



Judicial Council of California

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REPORT TO THE JUDICIAL COUNCIL

Item No.: 25-063

For business meeting on October 24, 2025

Title

Juvenile Law: Court Adoption and
Permanency Month

Report Type

Action Required

Effective Date

October 24, 2025

Rules, Forms, Standards, or Statutes Affected

None

Date of Report

October 10, 2025

Recommended by

Family and Juvenile Law Advisory
Committee

Contact

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Hon. Tari L. Cody, Cochair

Hon. Stephanie E. Hulse, Cochair

Executive Summary

The Family and Juvenile Law Advisory Committee recommends adopting a resolution proclaiming November 2025 to be Court Adoption and Permanency Month. This resolution would recognize the ongoing efforts of California's juvenile courts and their justice partners to provide children and families with access to fair, understandable judicial proceedings leading to timely and well-informed permanency outcomes that are in the best interest of the child.

Recommendation

The Family and Juvenile Law Advisory Committee recommends that, effective October 24, 2025, the Judicial Council adopt a resolution proclaiming November 2025 to be Court Adoption and Permanency Month.

Relevant Previous Council Action

The Judicial Council first declared November to be Court Adoption and Permanency Month in California in 1999. Since that first observance, the council has continued to reaffirm this declaration, demonstrating its commitment to judicial procedures and collaborative practices that promote timely case resolution and permanency for children and youth in foster care.

Permanency is a child's exit from foster care to safe return to the family home (reunification), adoption, or legal guardianship. The council's Family and Juvenile Law Advisory Committee, other advisory groups, and council staff have worked to implement council and legislative directives relating to adoption and permanency and support the juvenile courts and their local justice partners each November to highlight ongoing and special adoption and permanency efforts.

Analysis/Rationale

California's juvenile courts are where the most consequential decisions for placement and family reunification are made for children in foster care. Each court is charged with the "protection and safety" of children within its jurisdiction.¹ The court has a critical oversight role to ensure that social services agencies making placement decisions properly evaluate a dependent child's best interest.²

"The courts and their child welfare partners share responsibility for the safety and well-being of children while they are in foster care, in effect, serving as the 'parent' until a child either safely returns home, moves to another permanent home, or becomes an adult and leaves the system."³

Efforts made by the superior courts, the Judicial Council, and partners in child welfare to improve permanency in the years since the first Adoption and Permanency Month proclamation include:

- Extensive education, technical assistance, and engagement of the Judicial Council Tribal Court–State Court Forum on the implementation of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA);
- Support and oversight of the 11,000 active Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) volunteers providing services to 13,000 children and youth statewide;
- Expansion of resources for court-appointed counsel for children in foster care and their parents; and
- Active participation in the Child and Family Services Review Permanency Outcome 1 to ensure that a child's placement is stable, the permanent plan is appropriate, and the agency makes concentrated efforts to achieve reunification, guardianships, or adoption by focusing on court activities in California's Program Improvement Plan.

¹ Welf. & Inst. Code, § 202.

² *In re Shirley K.* (2006) 140 Cal.App.4th 65, 73.

³ California Blue Ribbon Commission on Children in Foster Care, *Fostering a New Future for California's Children* (May 2009), p. 3.

Court Adoption and Permanency Month and associated events in courts have been a critical means of highlighting progress, sharing strategies, and demonstrating the commitment of the courts to stabilize children’s lives. The month of November was selected to coincide with National Adoption Month, when government agencies and nonprofit organizations highlight innovative efforts to promote permanency, including adoption, and raise awareness of the need for safe, permanent homes for children in foster care.

