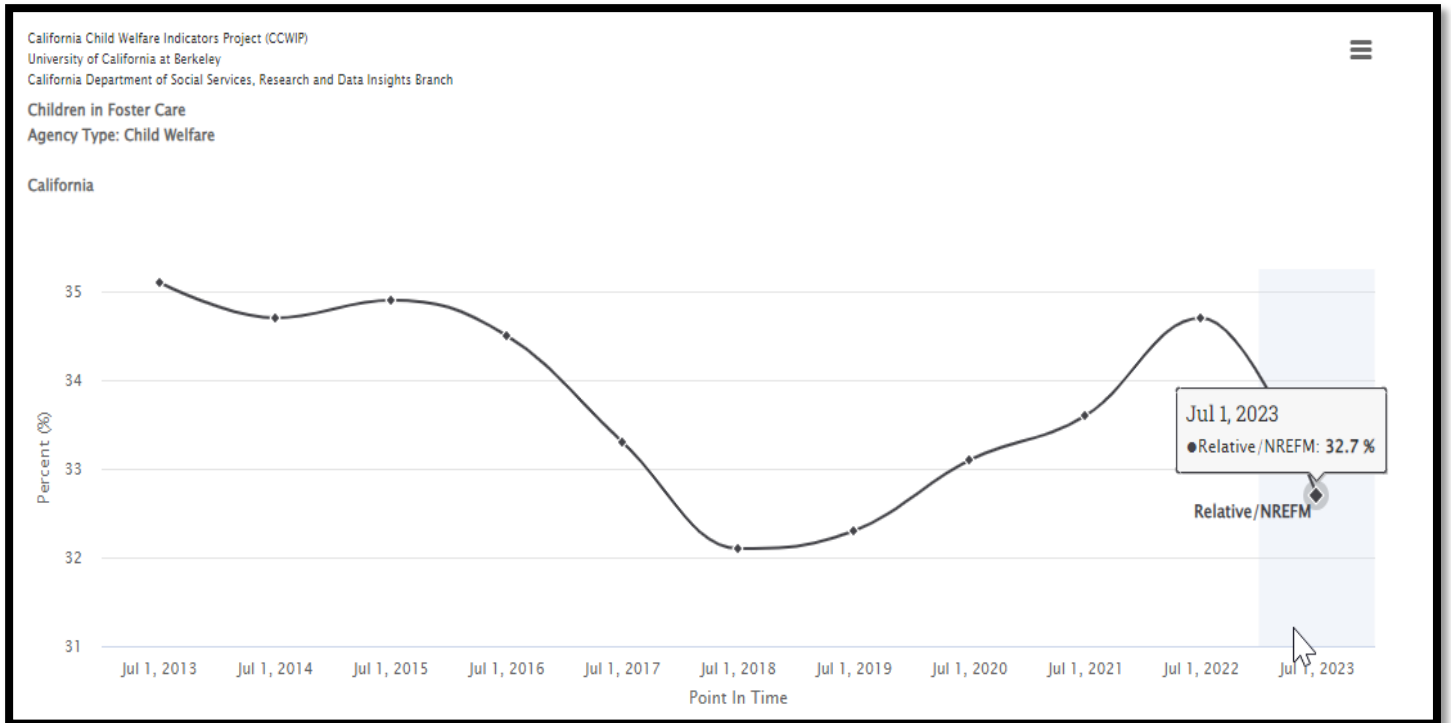
The most comprehensive source of data on California's foster care system is the Berkeley California Child Welfare Indicators Project (CCWIP).<sup>11</sup> According to the CCWIP, on July 1, 2023, 32.7% of California foster children were placed with a Relative or NREFM. The charts below illustrate California's statewide average regarding relative placement, first as an isolated graph (Figure 1) and then as a graph compiled with other placement forms (Figure 2).

