

**Assembly Bill No. 3043**

CHAPTER 671

An act to amend Sections 11462 , 11462.01, and 11468.6 of, and to add Section 11466.8 to, the Welfare and Institutions Code, relating to public social services, and declaring the urgency thereof, to take effect immediately.

[Approved by Governor September 20, 1996. Filed with Secretary of State September 23, 1996.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 3043, Takasugi. Foster care providers.

Existing law provides for the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program, pursuant to which qualified families are provided with cash assistance, and includes the Aid to Families with Dependent Children-Foster Care (AFDC-FC) program, through which certain needs of eligible children in foster care are provided. The AFDC program is administered and partially funded by the counties. The AFDC program is partially funded by federal participation and is subject to federal requirements for federal participation.

Existing law provides for the establishment of various levels of group home reimbursement rates under the AFDC-FC program and requires that those providers maintain and provide to the department specified information.

This bill would revise the procedures for determining the reimbursement of those group home providers.

The bill would also require the department to report to the appropriate policy and fiscal committees of the Legislature by December 1, 1996, on its progress in implementing certain existing requirements relating to out-of-home child care placement.

The bill would declare that it is to take effect immediately as an urgency statute.

*The people of the State of California do enact as follows:*

SECTION 1. Section 11462 of the Welfare and Institutions Code is amended to read:

11462. (a) (1) Effective July 1, 1990, foster care providers licensed as group homes, as defined in departmental regulations, including public child care institutions, as defined in Section 11402.5, shall have rates established by classifying each group home program and applying the standardized schedule of rates. The department



shall collect information from group providers beginning January 1, 1990, in order to classify each group home program.

(2) Notwithstanding paragraph (1), foster care providers licensed as group homes shall have rates established only if the group home is organized and operated on a nonprofit basis as required under subdivision (h) of Section 11400. The department shall terminate the rate effective January 1, 1993, of any group home not organized and operated on a nonprofit basis as required under subdivision (h) of Section 11400.

(b) A group home program shall be initially classified, for purposes of emergency regulations, according to the level of care and services to be provided using a point system developed by the department and described in the report, "The Classification of Group Home Programs under the Standardized Schedule of Rates System," prepared by the State Department of Social Services, August 30, 1989.

(c) The rate for each rate classification level (RCL) has been determined by the department with data from the AFDC-FC Group Home Rate Classification Pilot Study. The rates effective July 1, 1990, were developed using 1985 calendar year costs and reflect adjustments to the costs for each fiscal year, starting with the 1986-87 fiscal year, by the amount of the California Necessities Index computed pursuant to the methodology described in Section 11453. The data obtained by the department using 1985 calendar year costs shall be updated and revised by January 1, 1993.

(d) As used in this section, "standardized schedule of rates" means a listing of the 14 rate classification levels, the single rate established for each RCL, and the rate floor for each RCL.

(e) The standardized schedule of rates shall be phased in commencing July 1, 1990.

(1) In order to phase in the standardized schedule of rates, a "rate floor" has been established for each RCL.

(2) The rate floor for fiscal year 1990-91 shall be 85 percent of the standard rate for each RCL. The rate floor shall be increased to 92.5 percent of the standard rate for fiscal year 1991-92 for each RCL, shall be equal to the standard rate for each RCL for the period July 1, 1992, to September 13, 1992, inclusive, and shall be 92.5 percent of the standard rate for each RCL for the period September 14, 1992, to June 30, 1993, inclusive.

(3) The rate floor for each RCL shall be 95 percent of the standard rate for each RCL for the 1993-94 fiscal year. The rate floor shall be equal to the standard rate for each RCL for the 1994-95 fiscal year and beyond.

(f) Except as specified in paragraph (1), the department shall determine the RCL for each group home program on a prospective basis, according to the level of care and services that the group home operator projects will be provided during the period of time for which the rate is being established.