For this 26-year anniversary of Adoption and Permanency Month, the Judicial Council is highlighting the importance of kinship care and developing a “kin-first culture.” This is the term used to describe a system that prioritizes placing children with their extended family network. Research demonstrates that children in kinship care experience fewer behavioral health problems and less placement disruption and require fewer mental health services than youth in a nonrelative placement.⁴ Children with a first placement with relatives or extended family members are three times as likely to remain in that first placement after 12 months.⁵ Seventy percent of youth placed with relatives are also with their entire sibling set, compared to 44 percent of youth placed with nonrelatives.⁶ Youth who are with a relative at the time they exit from foster care are also less likely to reenter care within 12 months.⁷

In recent years, the judicial branch, executive branch, and the Legislature have worked together to demonstrate their commitment to improving child welfare outcomes by promoting and supporting kinship care. In 2022 Governor Gavin Newsom established the Center for Excellence in Family Finding, Engagement and Support to provide culturally appropriate training and technical 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.⁸

In 2024 the Legislature enacted Assembly Bill 2929 (Carrillo; Stats. 2024, ch. 845), which strengthened the family finding and engagement requirements in all juvenile dependency cases by requiring the agency to present evidence at all review hearings that it has continued its efforts to locate any relatives, extended family members, or nonrelative extended family members (also

⁴ Anthony Gómez and Mark E. Courtney, *Transition-Age Youth in Kinship Care: Trends Over Time From the CalYOUTH Study* (2022), California Child Welfare Indicators Project, University of California at Berkeley (2022), <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/TAY/articles-memos/Kin%20report-FINAL.pdf>.

⁵ California Child Welfare Indicators Project, “Safety Dashboard,” <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu>. Specific reports on placement stability are available at <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/childwelfare/reports/PlacementStability/MTMG/r/fcp/l>.

⁶ California Department of Social Services, “Center for Excellence in Family Finding, Engagement and Support Overview” (undated), <https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/178930.pdf>.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Angie Schwartz, All County Letter No. 23-12, California Department of Social Services (Feb. 2, 2023), <https://humanservices.ucdavis.edu/sites/g/files/dgvnsk7381/files/media/documents/All%20County%20Letter%2023-12.pdf>.

defined as kin) who could provide family support or possible placement of the child and the results of those efforts.

The Judicial Council is taking decisive action to implement a program focused on building a kin-first culture. Effective January 1, 2026, the Judicial Council will amend rules and revise forms to align judicial procedures with this vital legislative and executive branch priority. In the 2025 State of the Judiciary address, Chief Justice Patricia Guerrero emphasized the critical importance of this initiative and highlighted the efforts of the Superior Courts of Santa Cruz, Sacramento, Solano, Kern, and San Diego Counties to create a kin-first culture, expressing ongoing support for the efforts in San Diego County that led to a 10 percent increase in children being safely placed with family.

The council is committed to providing ongoing training on kin-first culture. In addition to partnering with the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) and the Center for Excellence to conduct local kin-first culture trainings throughout the state, this will be a major theme at the judicial branch's 2025 Beyond the Bench conference. Beyond the Bench is a multidisciplinary statewide conference devoted to children, youth, and families in the court system. The first conference was held in 1988; prior to the pandemic, it was a biennial statewide event convening more than 1,200 professionals.

The Beyond the Bench Conference will be held in November 2025, which will be the first one since 2019. The conference brings together judges, local, state, and tribal court leaders, attorneys, probation officers, social workers, court users, researchers, policy makers, and other juvenile court-related professionals from across California. Multiple sessions this year will focus on shifting the paradigm to reduce harm to children and prioritize kin-first placements.

Since Court Adoption and Permanency Month was initiated in 1999, many individual California courts have dedicated specific adoption days in November—including Adoption Fridays and Adoption Saturdays—as well as other events to ensure that adoptions are completed and finalized in a timely manner. The Judicial Council encourages courts to do so as circumstances permit.

Many local courts—in conjunction with county social services, local nonprofit agencies, and others—celebrate and highlight Court Adoption and Permanency Month in November and throughout the year. This November, numerous courts are holding events honoring permanent connections for foster children this year, including the Superior Courts of Amador, Kern, Riverside, Sacramento, San Diego, San Francisco, and Sutter Counties. In addition to holding adoption proceedings, the celebrations will have food, face painting, action figures, activities for children, family projects, and other amenities. Of note, as part of the Superior Court of Kern County's celebration, two judges not ordinarily assigned to adoptions calendars but who were adopted as children will preside over an adoptions calendar. These judges will also tell their stories at a joint press conference with other branches of local government before the court holds the adoption proceedings.