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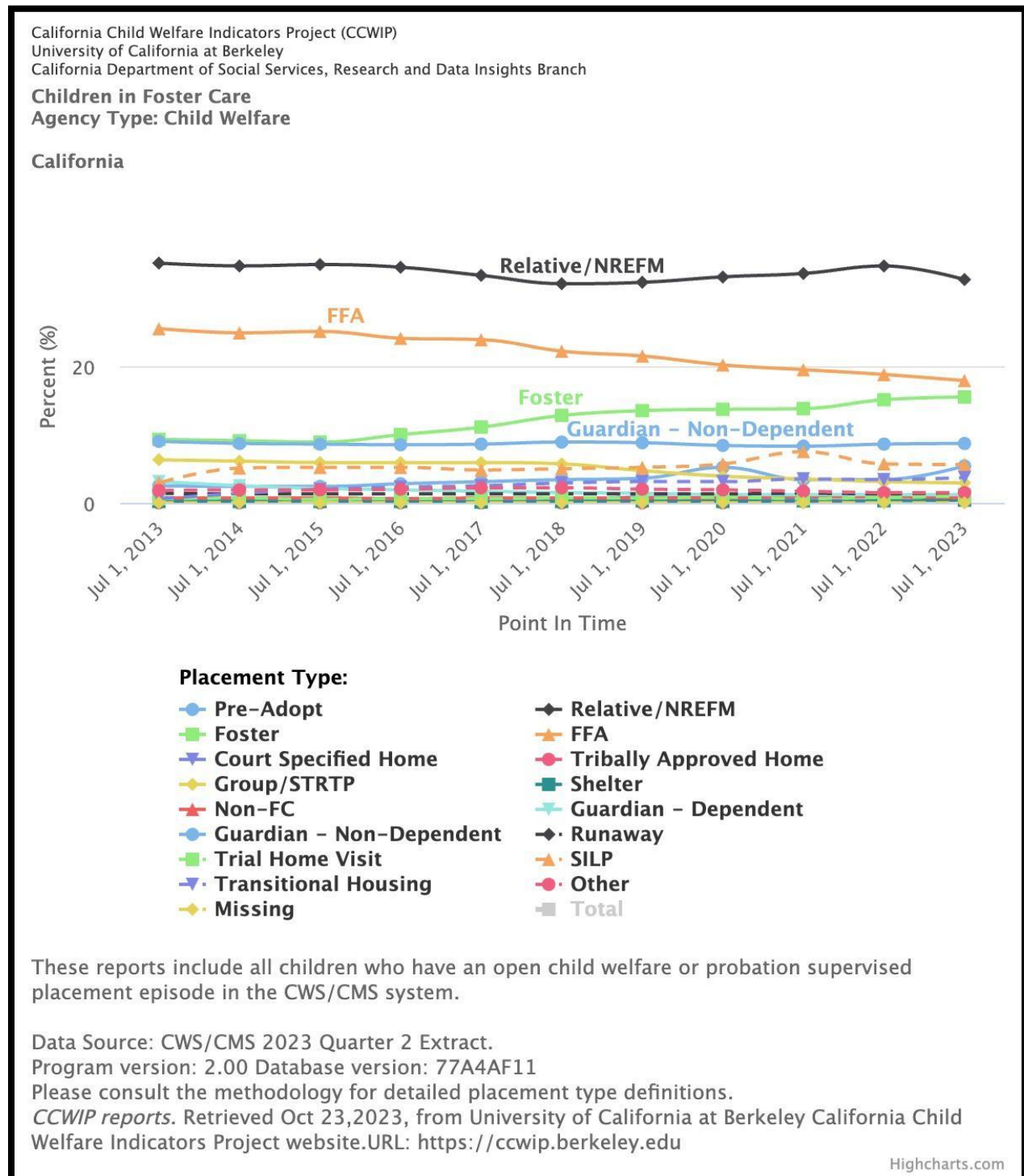
<sup>10</sup> Welf. & Inst Code §§ 309, 358.1.

<sup>11</sup> Webster, D., Lee, S., Dawson, W., Magruder, J., Exel, M., Cuccaro-Alamin, S., Putnam-Hornstein, E., Wiegmann, W., Saika, G., Courtney, M., Eastman, A.L., Hammond, I., Gomez, A., Sunarvo, E., Guo, S., Agarwal, A., Berwick, H., Hoerl, C., Yee, H., Gonzalez, A., Ensele, P., Nevin, J., & Guinan, B. (2023). <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/childwelfare/reports/Allegation/MTSG/r/ab636/s>