(1) For a group home program for which the department established a rate effective prior to June 30, 1990, that took into account the program's historical costs, the department shall establish the rate for fiscal year 1990-91 by determining the RCL on a retrospective basis, according to the level of care and services actually provided between July 1 and December 31, 1989, or between July 1, 1989, and March 31, 1990.

(2) Group home programs that fail to maintain at least the level of care and services associated with the RCL upon which their rate was established shall inform the department. The department shall develop regulations specifying procedures to be applied when a group home fails to maintain the level of services projected, including, but not limited to, rate reduction and recovery of overpayments.

(3) The department shall not reduce the rate, establish an overpayment, or take other actions pursuant to paragraph (2) for any period that a group home program maintains the level of care and services associated with the RCL for children actually residing in the facility. Determinations of levels of care and services shall be made in the same way as modifications of overpayments are made pursuant to paragraph (2) of subdivision (b) of Section 11466.2.

(4) Beginning July 1, 1994, for group homes paid at rates below the standard rate established by subdivision (g), a group home program shall remain at its current RCL if it maintains at least the level of care and services associated with that percentage of the points required to be at that RCL that equals the percentage of the standard rate used to establish the group home's rate. In no event, however, shall points per child per month be reduced more than 10 points below the minimum required for the current RCL. The RCL for a program shall not increase due to the operation of this paragraph absent any program changes approved by the department pursuant to subdivision (k).

(5) A group home program that substantially changes its staffing pattern from that reported in the group home program statement shall provide notification of this change to all counties that have placed children currently in care. This notification shall be provided whether or not the RCL for the program may change as a result of the change in staffing pattern.

(g) The standardized schedule of rates for fiscal year 1990-91 is:

		FY 1990-91	
Rate Classification		Standard Rate	Rate Floor (85%)
Level	Point Ranges		
1	Under 60	\$1,183	\$1,006



2	60-89	1,478	1,256
3	90-119	1,773	1,507
4	120-149	2,067	1,757
5	150-179	2,360	2,006
6	180-209	2,656	2,258
7	210-239	2,950	2,508
8	240-269	3,245	2,758
9	270-299	3,539	3,008
10	300-329	3,834	3,259
11	330-359	4,127	3,508
12	360-389	4,423	3,760
13	390-419	4,720	4,012
14	420 & Up	5,013	4,261

(h) (1) For fiscal year 1990-91, the standardized schedule of rates shall be implemented as follows:

(A) Any group home program which received an AFDC-FC rate in the prior fiscal year below the standard rate for the fiscal year 1990-91 RCL shall receive their 1989-90 rate plus an amount equal to the California Necessities Index (CNI). The rate for fiscal year 1990-91 at which the state will participate shall not exceed the standard rate for the RCL.

(B) If the CNI increase to the group home program's fiscal year 1989-90 rate does not raise the group home program to the rate floor for the RCL, the group home program shall receive a rate equal to the rate floor for the RCL.

(C) A group home program which received an AFDC-FC rate for fiscal year 1989-90 at or above the standard rate for the RCL for fiscal year 1990-91 shall continue to receive that fiscal year 1989-90 rate.

(2) For that portion of the 1997-98 fiscal year, commencing on November 1, 1997, and the 1998-99 fiscal year, the standardized rate for each RCL shall be adjusted by an amount equal to the California Necessities Index computed pursuant to the methodology described in Section 11453.

(A) Any group home program which received an AFDC-FC rate in the prior fiscal year at or above the adjusted standard rate for the RCL in the current fiscal year shall continue to receive that rate.

(B) A group home program which received an AFDC-FC rate in the prior fiscal year below the standard rate for the RCL in the current fiscal year shall receive that rate adjusted by an amount equal to the CNI. The rate for the current fiscal year shall not exceed the standard rate for the RCL and shall not be less than the rate floor for the RCL.



(3) Beginning with the 1999–2000 fiscal year, the standardized schedule of rates shall be adjusted annually by an amount equal to the CNI computed pursuant to Section 11453, subject to the availability of funds.

(A) Any group home program which received an AFDC-FC rate in the prior fiscal year at or above the adjusted standard rate for the RCL in the current fiscal year shall continue to receive that rate.