Policy implications

The Legislature acknowledged the importance of Court Adoption and Permanency Month through Assembly Concurrent Resolution 106 (Link A), which declares November 2025 to be Court Adoption and Permanency Month. The Judicial Council remains committed to working with the Governor, the Legislature, and local courts and communities to provide children and families with access to fair, understandable judicial proceedings leading to timely, well-informed, and just permanency outcomes.

Comments

Public comments were not solicited for this proposal because the recommendation is within the Judicial Council's purview to approve without circulation.

Alternatives considered

The Family and Juvenile Law Advisory Committee considered not making a recommendation for the Judicial Council to proclaim November 2025 to be Court Adoption and Permanency Month. However, when assessing the number of children still in care without permanent placement, the committee determined that a new resolution this year (Attachment A) will emphasize the ongoing critical need to seek permanence for foster children. The committee also wanted to take the opportunity to highlight the critical work of the judicial branch and its justice partners in prioritizing kinship care and building a kin-first culture.

Fiscal and Operational Impacts

Court Adoption and Permanency Month is a voluntary program. Every court can participate at a level it considers appropriate to its jurisdiction. Suggested commemorative events range from no-cost activities for promoting adoption and permanency to higher-cost, systemwide programs.

Family participation in special events or projects is also voluntary. The adoption of the resolution proclaiming November 2025 to be Court Adoption and Permanency Month is not intended to encourage courts to schedule adoption hearings to coincide with special events. Each case should be heard as soon as it can be calendared, and families should be offered the opportunity to participate in court events that occur at a later date.

Attachments and Links

1. Attachment A: Court Adoption and Permanency Month resolution
2. Link A: Assembly Concurrent Resolution 106,
https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=202520260ACR106

JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF CALIFORNIA



ADOPTION AND PERMANENCY MONTH R E S O L U T I O N

Whereas juvenile court judges are uniquely responsible for the care, supervision, custody, and support of the children under the court's jurisdiction and provide active leadership within the community to ensure that resources are available to serve families and children;

Whereas in order to reinforce the benefits of in-home care, the Judicial Council, courts, and justice partners have focused on a Kin-First Culture system where the parent and family help determine the safest place for the child within the family, community, or tribe;

Whereas though 55,000 children were in child welfare-supervised, out-of-home care on January 1, 2021, that number has been reduced by 29 percent to 39,000 children on January 1, 2025, as a result of these efforts;

Whereas in 2023, approximately 74 percent of children in foster care at 12 months were in their first or second placement, a 10 percent increase in placement stability since 2018;

Whereas kinship care provides a protective effect on youth mental health outcomes and is associated with higher placement stability and permanency as compared to traditional foster care placement;

Whereas children in kinship care experience fewer behavioral health problems, less placement disruption, and fewer mental health services than youth in a nonrelative placement;

Whereas children with a first placement with relatives or extended family members are three times as likely to remain in the first placement after 12 months, and youth who were with a relative at the time they exit from foster care are less likely to reenter care within 12 months;

Whereas in 2024, approximately 57 percent of children and youth who exited the foster care system were placed with or adopted by a relative, a 6 percent increase since 2019;

Whereas California is a proponent of kinship care, providing financial and social supports to relative caregivers as a way to strengthen family connections and improve the well-being of foster youth;

Whereas the Judicial Council remains committed to working with the Governor, the Legislature, and local courts and communities to provide children and families with access to fair, understandable judicial proceedings leading to timely, well-informed, and just permanency outcomes;

Now, therefore, be it resolved that I, Patricia Guerrero, Chief Justice of California, on behalf of the Judicial Council of California, do hereby proclaim November 2025 to be Court Adoption and Permanency Month, during which the courts and their communities are encouraged to examine local policies and practices to promote reunification, adoption, and permanency, by prioritizing kinship care and supporting resilient families.

*In witness whereof,
I have hereunto set my hand this 24th day of October, 2025*

Attest

PATRICIA GUERRERO
Chief Justice of California and
Chair of the Judicial Council of California

MICHELLE CURRAN
Administrative Director
Judicial Council of California