**Figure 1**



**Figure 2**

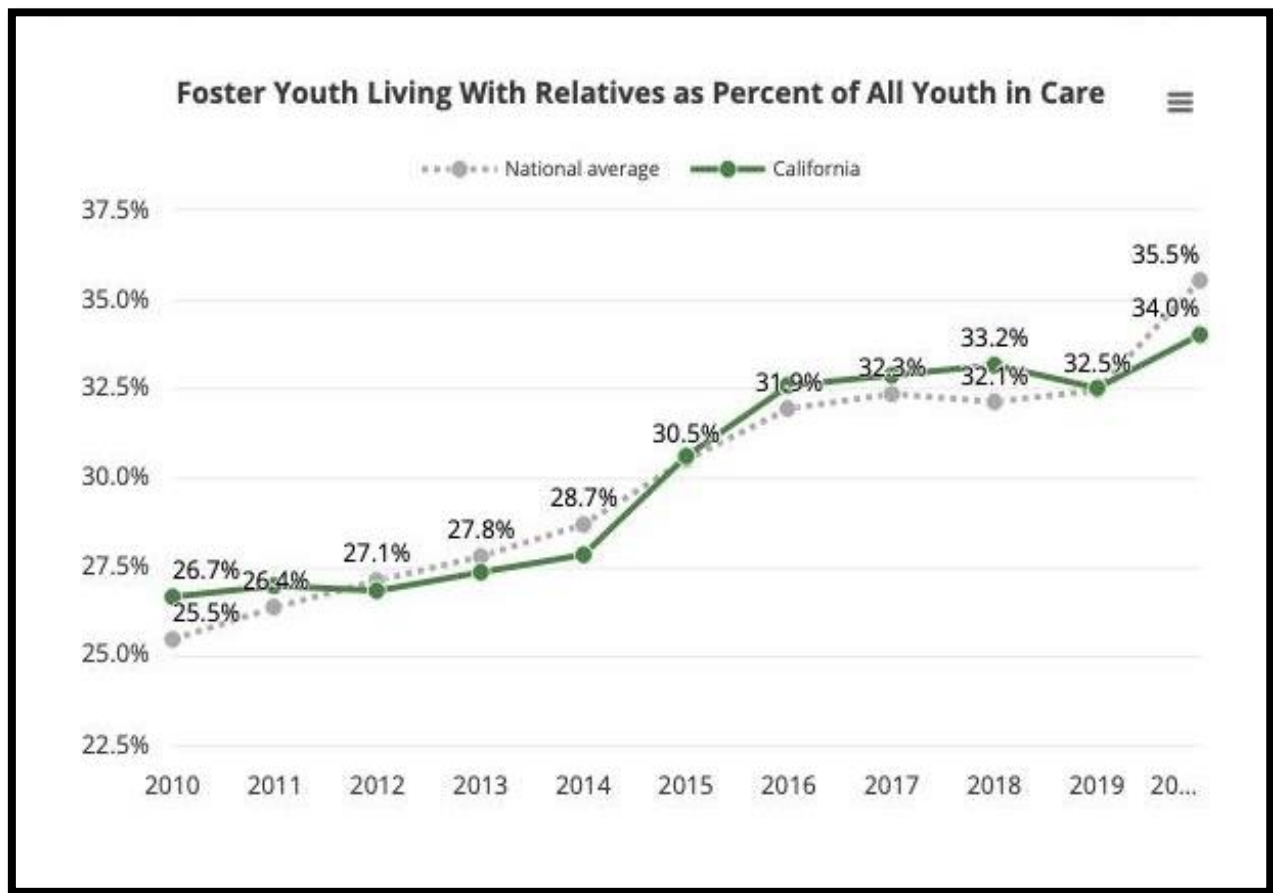




## B. Statewide Average of Children Placed with Relatives According to *Who Cares*

Another data set, found in a report published by *The Imprint* entitled *Who Cares: A National Count of Foster Homes and Families*,<sup>12</sup> shows that in 2020, 34% of all foster youth in California were living with relatives. The report includes data from the federal Adoption and Foster Care Analysis Reporting System for 2011, 2013, 2015, and 2017 and state-provided data for the years thereafter. For the report, *The Imprint* also asked each state to provide the number of relatives with an active ongoing placement, resulting in data showing the percentage of foster youth placed with relatives from 2010–2020. The report produced the chart immediately below to illustrate California's performance compared to the national average.

**Figure 3**



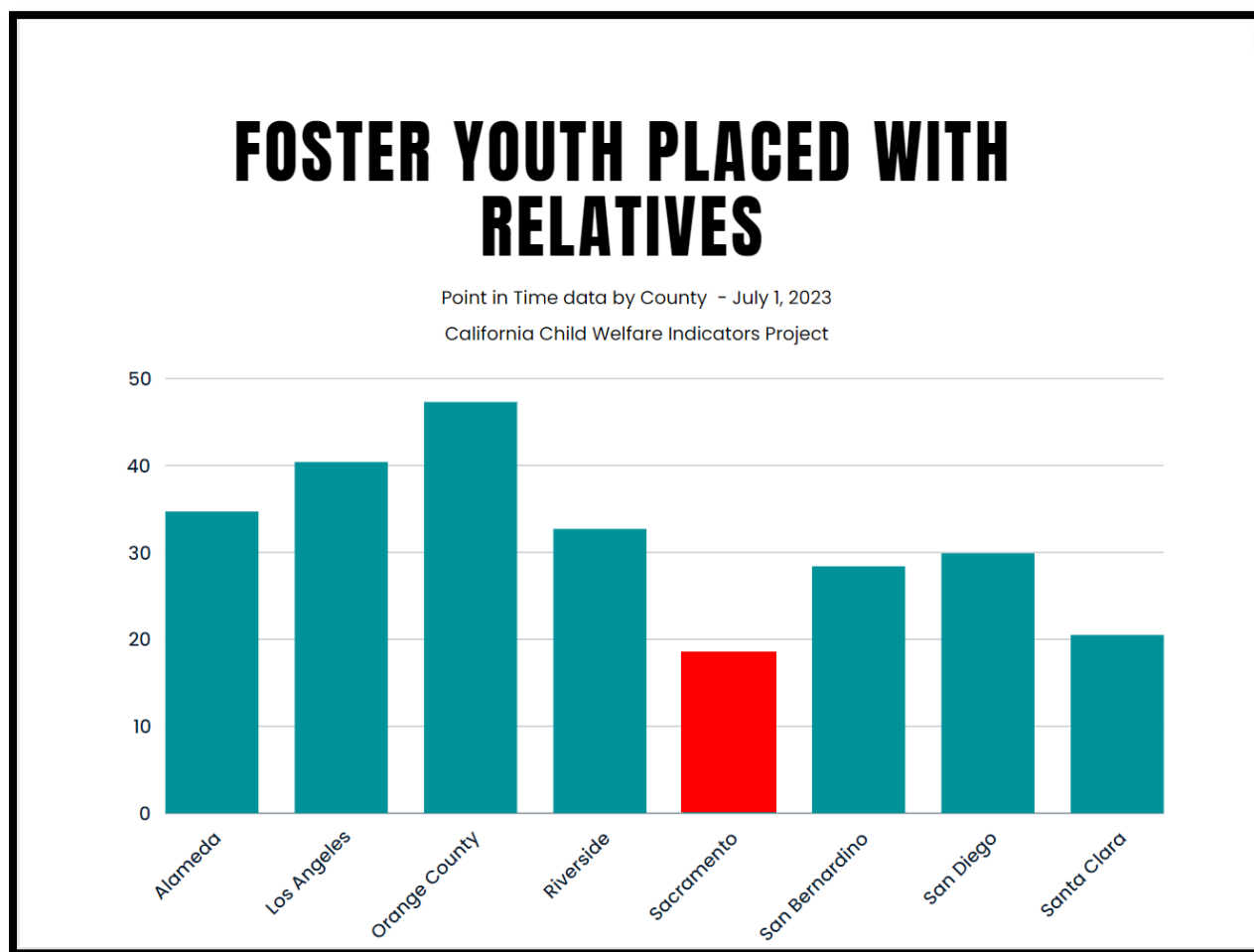
<sup>12</sup> The Imprint, *Who Cares: A National Count of Foster Homes and Families* (2022), available at <https://www.fostercarecapacity.com/>.



