



## Children's Advocacy Institute

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# PRESS RELEASE

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Robert C. Fellmeth

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Alan Shumacher, M.D.  
Owen Smith

**Emeritus Members**  
Birt Harvey, M.D.  
Paul A. Peterson

**Contacts:** Robert Fellmeth / Melanie Delgado (619) 260-4806 (in Sacramento on 1/16/07)  
Ed Howard (916) 444-3875

## **California, The Neglectful Parent** **STATE'S LACK OF SUPPORT FOR EMANCIPATED FOSTER YOUTH RESULTS IN BLEAK OUTCOMES FOR THEM AND SIGNIFICANT LONG-TERM COSTS FOR THE STATE**

### ***Nation's First Transitional Services Cost-Benefit Analysis Shows Increased Assistance to Emancipated Foster Youth Would Provide Long-Term Fiscal Benefits to State***

**Sacramento, CA:** Today, the Children's Advocacy Institute (CAI) of the University of San Diego School of Law, joined by former foster youth and their service providers, charged the State of California with neglect, with respect to its treatment of youth aging out of the state's foster care system. In its report, ***Expanding Transitional Services for Emancipated Foster Youth: An Investment in California's Tomorrow***, CAI details how state and federal laws and programs fail to provide California's emancipated foster youth with a meaningful opportunity to attain self-sufficiency. "While some state and federal funding is available for former foster youth, it is sorely inadequate to provide the support necessary to enable these youth to transition to self-sufficiency," stated CAI Executive Director Robert C. Fellmeth. "In California, current programs for emancipated foster youth are fragmented and underfunded, fail to provide comprehensive assistance and services, and do not reach a significant number of former foster youth in a meaningful way."

Each year, over 4,000 California youth emancipate, or "age out", of the foster care system at age 18. "Time after time, the state—which has assumed the role of parent in these cases—turns her children out into the street at age 18 with no place to live, no means of supporting themselves, no safety net, and no hope for their future," stated CAI Staff Attorney Melanie Delgado. "Even for average youth — kids who never had the added struggle of life in foster care — the age of self-sufficiency is 26. And that's with their parents contributing over \$44,000 during their post-18 transitional period. Former foster youth have no such safety net, and their outcomes are bleak, often resulting in significant long-term financial implications for the state, due to incarceration, welfare, homelessness, etc." According to CAI, on average California provides to former foster youth less than 5% of the amount given by other parents for their children after age 18, as they transition to self-sufficiency.

University of San Diego  
School of Law  
5998 Alcalá Park  
San Diego, CA 92110  
(619) 260-4806  
(619) 260-4753 (Fax)

717 K Street  
Suite 509  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
(916) 444-3875  
(916) 444-6611 (Fax)

Reply to:  
 San Diego  
 Sacramento

[www.caichildlaw.org](http://www.caichildlaw.org)

CAI also released details on its proposed **Transition Guardian Plan**, which would replicate as closely as possible the commitment of responsible parents during the transition of their children into independent adulthood. Under CAI's proposal, former foster youth who opt to participate in the Transition Guardian Plan will receive a monthly stipend and support services. The stipend is sent to a court-appointed adult guardian who meets with the youth on a monthly basis to distribute the funds, plan for their use, and verify the youth's continuing progress toward self-sufficiency. "The stipend would be based on the youth's needs, but would typically range from a high of \$850 per month in the first year of participation down to \$258 per month during the fifth year of participation, decreasing as the youth becomes more self-sufficient," explained Fellmeth. An important element of the Transition Guardian Plan is the guardian position itself. "Ideally, this guardian will be someone with a prior relationship with the youth — to accomplish the continuity otherwise lacking for many of these children. The guardian may be the foster care provider, a relative, a CASA, the youth's attorney, or some other person who is competent, responsible, cares about the youth and in whom the youth has confidence," Fellmeth added.

"We believe that the support and mentoring offered through the Transition Guardian Plan would enable most — if not all — emancipated foster youth to achieve higher education and/or vocational training, thus increasing their chances to secure better paying employment, obtain housing, and become self-sufficient," stated Delgado.

CAI also unveiled the results of the **nation's first transitional services cost-benefit analysis**, which shows that significant cost savings would be attributable to keeping former foster youth out of prison and off welfare, and helping them become self-sufficient, tax-paying members of society. Using just those three factors, CAI's analysis shows a benefit-to-cost ratio of 2.98 to 1 (or 1.85 to 1 present value) for one cohort and 3.1 to 1 (or 1.9 to 1 present value) for 40 cohorts.

"Even if it didn't make financial sense, which it clearly does, California has the means, opportunity, and — most importantly — the responsibility to provide its transitioning youth with a meaningful chance at self-sufficiency," added Fellmeth. "We must all call on our leaders to do so."

The University of San Diego School of Law's Children's Advocacy Institute is an academic research and advocacy center dedicated to promoting the health and well being of California's children. CAI advocates in the legislature to make laws, in the courts to interpret laws, before administrative agencies to implement laws, and before the public to educate and build support for laws to improve the status of children. CAI seeks to educate policymakers about children's needs for economic security, adequate nutrition, health care, education, quality child care, and protection from abuse, neglect, and injury.

For a copy of the report, visit CAI's website at [www.caichildlaw.org](http://www.caichildlaw.org) or contact CAI at (619) 260-4806 or (916) 444-3875.

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