(B) Any group home program which received an AFDC-FC rate in the prior fiscal year below the adjusted standard rate for the RCL in the current fiscal year shall receive the adjusted RCL rate.

(i) (1) (A) The rate for a new group home program of a new or existing provider shall be established at the rate floor for the new program's projected RCL.

(B) On and after the operative date of this subparagraph, the department shall not, prior to July 1, 1993, establish a rate for a new group home program of a new or existing provider.

(2) The department shall not establish a rate for a new program of a new or existing provider unless the provider submits a recommendation from the host county, the primary placing county, or a regional consortium of counties that the program is needed in that county; that the provider is capable of effectively and efficiently operating the program; and that the provider is willing and able to accept AFDC-FC children for placement who are determined by the placing agency to need the level of care and services that will be provided by the program.

(3) The department shall encourage the establishment of consortia of county placing agencies on a regional basis for the purpose of making decisions and recommendations about the need for, and use of, group home programs and other foster care providers within the regions.

(4) The department shall annually conduct a county-by-county survey to determine the unmet placement needs of children placed pursuant to Sections 300 and Section 601 or 602, and shall publish its findings by November 1 of each year.

(j) The department shall develop regulations specifying ratesetting procedures for program expansions, reductions, or modifications, including increases or decreases in licensed capacity, or increases or decreases in level of care or services.

(k) (1) For the purpose of this subdivision, “program change” means any alteration to an existing group home program planned by a provider that will increase the RCL or AFDC-FC rate. An increase in the licensed capacity or other alteration to an existing group home program that does not increase the RCL or AFDC-FC rate shall not constitute a program change.

(2) (A) Prior to July 1, 1993, the rate for a group home program shall not increase, as the result of a program change, from the rate established for the program effective June 30, 1992. For rate increases



as a result of a program change which became effective between July 1, 1992, and the effective date of this paragraph, the department shall adjust rates downward as necessary to comply with this chapter. Notwithstanding any other provisions of law, a group home provider shall be allowed to change a group home program to reflect a decrease in services due to the provisions of this paragraph.

(B) For the 1993–94 fiscal year, the rate for a group home program shall not increase, as the result of a program change, from the rate established for the program effective July 1, 1993, except as provided in paragraph (3).

(C) For the 1994–95 fiscal year, the 1995–96 fiscal year, and the 1996–97 fiscal year, the rate for a group home program shall not increase, as the result of a program change, from the rate established for the program effective July 1, 1994, except as provided in paragraph (3).

(3) (A) For the 1993–94 fiscal year, the 1994–95 fiscal year, the 1995–96 fiscal year, and the 1996–97 fiscal year, the department shall not establish a rate for a new program of a new or existing provider or approve a program change for an existing provider that either increases the program's RCL or AFDC-FC rate, or increases the licensed capacity of the program as a result of decreases in another program with a lower RCL or lower AFDC-FC rate that is operated by that provider, unless both of the conditions specified in this paragraph are met.

(i) The licensee obtains a letter of recommendation from the host county, primary placing county, or regional consortium of counties regarding the proposed program change or new program.

(ii) The county determines that there is no increased cost to the General Fund.

(B) Notwithstanding subparagraph (A), the department may grant a request for a new program or program change, not to exceed 25 beds, statewide, if (i) the licensee obtains a letter of recommendation from the host county, primary placing county, or regional consortium of counties regarding the proposed program change or new program, and (ii) the new program or program change will result in a reduction of referrals to state hospitals during the 1993–94 fiscal year, the 1994–95 fiscal year, the 1995–96 fiscal year, or the 1996–97 fiscal year.

(l) General unrestricted or undesignated private charitable donations and contributions made to charitable or nonprofit organizations shall not be deducted from the cost of providing services pursuant to this section. The donations and contributions shall not be considered in any determination of maximum expenditures made by the department.