### C. Percentage of Foster Children in Relative Care in the Eight Most Populous California Counties According to CCWIP

The CCWIP also provides point-in-time data on foster care placements by county.<sup>13</sup> Figure 4 provides a comparison of county data regarding the percentage of foster youth placed with relatives.

**Figure 4<sup>14</sup>**



<sup>13</sup> Webster, D., Lee, S., Dawson, W., Magruder, J., Exel, M., Cuccaro-Alamin, S., Putnam-Hornstein, E., Wiegmann, W., Saika, G., Courtney, M., Eastman, A.L., Hammond, I., Gomez, A., Sunaryo, E., Guo, S., Agarwal, A., Berwick, H., Hoerl, C., Yee, H., Gonzalez, A., Ensele, P., Nevin, J., & Guinan, B. (2023).

<https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/childwelfare/reports/Allegation/MTSG/r/ab636/s>

<sup>14</sup> Data from California Child Welfare Indicator Project (CCWIP), available at <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/childwelfare/reports/Allegation/MTSG/r/ab636/s>.

## D. California Compared to Other States

The *Who Cares* report also includes data on relative placement from each state. The following table compiles the data to compare the percentage of children in foster care placed with relatives in each state.

### i. Who Cares Report on Relative Placement as a Percentage of All Placements

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Nat'l Average	<b>25.5%</b>	<b>26.4%</b>	<b>27.1%</b>	<b>27.8%</b>	<b>28.7%</b>	<b>30.5%</b>	<b>31.9%</b>	<b>32.3%</b>	<b>32.1%</b>	<b>32.5%</b>	<b>35.5%</b>
Alabama	12.9%	13.5%	21.3%	11.0%	12.0%	11.3%	10.6%	12.6%	13.6%	15.2%	15.9%
Alaska	24.6%	21.0%	19.3%	19.8%	20.7%	21.8%	22.5%	18.2%	20.8%	24.1%	25.8%
Arizona	32.4%	33.1%	37.5%	39.9%	44.3%	44.7%	43.9%	42.5%	41.3%	45.5%	51.5%
Arkansas	8.1%	11.2%	11.4%	11.8%	15.6%	15.7%	19.7%	23.8%	21.1%	22.6%	28.2%
California	<b>26.7%</b>	<b>27.0%</b>	<b>26.8%</b>	<b>27.4%</b>	<b>27.8%</b>	<b>30.6%</b>	<b>32.6%</b>	<b>32.9%</b>	<b>33.2%</b>	<b>32.5%</b>	<b>34.0%</b>
Colorado	13.6%	14.2%	15.7%	20.0%	22.6%	22.8%	25%	23.4%	23.2%	25.6%	26.1%
Connecticut	11.7%	18.7%	20.6%	26.2%	33.0%	37.5%	39.3%	37.9%	39.1%	40.5%	36.5%
Delaware	9.1%	12.9%	9.6%	12.3%	7.4%	11.0%	12.5%	12.5%	9.5%	7.6%	6.3%
Florida	39.7%	41.2%	43.5%	42.0%	40.2%	41.9%	41.2%	40.2%	38.8%	38.0%	42.0%
Georgia	15.3%	17.9%	17.9%	17.3%	19.2%	24.0%	28.6%	29.6%	27.3%	25.6%	24.0%
Hawaii	45.7%	44.9%	48.6%	48.3%	47.4%	43.8%	43.9%	46.3%	46.2%	46.3%	46.8%
Idaho	24.5%	21.8%	24.8%	26.5%	26.1%	27.5%	27.2%	31.6%	26.2%	28.3%	33.8%
Illinois	31.5%	34.1%	34.4%	35.5%	36.0%	36.9%	40.6%	43.4%	42.7%	40.6%	44.1%
Indiana	26.2%	26.2%	25.8%	27.8%	29.3%	32.5%	33.6%	34.4%	31.8%	29.6%	34.5%
Iowa	20.5%	21.6%	23.6%	27.3%	27.3%	28.3%	32.4%	34.1%	34.6%	35.5%	39.3%
