

# SB 484 (Beall) – FACT SHEET

## Reduce Use of Drugs to Restrain Foster Children in Group Homes

### BACKGROUND

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More than half of California foster children in group homes are sedated with powerful chemical restraints. Inadequate oversight encourages overreliance on drugs to control California's most traumatized children. Legislation is needed to establish appropriate treatment protocols and oversight.

### PROBLEM

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More than half of the children in our state's institutions for foster children ("group homes") are medicated with powerful drugs. Resistance to taking the drugs can be, and is, punished by expulsion from the facility. The most problematic of the medications are the "antipsychotic" drugs designed to suppress the most uncontrollable behavior of schizophrenics. As a witness at last year's Congressional hearing said, "these drugs are too often misused as 'chemical straitjackets.' This is a haphazard attempt to simply control and suppress undesirable behavior, rather than treat, nurture and develop these treasured young people."

The 1000+ group homes throughout California vary widely in size, staffing and quality of care. Some are accredited, but many are not. In 2011 the state's Foster Care Ombudsman rated more than a third of the homes "unsatisfactory."

Causes of overmedication include:

- Poorly trained staff
- Sedated children allow for reduced staffing ratios
- Lack of therapeutic intervention alternatives
- Energetic promotion by manufacturers
- Lack of state oversight

### THIS BILL

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Identifies those group homes that appear to rely on psychotropic medications as the first-line or only treatment and require those with the highest rates of medication to reduce those rates and adopt alternative, less invasive treatment approaches. This bill:

- 1) Requires identification of group homes in which utilization of psychotropic medications suggests they are being used as chemical restraints

- 2) Requires inspection of facilities administering psychotropic medications above the average of all group homes, the submission of a corrective action plan within sixty days, and departmental monitoring of plan implementation.
- 3) Sets the goal of reducing the use of psychotropic medications in group homes 25% by the end of 2016 and convening all stakeholders to participate in the development of performance standards and outcome measures for reducing the use of psychotropic medications in group homes.

### SPONSOR

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National Center for Youth Law

### SUPPORT

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Alameda County Foster Youth Alliance  
Advokids  
California CASA  
Children's Advocacy Institute  
Dependency Legal Group of San Diego  
First Focus Campaign for Children  
Legal Services for Prisoners with Children  
Peers Envisioning and Engaging Recovery Services  
Public Counsel

### OPPOSE

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### STATUS

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Referred to Senate Human Services Committee

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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