

Family Urgent Response System (FURS) Outreach Toolkit



Children Now and a diverse coalition of child welfare and behavioral health stakeholders worked together to develop and get the Family Urgent Response System (FURS) enacted into law in California in 2019. Since that time, Children Now has partnered with the state, counties, youth, caregivers, and other stakeholders to plan for the state and counties' launch of FURS in 2021 and to spread the word about this important trauma-informed resource. We have created this **FURS Outreach Toolkit** to help build broad public awareness of FURS throughout California.



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Background

Children and youth who have spent time in foster care have already experienced maltreatment, loss, and disrupted relationships. To heal from this trauma, they need stable homes and living situations where they can develop and maintain supportive, consistent, and loving relationships with at least one adult committed to them unconditionally. Efforts by caregivers and youth to build strong relationships can quickly derail when they face barriers accessing crucial community-based, trauma-informed supports during critical moments. Without immediate supports and services, even minor miscommunications and frustrations can intensify and have detrimental results, leaving youth feeling further traumatized and possibly facing another relationship disruption, a change in living situation, hospitalization, institutionalization, or even re-entry into foster care for young people who have exited care to adoption, reunification, or guardianship. Even worse, in many circumstances, the police are called during situations of instability, leading to the inappropriate criminalization of children who have experienced trauma.

Enacted in 2019, the Family Urgent Response System (FURS) is designed to provide children and youth currently or formerly in foster care in California and their caregivers with the immediate trauma-informed support they need when issues big or small arise through a 24/7 statewide hotline and county mobile response systems. This coordinated state and community-based solution is needed now more than ever to help preserve relationships, link youth and families to longer-term supports and services, promote healing, and prevent calls to law enforcement and criminalization of traumatized youth in the face of the added isolation, uncertainty, anxiety, and instability brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. FURS is also a critical resource to promote stability for older youth (up to age 21) currently or formerly in foster care who are living on their own. The Cal-FURS statewide hotline launched in March 2021 and all 58 counties launched their full mobile response systems as of July 2021.

A Los Angeles caregiver with long-term experience caring for many children in foster care has used FURS and shared her thoughts with Children Now for [a blog](#) on FURS,

“Oh my goodness, I was so pleased with FURS’ service! The counselor was so reassuring. She questioned me about the situation and guided me as I worked with my foster child. She helped me find ways to calm them down to where they were no longer head banging nor biting....”

Minnie, a youth in extended foster care also shared her thoughts on FURS when interviewed for [the blog](#). She believes FURS will provide,

“...important and indispensable advocacy for caregivers and youth. As the middleman between a youth and a caregiver, it can bring unity and harmony into the relationship and resources to help both the youth and caregiver.”

Who Does FURS Serve?

- Children and youth (up to age 21) currently in foster care and their caregivers.
- Children and youth (up to age 21) who have left foster care for any reason, including to adoption, reunification with a parent, or guardianship, and their caregivers.
- This includes youth who have spent time in foster care through the child welfare OR the probation/justice system.
- Caregivers is defined broadly to include someone acting in a caregiving role.

More info on Cal-FURS is available here: <https://www.cal-furs.org/>

How is FURS Different than Other Resources?

FURS was created to ensure that immediate support is available in a consistent and coordinated manner throughout California to help preserve and enhance relationships between children or youth and their caregivers, prevent or reduce calls to 911 or police, and promote healing and stability. The resources available in each county or community differ vastly; even when resources exist there are variations in who they serve and when they are available. Children, youth, and caregivers often report having trouble finding the support they need at the point in time when they most need it, not knowing who to contact during critical moments, and/or being turned away because their situation does not rise to a certain level of urgency or emergency or otherwise fit within a resource's eligibility criteria.

FURS fills this gap by providing a central place for children, youth, and their caregivers to contact to receive immediate phone support, swift in-person support if wanted, and help connecting to ongoing community-based services on a 24/7/365 basis for any situation of instability as defined by the child, youth, or caregiver. For example, they may need a peer or caring counselor to help deescalate a fight or conflict; be available to listen when they are feeling frustrated, sad, or overwhelmed; provide support during a mental health crisis or a parenting challenge; or help connect them to longer-term resources in their community. Through FURS, children or youth and their caregivers will receive support and resources that are individualized and tailored to their specific situation and needs.

