**Bill Summary**

AB 2035 ensures youth and nonminor dependents in foster care can access the sexual health education and services available to every other youth and that their caregivers are empowered with the knowledge and information they need to support, guide and be available to youth. These efforts will greatly improve the health outcomes of youth in care and ensure healthy futures for foster youth.

**Background**

California has established a high standard for sexual and reproductive health education and services young people need and deserve. Several years ago, the state recognized that young people in foster care were facing unfair barriers accessing the education and services available to other youth. As a result, youth in foster care were facing disproportionately poor sexual and reproductive health outcomes. In a 2016 study of youth in California’s foster care system, by age 19, about half of females reported having been pregnant at least once, more than twice the rate in the general population; yet, two-thirds did not describe these pregnancies as planned. Young people in foster care additionally reported disproportionately higher rates of sexually transmitted infection than their peers.

In response to these concerns, the Department of Social Services developed new policies and practices and the Legislature approved SB 245 (Leyva), which was included in SB 89, the human services omnibus budget bill, in 2017.

California law now requires that: 1) child welfare case workers ensure foster youth receive the same comprehensive sexual health education that other California youth receive, including education on healthy relationships and consent; 2) case workers inform foster youth of the sexual health and education programs and services available to them and remove barriers to access; 3) county social workers, certain foster caregivers, and juvenile judges receive education on how to support the healthy development of youth in care; and 4) caregivers support youth decision-making and access to education and care. California invests $2.9 million annually to support reproductive health education for youth in care.

**The Problem**

Although these efforts were a tremendous first step, implementation has demonstrated that minor changes must be made to fully realize the vision of these laws. Issues that must be addressed include:

- Need to inform juvenile judges and attorneys: While state law requires social workers to document in a youth’s case plan that middle and high school age youth have received sexual health education and information about their rights and available resources, there is no legal requirement that the information be documented in the corresponding court reports making it difficult for judges, bench officers and attorneys to ensure youth in care receive the information and access to care envisioned by state law.

  - Need for training for all caregivers: Although state law requires training for individuals hoping to become resource families, resource families who were licensed before 2018 are not required to complete such training. This means that many caregivers do not have the information they want and need to support the healthy development of youth in their care.

  - No mechanisms to measure progress: There are no mechanisms that allow the state to measure implementation of training or delivery of services and education, or their impact on foster youth health access and outcomes, such as STI rates, timely prenatal services or contraceptive access.

**Details of the Bill**

AB 2035 has the following key provisions:

1. Requires county social workers to include in reports to juvenile courts whether youth or nonminor dependents in the foster system have received comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education pursuant to the California Healthy Youth Act (Chapter 5.6 of the Education Code)

2. Requires county to ensure annual caregiver training includes sexual and reproductive healthcare

3. Requires the Department of Social Services to report outcome and performance data on implementation of sexual and reproductive health training

**Support**

- Alliance for Children's Rights (Co-Sponsor)
- Black Women for Wellness (Co-Sponsor)
- Children's Law Center of California (Co-Sponsor)
- John Burton Advocates for Youth (Co-Sponsor)
- National Center for Youth Law (Co-Sponsor)

**For More Information**

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