(m) The department shall, by October 1 each year, commencing October 1, 1992, provide the Joint Legislative Budget Committee with a list of any new departmental requirements established during



the previous fiscal year concerning the operation of group homes, and of any unusual, industrywide increase in costs associated with the provision of group care which may have significant fiscal impact on providers of group homes care. The committee may, in fiscal year 1993-94 and beyond, use the list to determine whether an appropriation for rate adjustments is needed in the subsequent fiscal year.

(n) This section shall become operative on July 1, 1995.

SEC. 2. Section 11462.01 of the Welfare and Institutions Code is amended to read:

11462.01. (a) Commencing July 1, 1994, a group home program shall be classified at RCL 13 or RCL 14 if the program meets all of the following requirements:

(1) The group home program is providing, or has proposed to provide, the level of care and services necessary to generate sufficient points in the ratesetting process to be classified at RCL 13 if the rate application is for RCL 13 or to be classified at RCL 14 if the rate application is for RCL 14.

(2) (A) (i) The group home provider shall agree not to accept for placement into a group home program AFDC-FC funded children, including voluntary placements and seriously emotionally disturbed children placed out-of-home pursuant to an individualized education program developed under Section 7572.5 of the Government Code, who have not been approved for placement by an interagency placement committee, as described by Section 4096. The approval shall be in writing and shall indicate that the interagency placement committee has determined the child is seriously emotionally disturbed, as defined by Section 5600.3 and subject to Section 1502.4 of the Health and Safety Code, and that the child needs the level of care provided by the group home.

(ii) For purposes of clause (i), group home providers who accept seriously emotionally disturbed children who are assessed and placed out-of-home pursuant to an individualized education program developed under Section 7572.5 of the Government Code shall be deemed to have met the interagency placement committee approval for placement requirements of clause (i) if the individualized education program assessment indicates that the child has been determined to be seriously emotionally disturbed, as defined in Section 5600.3 and subject to Section 1502.4 of the Health and Safety Code, and needs the level of care described in clause (i).

(B) (i) Nothing in this subdivision shall prevent the emergency placement of a child into a group home program prior to the determination by the interagency placement committee pursuant to subclause (i) of subparagraph (A) if a licensed mental health professional, as defined in the department's AFDC-FC ratesetting regulations, has evaluated, in writing, the child within 72 hours of placement, and determined the child to be seriously emotionally



disturbed and in need of the care and services provided by the group home program.

(ii) The interagency placement committee shall, within 30 days of placement pursuant to clause (i), make the determination required by clause (i) of subparagraph (A).

(iii) If, pursuant to clause (ii), the placement is determined to be appropriate, the committee shall transmit the approval, in writing, to the county placing agency and the group home provider.

(iv) If, pursuant to clause (ii) the placement is determined not to be appropriate, the child shall be removed from the group home and referred to a more appropriate placement, as specified in subdivision (f).

(C) Commencing December 15, 1992, with respect to AFDC-FC funded children, only those children who are approved for placement by an interagency placement committee may be accepted by a group home under this subdivision.

(3) The group home program is certified by the State Department of Mental Health pursuant to Section 4096.5.

(b) The department shall not establish a rate for a group home requesting a program change to RCL 13 or RCL 14 unless the group home provider submits a recommendation from the host county or the primary placing county that the program is needed and that the provider is willing and capable of operating the program at the level sought. For purposes of this subdivision, “host county,” “primary placing county,” and “program change” mean the same as defined in the department’s AFDC-FC ratesetting regulations.

(c) The effective date of rates set at RCL 13 or RCL 14 shall be the date that all the requirements are met, but not prior to July 1 of that fiscal year. Nothing in this section shall affect RCL 13 or RCL 14 ratesetting determinations in prior years.

(d) Any group home program that has been classified at RCL 13 or RCL 14 pursuant to the requirements of subdivision (a) shall be reclassified at the appropriate lower RCL with a commensurate reduction in rate if either of the following occurs:

(1) The group home program fails to maintain the level of care and services necessary to generate the necessary number of points for RCL 13 or RCL 14, as required by paragraph (1) of subdivision (a). The determination of points shall be made consistent with the department’s AFDC-FC ratesetting regulations for other rate classification levels.

