



LOS ANGELES COUNTY COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Celebrating 30 Years of Advocacy & Achievement

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September 22, 2014

TO: Supervisor Don Knabe, Chairman
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FROM: Susan F. Friedman, Chair 
Los Angeles County Commission for Children and Families

RE: COUNTY'S PARTICIPATION IN THE APPROVED RELATIVE
CAREGIVER FUNDING OPTION PROGRAM (ARC)

The Commission for Children and Families is in full support of Los Angeles County's participation in the Approved Relative Caregiver Funding Option Program (ARC). ARC provides critical funding for foster children placed in the homes of relatives who are not federally eligible for support. The needs and cost of adequately caring for a foster child remain the same regardless of his/her placement, and we believe ARC offers great potential for improving outcomes for this population. Thus, the California legislature made placement of foster children with relatives a legal preference, with nearly half of all foster children in Los Angeles County living with kin.

ARC is an issue of fairness: relatives are the backbone of our child welfare system and should be equitably supported to care for their kin in foster care. The needs of a foster child should dictate the support received, not the relationship to the person with whom he/she lives.

Stabilizing family placements will reduce reliance on expensive group homes and Foster Family Agencies and have a significant positive effect on the children. Each child in a group home costs Los Angeles County approximately \$100,000 annually, while supporting that same child living with a relative through ARC costs only \$10,000 dollars per year.

Research by The Annie E. Casey Foundation (Stepping Up for Kids, Kids Count Report, January 2012, aecf.org) documents that permanency for foster youth is accelerated when children are placed with relatives.

The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) has advocated for acceptance of ARC. DCFS will still have to care for these children, and subsidizing State funds will be far less expensive than supporting them entirely in congregate care where many could end up because of inadequate support for relative placements. In addition, if for any reason counties want to opt out of ARC, they retain the right to do so, with four months' notice to the State.

We have the unique opportunity to implement a funded program that provides equity to foster children and their relative caregivers, as well as short and long-term savings to Los Angeles County. ARC is right because it is a financially sound way to improve our child welfare outcomes.

c: Chief Executive Officer
Director, Department of Children and Family Services
Children's Deputies