Kansas	19.6%	20.3%	21.3%	19.7%	21.2%	21.2%	21.2%	20.2%	22.4%	26.9%	31.9%
Kentucky	8.9%	6.7%	4.9%	4.2%	4.1%	3.5%	4.2%	4.6%	9.9%	12.0%	14.0%
Louisiana	20.6%	23.4%	26.4%	29.9%	30.0%	29.0%	27.7%	25.0%	25.2%	25.2%	31.6%
Maine	21.3%	20.7%	25.3%	28.2%	26.0%	23.6%	24.4%	30.1%	32.8%	34.8%	39.3%
Maryland	29.6%	31.1%	33.0%	32.0%	30.7%	29.1%	29.8%	34.5%	33.6%	36.9%	44.4%
Mass.	18.2%	20.5%	21.4%	23.0%	25.3%	25.7%	27.2%	26.0%	23.8%	21.8%	26.8%
Michigan	33.0%	33.1%	31.3%	30.6%	29.9%	32.8%	33.5%	35.7%	38.0%	39.1%	42.0%
Minnesota	15.6%	15.9%	16.9%	20.0%	22.3%	28.2%	35.0%	38.2%	37.5%	39.9%	43.0%
Mississippi	27.7%	27.9%	28.6%	30.5%	33.7%	36.2%	39.1%	37.0%	34.8%	29.8%	29.8%
Missouri	22.2%	23.2%	24.5%	25.8%	26.4%	26.6%	27.5%	28.7%	35.0%	37.1%	39.7%
Montana	31.7%	31.9%	37.1%	38.6%	34.8%	41.0%	39.5%	41.5%	39.2%	39.0%	45.2%
Nebraska	20.7%	19.9%	19.8%	22.5%	30.0%	28.7%	31.6%	32.0%	29.4%	28.4%	33.8%
Nevada	33.0%	31.1%	34.0%	32.2%	33.2%	33.9%	37.4%	37.7%	38.6%	40.0%	41.2%
New Hamp.	17.7%	21.2%	17.0%	13.5%	10.8%	15.0%	23.3%	29.1%	30.6%	30.1%	29.9%
New Jersey	35.0%	32.8%	33.5%	34.4%	36.0%	35.5%	35.4%	35.0%	33.7%	35.3%	35.5%
New Mexico	11.9%	11.6%	14.4%	15.5%	15.0%	14.4%	18.4%	20.0%	18.6%	21.6%	29.6%
New York	17.6%	17.9%	18.1%	17.4%	17.9%	20.7%	24.4%	19.7%	23.7%	27.3%	29.8%

N. Carolina	23.3%	23.3%	22.9%	24.0%	23.8%	24.3%	27.6%	26.4%	26.1%	26.9%	26.1%
N. Dakota	9.6%	10.5%	13.1%	17.1%	17.1%	17.3%	19.7%	20.8%	19.0%	19.6%	25.6%
Ohio	13.0%	14.7%	13.7%	14.4%	15.4%	16.0%	17.6%	20.0%	20.2%	21.0%	21.3%
Oklahoma	11.6%	23.0%	25.3%	26.9%	26.5%	24.9%	22.4%	22.1%	22.0%	24.2%	31.2%
Oregon	22.8%	27.0%	23.0%	22.8%	25.0%	24.3%	28.9%	31.3%	27.8%	28.4%	33.1%
Pennsylvania	23.2%	24.1%	25.7%	27.6%	29.7%	32.4%	34.9%	36.7%	37.3%	39.5%	41.6%
Rhode Island	26.6%	26.4%	30.2%	31.5%	36.8%	38.2%	40.0%	42.7%	42.7%	35.5%	35.5%
S. Carolina	6.9%	6.4%	6.4%	5.4%	4.7%	6.1%	4.7%	5.0%	4.9%	7.3%	10.2%
S. Dakota	14.5%	16.1%	15.1%	15.6%	17.0%	21.7%	21.6%	21.7%	21.2%	26.7%	26.5%
Tennessee	7.2%	12.1%	10.6%	10.7%	9.9%	9.6%	9.2%	10.7%	11.5%	12.4%	13.7%
Texas	28.0%	30.6%	31.2%	32.0%	31.9%	31.8%	33.5%	33.6%	33.3%	31.9%	33.2%
Utah	16.3%	14.0%	16.1%	16.1%	20.0%	19.3%	22.5%	23.0%	23.9%	25.1%	31.7%
Vermont	15.1%	19.2%	23.0%	27.8%	33.5%	34.7%	31.8%	29.3%	28.6%	26.0%	30.4%
Virginia	6.3%	6.7%	5.6%	5.3%	4.5%	5.5%	4.5%	4.5%	5.3%	5.0%	8.1%
Washington	32.9%	32.4%	31.9%	33.2%	33.1%	33.0%	32.7%	33.0%	32.3%	31.4%	34.1%
Wash. D.C.	17.2%	18.4%	17.7%	19.0%	16.9%	17.1%	17.6%	18.4%	21.2%	21.9%	24.4%
W. Virginia	9.5%	11.6%	12.9%	12.9%	9.5%	12.1%	14.9%	20.6%	27.7%	29.6%	53.0%
Wisconsin	29.2%	29.8%	28.9%	31.7%	31.7%	33.9%	35.5%	37.7%	39.7%	38.1%	39.8%
Wyoming	21.3%	18.1%	23.2%	27.3%	25.5%	30.5%	27.9%	31.3%	33.3%	28.4%	33.3%