Sample Description to Include on a Form or a Resource Guide

The Family Urgent Response System (FURS) provides free 24/7 call, text, chat and in-person support to children and youth (up to age 21) who have spent time in foster care and their caregivers for issues big or small. For support, contact FURS at 1-833-939-3877 (call or text) or visit [cal-furs.org](https://www.cal-furs.org) (live chat).

Sample Newsletter, Website, or Email Content

GENERAL AUDIENCE

California's Family Urgent Response System (FURS) launched in 2021 to provide **FREE 24/7** support to children and youth (up to age 21) who have spent time in foster care and their caregivers for issues **big or small!** FURS is a **safe and judgment-free** resource to help youth and caregivers feel supported.

FURS can be reached at **1-833-939-3877** (call or text) or at <https://www.cal-furs.org/> (for live chat).

What supports are available?

- **Free phone, text, or chat support.** Caring counselors are available to listen and help children or youth and caregivers work through any conflicts or problems they are having.
- Local mobile response teams are available to swiftly come meet with children or youth and/or caregivers at a place that they choose if they want **in-person support**.
- Help connecting to community resources for ongoing support after any immediate needs are met.

More information is available here: <https://www.cal-furs.org/>

CHILDREN OR YOUTH AUDIENCE

California's Family Urgent Response System (FURS) launched in 2021 to provide **24/7 support** to children and youth (up to age 21) who have spent time in foster care and their caregivers for issues **big or small!**

FURS can be reached at **1-833-939-3877** (call or text) or <https://www.cal-furs.org/> (for live chat).

What free supports are available?

- Phone, text, or chat support
- In-person support, if you want it, at a location of your choosing
- Connection to ongoing supports in your community after any immediate needs are met

When should children or youth contact FURS?

- For issues **big or small**. You can reach out when you:
 - Feel frustrated, alone, sad, or unsupported
 - Have a fight with a caregiver, roommate, or teacher
 - Are thinking of running away or hurting yourself
 - Need information on local resources
- FURS is a **safe and judgment-free** resource to help you feel supported.

More information on FURS is available here: <https://www.cal-furs.org/>

Sample Social Media:

Suggested Hashtags

#FURSCanHelp, #FURSi1st, #fosteryouth, #fosterstability, #fosterfamilies, #adoptees, #adoptivefamily, #agedout, #formerfosteryouth, #fostadopt, #fosteralumni, #fostercare, #fostercareawareness, #fosterchild, #fosterchildren, #fosterkids, #fosterlove, #fosterparents, #fostersupport, #fosterteens, #kinship, #nationalfostercaremonth, #resourcefamilies, #reunification, #socialwork, #systemimpacted

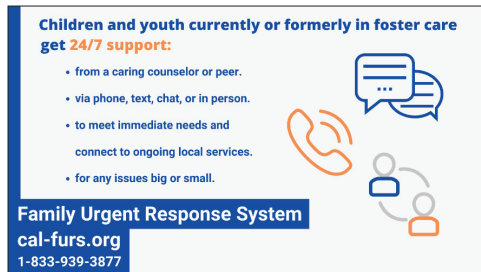
Within this toolkit you will find a few sample social media graphics to use with different audiences. These graphics and additional images sized for different social media platforms are available in this library:

[Downloadable Social Media Image Library](#)