(2) The group home program fails to maintain a certified mental health treatment program as required by paragraph (3) of subdivision (a).

(3) In the event of a determination under paragraph (1), the group home may appeal the finding or submit a corrective action plan. The appeal process specified in Section 11466.6 shall be



available to RCL 13 and RCL 14 group home providers. During any appeal, the group home shall maintain the appropriate level of care.

(e) The interagency placement committee shall periodically review, but no less often than that required by current law, the placement of the child. If the committee determines that the child no longer needs, or is not benefiting from, placement in a RCL 13 or RCL 14 group home, the committee shall require the removal of the child and a new disposition.

(f) (1) (A) If, at any time subsequent to placement in an RCL 13 or RCL 14 group home program, the interagency placement committee determines either that the child is not seriously emotionally disturbed or is not in need of the care and services provided by the group home program, it shall notify, in writing, both the county placing agency and the group home provider within 10 days of the determination.

(B) The county placing agency shall notify the group home provider, in writing, within five days from the date of the notice from the committee, of the county's plan for removal of the child.

(C) The county placing agency shall remove the child from the group home program within 30 days from the date of the notice from the interagency placement committee.

(2) (A) If a county placing agency does not remove a child within 30 days from the date of the notice from the interagency placement committee, the group home provider shall notify the interagency placement committee and the department, in writing, of the county's failure to remove the child from the group home program.

(B) The group home provider shall make the notification required by subparagraph (A) within five days of the expiration of the 30-day removal period. If notification is made, a group home provider shall not be subject to an overpayment determination due to failure of the county placing agency to remove the child.

(3) Any county placing agency that fails to remove a child from a group home program under this paragraph within 30 days from the date of the notice from the interagency placement committee shall be assessed a penalty in the amount of the state and federal financial participation in the AFDC-FC rate paid on behalf of the child commencing on the 31st day and continuing until the child is removed.

(g) (1) If any RCL 13 or RCL 14 group home provider discovers that it does not have written approval for placement of any AFDC-FC funded child placed on or after December 15, 1992, from the interagency placement committee, it shall notify the county placing agency, in writing, and shall request the county to obtain approval from the interagency placement committee or remove the child from the group home program. A group home provider shall have 30 days from the child's first day of placement to discover the placement error and to notify the county placing agency.



(2) Any county placing agency that receives notification pursuant to paragraph (2) of subdivision (f) shall obtain approval for placement from the interagency placement committee or remove the child from the group home program within 30 days from the date of the notice from the group home provider. The program shall not be reclassified to a lower RCL for a violation of the provisions referred to in this paragraph.

(3) (A) If a county placing agency does not have the placement of a child approved by the interagency placement committee or removed from the group home within 30 days from the date of the notice from the group home provider, the group home provider shall notify the county placing agency and the department, in writing, of the county's failure to have the placement of the child approved or remove the child from the group home program.

(B) The group home provider shall make the notification required by subparagraph (A) within five days after the expiration of the 30-day approval or removal period. If notification is made, a group home provider shall not be subject to an overpayment determination due to failure of the county placing agency to remove the child.

(C) Any group home provider that fails to notify the county placing agency pursuant to subparagraph (A) shall be assessed a penalty in the amount of the AFDC-FC rate paid to the group home provider on behalf of the child commencing on the 31st day of placement and continuing until the county placing agency is notified.

(4) Any county placing agency that fails to have the placement of a child approved or to have the child removed from the group home program within 30 days shall be assessed a penalty in the amount of the state and federal financial participation in the AFDC-FC rate paid on behalf of the child commencing on the 31st day of placement and continuing until the child is removed.

(h) The department shall develop regulations to obtain payment of assessed penalties as provided in this section. For audit purposes and the application of penalties for RCL 13 and RCL 14 programs, the department shall apply statutory provisions that were in effect during the period for which the audit was conducted.

