

**FACT SHEET: SB 945**  
**DUAL STATUS YOUTH RIGHTS TO SERVICES**  
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**THE PROBLEM**

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Each year in California more than 4,000 foster children turn 18 and exit the system. These youth face significant challenges in their transition to adulthood and are not faring well as other young adults. For example:

- 46% of foster children fail to complete high school, compared to 16% of non-foster youth.
- Nearly 1/3 will become homeless within the first year after they leave the system.
- About 1/4 will be incarcerated within the first two years after they emancipate.

Our state has created a number of new policies to assist foster youth. As a result, foster youth who age out of the system at 18 can access a variety of assistance and counseling programs. These programs help with housing, college planning and financing, and job and financial counseling.

Unfortunately, a segment of the foster youth population, called “dual status youth,” are unable to access services because they cannot prove their status as a former foster youth. Dual status youth are foster youth who have been under the jurisdiction of both the dependency courts to the juvenile delinquency court system. When these children emancipate from the juvenile delinquency court status, rather than from dependency court status, they are effectively denied access to private and non-profit programs designed to assist former foster youth.

**BACKGROUND**

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While there is no specific provision of California law that terminates a dual status youth’s eligibility for transitional living services there is no process to ensure that these children receive proof of their history in the foster care system. Foster youth who are moved to the delinquency court system

frequently do not return to their dependency status after satisfying their court-ordered detention or treatment due to the lack of placement availabilities.

These youth fall between the cracks because foster care programs identify transitional youth based on their residency. Young people who are wards of the court (housed in juvenile court or treatment facilities) do not reside in homes reserved specifically for foster youth and therefore not able to prove their status as a foster youth. Although probation officers who oversee wards for the court are expected to advise and assist their wards with access to transitional living services, there is no clear process for the probation officers to follow to assist this population.

**SOLUTION**

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SB 945 would ensure that upon the release of a ward from a nonfoster care facility, a probation officer or parole officer will provide the person with:

- A written notice stating that the youth is a former foster child and may be eligible for the services and benefits that are available to a former foster child through public and private programs.
- Information that informs the youth of the availability of federal and state programs that provide independent living services and benefits to former foster children.

By ensuring that all former foster youth receive access to transitional living skills programs, the likelihood that they will find jobs and housing increases, thereby reducing the growing population of homeless and incarcerated youth.

**SPONSOR**

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- Children’s Advocacy Institute