**If Sacramento County was a state,  
an 18.5% rate of placing foster  
children with family members  
would place it among the  
worst in the nation.**

## CDSS OFFERS RESOURCES TO COUNTIES THAT MAY BE STRUGGLING WITH FINDING RELATIVES

CDSS Programs | Foster Care | Center for Excellence

### The Center for Excellence in Family Finding, Engagement and Support



The Center for Excellence in Family Finding, Engagement and Support assists county child welfare agency efforts to keep youth connected to their biological families and extended family members. Children placed with relatives and extended family members have greater placement stability, fewer emotional and behavioral problems, and more connections to their social-cultural communities. The Center provides statewide, culturally appropriate training and technical assistance to county child welfare and probation departments, behavioral health, and other child-serving stakeholders, including tribal partners and service providers, to enhance their practices, policies, and efforts for family finding, support, and engagement.

#### Contact Us

Center for Excellence in Family Finding, Engagement and Support  
744 P Street, MS 8-13-78  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
(916) 651-7465  
E-mail: [Centerforexcellence@dss.ca.gov](mailto:Centerforexcellence@dss.ca.gov)

For additional information, trainings, and resources, please visit the Center for Excellence in Family Finding, Engagement, and Support Human Services webpage: [Center for Excellence in Family Finding, Engagement and Support | Continuing and Professional Education | Human Services \(ucdavis.edu\)](http://CenterforExcellenceinFamilyFinding,EngagementandSupport|ContinuingandProfessionalEducation|HumanServices(ucdavis.edu))

Is your county interested in a county consultation? Our consultation framework involves a deeper dive of a county's overarching system policy, processes, practices, and areas of strengths and needs towards developing a plan to opt into the Excellence in Family Finding, Engagement, and Support Program and cultivating a kin-first culture. Please contact [Centerforexcellence@dss.ca.gov](mailto:Centerforexcellence@dss.ca.gov)

The CDSS provides services to promote the stability of relative placements. Therefore, Sacramento County has access to resources to do better. We can find no records documenting whether the County is fully exploiting these resources.

### *Center for Excellence in Family Finding*

The CDSS contracted with the University of California, Davis, to launch the [Center for Excellence in Family Finding, Engagement, and Support \(CFE\)](#). This program provides “culturally appropriate training and assistance to county child welfare and probation departments, participating tribes, and foster care providers to enhance their practices, policies, and efforts for family finding, support, and engagement.” [See ACL No. 23-12, 2:4-8](#). This center supports family-finding efforts by providing training and technical assistance. It also offers training on engaging children and young people in the family-finding process.

### *California Kinship Navigator*

[The CDSS website](#) defines the term “kinship care,” which is often used in California as “the care of a foster child by a relative.” In California’s foster care system, kinship care also includes nonrelative extended family members (NREFMs), as described above. [California Kinship Navigator \(CKN\)](#) is a free service for these kin caregivers and current and former foster youth provided by CDSS. CKN supports kinship caregivers and foster youth to quickly find and access resources, such as:

- Financial support: CalWORKs, Kin-GAP, utilities, rent, transportation
- Housing: Rent, eviction, locating affordable housing, moving services
- Clothing/Supplies: Shoes, clothing, furniture, household supplies, school supplies
- Physical and Mental Health: Health insurance, dentists, eye doctor, behavioral support, speech therapy, therapy, respite care, relationship support, coping tools, substance use, specialized guardianship, and adoption services
- Childcare & Activities: Daycare vouchers, after-school activities, camps, sports
- Education: Tutoring, summer school supplies, parenting classes
- Legal Aid & Advocacy: Support with guardianship or adoption process and getting services for your child
- Food: CalFresh, WIC, meal, groceries
- Employment: Job leads, mentorship, networking, preparing a resume, interview skills

### *California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse Evaluation*

The California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare (CEBC) is funded by CDSS's Office of Child Abuse Prevention. It is one of their targeted efforts to improve the lives of children and families served within the child welfare system. CEBC used its own [scientific rating scale](#) to provide a summary of the current kinship programs in California. In order to be rated in this topic area by the CEBC, there must be research evidence (as specified by the CEBC [Scientific Rating Scale](#)) that examines outcomes for the kinship caregiver (e.g., knowledge or skill, psychological support, improvement in kinship caregivers' satisfaction with their kinship role, or retention of the child in their home) or outcomes for the child(ren) in their care (e.g., placement stabilization, reunification). The Scientific Rating Scale ranges from 1–5, with the following as rating criteria:

1. Well-supported by research evidence
2. Supported by research evidence
3. Promising research evidence
4. Evidence fails to demonstrate effect
5. Concerning Practice

CEBC used this 1–5 scale to rate five statewide family-finding efforts for their evidenced-based effects and found the following:

<b>PROGRAM</b>	<b>OVERVIEW</b>	<b>CEBC SCIENTIFIC RATING</b>
<a href="#"><u>Kinship Navigator (CHN-KN) Children's Home Network</u></a>	Provides a centralized intake line, comprehensive assessments, family conferencing, and navigation services that include securing concrete needs, enrollment in public assistance, linkage to key community resources, development of informal and formal supports, service and crisis planning, support groups, and follow-up contacts	2
<a href="#"><u>KEEP (Keeping Foster and Kin Parents Supported and Trained)</u></a>	Aims to give parents effective tools for dealing with their child's externalizing problems, trauma, and other behavioral and emotional problems and to support them in the implementation of those tools	3
<a href="#"><u>Kinship Caregiver Engagement and Support Program</u></a>	A trauma-informed, triad-centric, child welfare intervention that aims to increase the likelihood of a placement with relatives or fictive kin	3
<a href="#"><u>Kinship Supports Intervention</u></a>	Helps kinship caregivers, including relatives and fictive kin, navigate the child welfare system and connect them to federal, state, and local resources	3
<a href="#"><u>Support Groups for Grandparent Caregivers of Children with Developmental Disabilities and Delays</u></a>	Provides information on 1) financial issues, 2) guardianship, 3) respite care, 4) emotional support, and 5) problems interacting with multiple social service systems, including accessing health care, educational supports and housing	3

**IF SACRAMENTO COUNTY HAD SIMPLY KEPT UP WITH THE STATE AVERAGE, COULD THE MANY SCANDALS ABOUT IT HOUSING CHILDREN IN UNLAWFUL, UNLICENSED, AND UNSAFE PLACES FOR YEARS HAVE BEEN AVOIDED?**



## Drugs, alcohol, and violence inside Sacramento County foster youth facility



Sacramento County has for years explained that it housed children found by a court to have been abused or neglected children in unlicensed, unlawful, and dangerous places entirely unsuited for children — a former detention center, an office building — because no other placement options were available. In essence, the County pointed some blame at the children themselves as having needs too “complex” to find appropriate housing. As the County said in a written statement issued during the firestorm of negative news coverage earlier in 2023:

*There are numerous challenges with finding appropriate placements for our high needs foster youth who exhibit trauma response behaviors. One of the biggest barriers is a lack of appropriate placements in California, including near Sacramento, able to meet the complex needs of our youth.*<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.kcra.com/article/sacramento-county-jail-facility-foster-youth-report/43843991>



**The data above documenting Sacramento's dismal record of finding family placements for the County's children compared to other counties forces a different conclusion.**

Consider:

- When Sacramento news outlets and child advocacy organizations exposed that the County was housing children found by a court to have been abused or neglected in the unlicensed, jail-like Warren E. Thornton Center (WET), about 14 children were being housed there.
- There are about 1,500 children in Sacramento County foster care.<sup>16</sup>
- Sacramento County's family placement rate is 18.5%. Thus, just 277 of Sacramento County's 1,500 foster children were placed with family. The remaining 1,223 children were not placed with family members, including the 14 in the WET Center.

Now, let us examine what could have happened if Sacramento County had placed foster children with families comparable to the success rate of Los Angeles County.

- Los Angeles County's placement rate with families is 40%. Using that rate, 600 of Sacramento County's 1,500 foster children would have been placed with family, leaving 900 (instead of 1,233) without a family placement.
- **Focus on the 600 (40%) instead of the 277 (18.5%).** If Sacramento County had simply performed as well as Los Angeles County in placing children found by a court to have been abused or neglected with family members, **323 more family placements would have occurred in Sacramento County.** This is far, far more than would have been needed to provide family placements for some — maybe all — of the 14 children shunted to the WET Center.

**The conclusion is inescapable:  
Had Sacramento County done a better job of finding family placements for its foster children, it would very likely never have had to resort, year after year, to housing so many children in a rotating series of unlawful and child endangering places.**

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<sup>16</sup> <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/childwelfare/reports/PIT/MTSG/r/ab636/s>

Against this simple deduction, it is important to remember how bad the WET Center and its predecessors were.