(i) (1) Nothing in this subparagraph shall prohibit a group home classified at RCL 13 or RCL 14 for purposes of the AFDC-FC program, from accepting private placements of children.

(2) In cases where a referral is not from a public agency and no public funding is involved, there shall be no requirement for public agency review or determination of need.

(3) Children subject to paragraphs (1) and (2) shall have been assessed as seriously emotionally disturbed, as defined in Section 5600.3 and subject to Section 1502.4 of the Health and Safety Code, by a licensed mental health professional, as defined in Sections 629 to 633, inclusive, of Title 9 of the California Code of Regulations.



(j) A child shall not be placed in a group home program classified at an RCL 13 or RCL 14 if the placement is paid for with county-only funds unless the child is assessed as seriously emotionally disturbed, as defined in Section 5600.3, subject to Section 1502.4 of the Health and Safety Code, by a licensed mental health professional, as defined in Sections 629 to 633, inclusive, of Title 9 of the California Code of Regulations.

SEC. 3. Section 11468.6 of the Welfare and Institutions Code is amended to read:

11468.6. (a) The director shall establish administrative procedures to review group home audit findings.

(b) A group home provider, including an RCL 13 or an RCL 14 provider, may request a hearing to examine any disputed audit finding that results in an overpayment or adjustment to the provider's rate, or that reduces the provider's overall RCL point total pursuant to Section 11462. The administrative review process established in this section shall not examine issues regarding the authority of the department to set rates, determine RCL points, conduct audits, or collect overpayments from a group home provider.

(c) The administrative appeal process established pursuant to this section shall commence with an informal hearing, and provide for a formal administrative hearing of the informal level appeal record and decision by a hearing officer appointed by the director. The department shall make every effort to contract with the State Department of Health Services to conduct the informal hearings required by this subdivision during the first year of implementation of this section.

(d) An amended audit report may be issued by the department for the fiscal period or periods for which the proceedings are pending under this section, if at the time of the hearing, the group home provider submits additional documentation or evidence that was not available to the department at the time of the audit. The proceedings shall be suspended for a period not exceeding 120 days while the department completes an amended audit and the provider identifies any additional disputes that result from an amended audit report. Additional audit findings included in an amended audit report may also be included in the proceedings at the request of the provider.

(e) Within 120 days after submission of a proposed decision, the director shall do one of the following:

(1) Adopt the proposed decision with or without reading or hearing the record.

(2) Reject the proposed decision and adopt an alternative decision based upon the documentary and electronically recorded record, with or without taking additional evidence.

(3) Refer the matter to the same or a different hearing officer to take additional evidence. If the case is so assigned, the hearing officer



shall, within 90 days, prepare a proposed decision, based upon the additional evidence and the documentary and electronically recorded record of the prior hearing. The director may then take one of the actions described in this subdivision in regard to the new proposed decision. The director may return a proposed decision twice on the same appeal.

(f) (1) The director's decision shall be final when the decision is mailed to the parties. However, the director retains jurisdiction to correct clerical errors.

(2) Copies of the final decision of the director and the hearing officer's proposed decision, if it was not adopted by the director, shall be mailed by certified mail to the parties.

(g) The group home provider may request review of the final decision of the director pursuant to this section in accordance with Section 1094.5 of the Code of Civil Procedures within six months of the issuance of the director's final decision.

SEC. 4. The Legislature reiterates its findings and declarations in Section 11467 of the Welfare and Institutions Code and its interest in assessing children for levels of care. The State Department of Social Services shall report to the appropriate policy and fiscal committees of the Legislature, by December 1, 1996, on its progress in implementing the requirements of Section 11467 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, including its projected date for full implementation.

SEC. 5. This act is an urgency statute necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety within the meaning of Article IV of the Constitution and shall go into immediate effect. The facts constituting the necessity are:

In order that foster children may be properly assessed for the level of care they are receiving and that they experience the best care possible while in a group home placement, it is necessary that this act take effect immediately.

