



State of California Department of Justice

KAMALA D. HARRIS ~ ATTORNEY GENERAL

NEWS RELEASE

Social Networks

September 1, 2016



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

(415) 703-5837

AGPRESSOFFICE@DOJ.CA.GOV

[Print Version](#)

Attorney General Kamala D. Harris Issues New Guidelines to Encourage Secure Sharing of Information Between Schools and Child Welfare Agencies to Better Serve Foster Youth

SAN FRANCISCO – Attorney General Kamala D. Harris today announced that the California Department of Justice’s Bureau of Children’s Justice (BCJ), the California Department of Education (CDE), and the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) have jointly developed statewide guidelines for school districts, county offices of education, and child welfare agencies to better assist them in the secure sharing of data and information that is critical to the success of students in foster care.

“Too many foster children in California are falling through the cracks, not meeting their full potential, and ending up in the criminal justice system. Schools and child welfare agencies must communicate effectively in order to provide children the services they need,” said Attorney General Harris. “This collaborative effort between the Bureau of Children’s Justice and the California Departments of Education and Social Services is a positive step toward improving the ways we support vulnerable children, particularly foster youth.”

Under the law, foster youth are entitled to a range of services, including enhanced academic counseling regarding graduation eligibility requirements and mental health counseling. But many eligible youth are not receiving the services they need because schools don't know which students should be receiving additional support. This guidance makes clear that schools and child welfare agencies can share information to keep children on track.

The guidance will help local educational and county welfare agencies by providing clarity on the scope of information which can be shared under the law, including critical information that school districts, local county offices of education, and caregivers need to identify and coordinate supports and services for foster youth. In addition to providing clarity on the state of the law, the guidance encourages local educational and child welfare agencies to collaborate with each other to create joint data systems for the continued sharing of information regarding foster youth between and within their respective agencies.

"Providing clear statewide guidance is vital for strengthening the relationship between foster children, caregivers and educators," said Will Lightbourne, Director of the California Department of Social Services. "This allows the focus to shift away from administrative hurdles and directly to the educational needs of each foster child."

"I deeply appreciate the joint effort by the state social services and education agencies, and the Bureau of Children's Justice, to create this guidance," said Martha Matthews, Directing Attorney of the Children's Rights Project at Public Counsel. "It will help school districts and county child welfare agencies here in Los Angeles County and statewide to share information and work together to support foster youths' educational success, while respecting their dignity and privacy."

"The only way we can significantly improve education outcomes for children in foster care is through strong collaboration between schools and child welfare agencies, and that can only occur when they have the ability to share essential information," said Molly Dunn, Senior Policy Attorney at Alliance for Children's Justice. "The joint guidance cuts through a labyrinth of federal and state laws to provide a clear path for the communication and collaboration necessary between agencies to support the education success of children in foster care."

"The release of this guidance is huge step forward in California's efforts to

questions about what data may and must be shared, who should be permitted to see what information and for what purpose,” said Michelle Francois Traiman, Director of FosterEd at the National Center for Youth Law. “Effective, thoughtful sharing of information across systems is critical to ensuring that the adults that are charged to support young people collaborate meaningfully, work as a team, and put the needs of each young person at the forefront of their practices and policies so they can succeed in school.”

In February 2015, Attorney General Harris formed the Bureau of Children’s Justice, a unit within the California Department of Justice that works to support and protect children and ensure they are on track to meet their full potential. The Bureau works to enforce California’s civil and criminal laws with respect to California’s foster care, adoption, and juvenile justice systems; discrimination and inequities in education; California’s elementary school truancy crisis; human trafficking of vulnerable youth; and childhood trauma and exposure to violence.

Earlier this year, the Bureau made public its active civil rights investigations on issues related to juvenile justice, the child welfare system, and education across the state. More information is available at <http://oag.ca.gov/bcj/investigations>.

Attorney General Harris’s office is leading the California Defending Childhood State Policy Initiative—a collaboration of state agencies including CDE and CDSS—in its work to address the impacts of violence and trauma on children across the state, including enhancing the secure sharing of data to inform supports and services. Under Attorney General Harris’s leadership, California was one of three states nationwide selected by the U.S. Department of Justice to be a part of its national Defending Childhood Initiative.

Attorney General Harris has pioneered the use of data to inform public policy and pushed for greater transparency and more effective collaboration and data-sharing between state agencies in order to better serve the public. She announced [OpenJustice](#), a first-of-its-kind open data criminal justice initiative, in September 2015. Since its launch, OpenJustice has published additional analysis and plans to release new juvenile justice data in the coming weeks.

Her office also is collaborating with the [Children’s Data Network](#) at the University of Southern California to link the administrative records of youth involved in the justice system in order to better understand their early experiences, trajectories through systems, and factors that may increase the of risk involvement, all with an eye toward preventing involvement altogether.

###

You may view the full account of this posting, including possible attachments, in the News & Alerts section of our website at: <http://oag.ca.gov/news/press-releases/attorney-general-kamala-d-harris-issues-new-guidelines-encourage-secure-sharing>



© 2016 DOJ

You may view all News & Alerts on our website at: <http://oag.ca.gov/news>

Please visit the remainder of the Attorney General's site at: <http://oag.ca.gov/>

[Unsubscribe](#) from this list