# THE SACRAMENTO BEE

## Exclusive: Sacramento County foster kids have been living in cells for 6 months

BY THERESA CLIFT

UPDATED MAY 02, 2023 4:55 PM

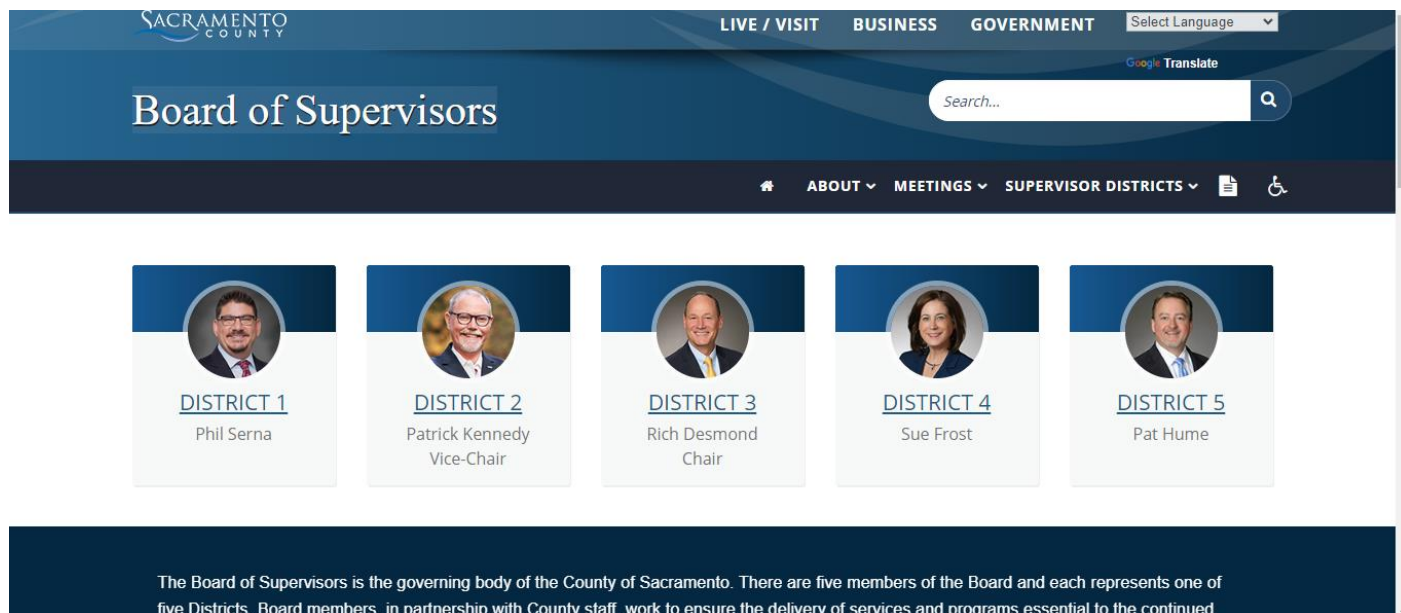


As Disability Rights California explained, Sacramento has known for years it was housing children unlawfully and dangerously — but it kept doing so. “The current crisis [related to the WET Center] dates to 2016 when the County leased space for its Centralized Placement Support Unit (CPSU) on the campus of the Children’s Receiving Home of Sacramento. In February 2016 the California Department of Social Services (DSS) cited the County for operating the intake unit as an unlicensed shelter. The state found that the children and youth brought to the CPSU stayed for extended periods of time, slept on the floor, and went unsupervised. It ordered Sacramento County to close the facility by September 30, 2017....

Sacramento County did not close the intake unit until 2020. It then moved the children and youth to a County-owned office building. The building had no beds, no showers, and virtually no kitchen facilities. In May 2022, DSS determined it “posed an immediate health and safety risk” and could not continue to house children and youth....

The County stopped using the office building in August 2022 and moved the children and youth to the WET Center, a closed juvenile detention facility down the street. In February 2023, DSS notified the County that it was operating the WET Center without a license....The County then applied for a license to operate the facility as a temporary shelter care facility.”<sup>17</sup> The license application was denied and CDSS ordered the County to close the facility or face fines.<sup>18</sup>

## **QUESTIONS FOR SUPERVISORS SERNA, KENNEDY, DESMOND, FROST, AND HUME**



- **Were you aware of Sacramento’s poor record of finding families for its foster children to live with compared to other counties?**
- **How long have you been aware?**
- **If you have been aware, what steps have you instructed county officials to take to improve the County’s performance? Has the County, for example (i) contacted better performing counties to compare their policies with Sacramento’s, (ii) fully availed itself of all the CDSS, community-based, and academic resources available to improve its performance, (iii) appropriated needed funds, or (iv) publicly tasked one accountable official with improving performance on a set timetable?**
- **If you have not been aware, will you take these steps now and urgently?**

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.disabilityrightsca.org/custom-page/it-feels-like-a-juvenile-hall-to-me-a-snapshot-of-conditions-in-the-warren-e-thornton-0>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.kcra.com/article/sacramento-county-fined-wet-center-foster-youth/44228279>

- Will you agendize this issue at the next meeting? If not, what is a larger priority?
- Will you reach out and partner with Sacramento's Black community and other disproportionately affected communities to seek their advice?
- And, finally, how will you ensure your constituents are regularly informed of your progress?

## **CONCLUSION: IN THE SHADOW OF THE STATE CAPITOL, WE ARE FAILING OUR CHILDREN**

"No child should be apart from family, especially during the holidays," said Ed Howard, Senior Counsel of the University of San Diego School of Law's Children's Advocacy Institute who, with USD law student Ashley Worthen, authored this report. "As we celebrate with our loved ones, let's all please take a silent moment of thought and prayer for those children living in our state's capital, surrounded by powerful people who could help them, who we have failed; who in this time of joy are children who feel deeply unloved, abandoned, and, horribly, all alone."

Professor Jessica Heldman, the USD School of Law's Fellmeth-Peterson Associate Professor in Child Rights, observed: "Prioritizing placement of a child with relatives is not only a legal requirement, it is a moral imperative. Kinship placement is not merely a bureaucratic obligation. It is the path to reducing trauma and promoting the well-being of children under our care."

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