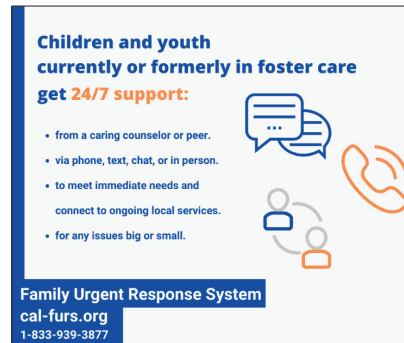
CHILDREN OR YOUTH AUDIENCE

Sample Social Media Images

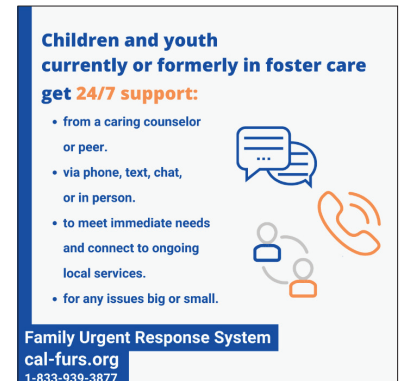
Twitter



Facebook



Instagram



Sample Twitter Posts

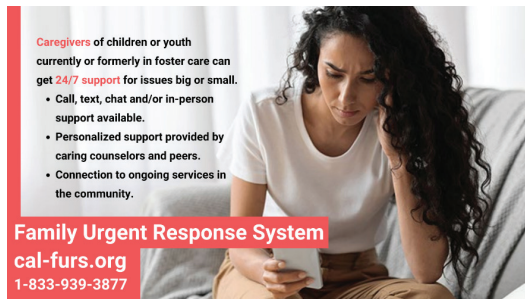
1. Have you spent time in #fostercare in California? Need someone to talk to? #FURSCanHelp. FURS is always available to provide a safe, judgment-free space to talk about your worries or vent. Call or text 1-833-939-3877 or visit cal-furs.org for live chat or more info.
2. Are you a current or former #fosteryouth? Feeling frustrated, unsupported, alone, or overwhelmed? For 24/7 support, call or text FURS at 1-833-939-3877 or visit cal-furs.org. #FURSCanHelp
3. Life is hard. Relationships are difficult. You are not alone. Current or former #fosteryouth in CA and their caregivers can get 24/7/365 text, chat, and in person support for issues big or small. Call or text 1-833-939-3877 or visit cal-furs.org. #fostersupport #FURSCanHelp

Sample Facebook/Instagram Posts

1. Have you spent time in foster care? Need someone to talk to? California's Family Urgent Response System (FURS) is always available to provide you with a safe, judgment-free space to share your worries or vent. Free text, chat, phone, and in person support is available for issues big or small. Call or text 1-833-939-3877 or visit cal-furs.org for more information. #FURSCanHelp #fosteryouth
2. Are you a current or former #fosteryouth? Feeling frustrated, sad, alone, unsupported, or overwhelmed? Had a fight with your roommate, caregiver, or someone else in your life? You can get 24/7 free text, call, chat, or in-person support from California's Family Urgent Response System (FURS) for issues big or small. Call or text FURS at 1-833-939-3877 or visit cal-furs.org to connect with a caring counselor or peer. #fosterstability #FURSCanHelp

Sample Social Media Images

Twitter



Facebook



Instagram



Sample Twitter Posts

1. Are you caring for a child or youth who has spent time in #fostercare in CA? FURS provides free 24/7/365 phone, text, chat, and in-person support whenever you need it! Reaching out for help is a sign of strength. Visit cal-furs.org for more info. #FURSCanHelp
2. You are not alone. Are you a caregiver for a current or former #fosteryouth in CA? FURS is here to help you 24/7. Call or text 1-833-939-3877 or visit cal-furs.org for support with issues big or small. #FURSCanHelp
3. FURS is a free 24/7 resource for children and youth who have spent time in #fostercare in CA and their caregivers to help preserve relationships and living situations. Call or text 1-833-939-3877 or visit cal-furs.org whenever you need support. #FURSCanHelp



Sample Instagram/Facebook Posts:



1. Are you a caregiver for a child or youth who has spent time in #fostercare? Need additional support? California's Family Urgent Response System (FURS) was created to help preserve and enhance relationships, prevent or reduce calls to 911 or police, and promote stability. FURS is available to provide free 24/7/365 phone, text, chat, and in-person support for issues big or small! Call or text 1-833-939-3877 or visit cal-furs.org for more information. #FURSCanHelp #FURSi1st
2. You are not alone. Are you caring for a current or former #fosteryouth? California's Family Urgent Response System (FURS) is here to support you 24/7 when issues big or small come up. Free phone, chat, and in-person support are available. Call or text 1-833-939-3877 or visit cal-furs.org for more information. #FURSCanHelp
3. Reaching out is a sign of strength – we all need a little help sometimes! California's Family Urgent Response System (FURS) is a free 24/7 resource for children and youth who have spent time in foster care and their caregivers to help support relationships, preserve living situations, and prevent calls to police. Contact 1-833-939-3877 or visit cal-furs.org for issues big or small. #FURSCanHelp #FURSi1st

Sample Social Media Images

Twitter



Facebook



Instagram



Sample Twitter Posts:

1. FURS is available 24/7 to provide free, trauma-informed phone, text, chat, and in-person support to children or youth who have spent time in #fostercare in CA & their caregivers. Check out cal-furs.org to learn how #FURSCanHelp!
2. Children and youth who have spent time in #fostercare in CA and their caregivers can now get 24/7/365 support for issues big or small through FURS. Visit cal-furs.org for more information. #FURSCanHelp #FURSi1st
3. Help spread the word! FURS is a free 24/7/365 resource to support children or youth who have spent time in #fostercare in CA and their caregivers. Outreach flyers are available [here](#) or visit cal-furs.org to learn more. #FURSCanHelp
4. FURS was created to provide 24/7 support to current and former #fosteryouth in CA and their caregivers, preserve relationships, and reduce calls to 911 or police. For more info, visit cal-furs.org. #FURSi1st #fosterstability



Sample Facebook or Instagram Posts:

1. California's Family Urgent Response System (FURS) is available 24/7 to provide free, trauma-informed phone, text, chat, and in-person support to youth currently or formerly in foster care and their caregivers for issues big or small. Check out cal-furs.org to learn how FURS can help! #fosteryouth #FURSCanHelp
2. Children and youth who have spent time in #fostercare and their caregivers can now get 24/7/365 trauma-informed support for issues big or small by contacting California's Family Urgent Response System (FURS). Visit cal-furs.org for more information. #FURSCanHelp
3. Help spread the word! The Family Urgent Response System (FURS) is a free 24/7/365 resource in CA to support children or youth who have spent time in #fostercare and their caregivers. FURS can help preserve relationships and living situations and reduce calls to 911 or police. Outreach flyers are available [here](#) or visit cal-furs.org to learn more. #FURSCanHelp #FURSi1st



Key Messages to Share about FURS

With Caregivers:

- Reaching out for help is a sign of strength.
- FURS is a **judgment-free and safe** resource.
- FURS is here to support you – **you are not alone**.
- FURS is here to support living situations and **preserve relationships**.
- FURS gives you an opportunity to speak with a neutral party.
- FURS is here to support you with issues **big or small**.

With Children and Youth:

- FURS is a **positive** resource.
- FURS is not here to take sides.
- FURS is a space for youth to **feel heard and understood** by a neutral party.
- FURS is a **judgment-free and safe** resource.
- FURS is here to support you with issues **big or small**.
- Reaching out for help is a sign of strength.

How You can Help:

- Share **FURS Outreach Flyers**. Flyers are available for download in multiple languages [here](#). You can also email the California Department of Social Services at furs@dss.ca.gov to request free printed flyers and wallet cards.
- Add information about FURS to your **website**. You can use the sample messaging included in this toolkit or develop your own to meet your needs.
- Encourage youth and caregivers to save the number to reach FURS (1-833-939-3877) into their **phone contacts** during meetings or visits.
- **Send a text** to youth or caregivers you know with info about FURS. Save the FURS number into your phone and share the contact as an attachment so the youth or caregiver can easily open it and save it to their phone contacts.
- **Follow Cal-FURS** on social media.
 - [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#) handle: @calfurs
 - [Facebook](#): Cal-FURS
- Reach out if you want to set up a **training** for your staff. You can contact Jessica Haspel at Children Now at jhaspel@childrennow.org or the FURS team at the California Department of Social Services at furs@dss.ca.gov
- Add information on FURS to other trainings or presentations you are giving. Children Now has created a **FURS information slide deck** (2 slides) that can be added to other trainings for current or former foster youth or their caregivers and shared with community-based organization to help spread the word about FURS. The sample slides are available for download in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).

More Resources:

- Website to access Cal-FURS: www.cal-furs.org
- FURS Guiding Principles: <https://www.cdss.ca.gov/Portals/9/FosterCare/FURS/FURS%20Guiding%20Principles.pdf>
- FURS Outreach Checklist for Counties: <https://go.childrennow.org/furs-outreach-checklist>
- FURS Blog Post from Children Now: <https://www.childrennow.org/blog/family-urgent-response-system-furs/>
- California Department of Social Services FURS Policy Webpage: <https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/cdss-programs/foster-care/furs>
- Child Welfare Information Gateway Podcast: Preventing Placement Disruptions: <https://www.childwelfare.gov/more-tools-resources/podcast/episode-70/>