

*Training Resource on*

**AB 1331:  
Accessing SSI to Improve the Transition  
for Foster Youth with Disabilities**

**Trainer's Guide for Child Welfare Supervisors and Managers**

**2008**

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The material in this module originally was written by  
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Laura Streimer and Anjuli Arora Dow of the Alliance for Children's Rights  
on behalf of the SSI Transitions Project (<http://www.ssitransitions.org>).  
The material in this document was subsequently prepared  
as a training module for CalSWEC.

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**AB 1331:  
ACCESSING SSI TO IMPROVE THE TRANSITION  
FOR FOSTER YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES  
TRAINING RESOURCE FOR CHILD WELFARE  
SUPERVISORS AND MANAGERS**

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**ABOUT THIS TRAINING RESOURCE**

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**Purpose:**

This brief training resource is designed to disseminate the vital information about Assembly Bill 1331 to everyone affected by the changes in the law. It is designed with some activities that can be conducted by a trainer, or by a supervisor or manager. The activities last about one hour, and could be used during a regularly scheduled meeting such as a unit meeting.

**Format:**

The training resource is formatted similarly to other curricula used by the training system in California. It has the following components:

*Learning Objectives* – These are brief, measurable statements of the knowledge, skills, and values that the trainee should get out of the training. The facilitator/supervisor should read them to be clear on what the specific purposes of the training are.

*Title IV-E Competencies* – These competencies guide practice and MSW education in California. They are included to show how this training resource applies to larger practice.

*Applicable Quarterly Exit Outcomes for Youth Aging Out of Foster Care* – These are included to show how this training resource applies to larger practice, specifically exit outcomes that must be tracked by child welfare workers.

*Lesson Plan* – This is a brief map of the activities included in the training, which maps the learning objectives to each segment of the training. It should help the facilitator see how the whole training fits together.

*Training Activities* – These give specific instructions/suggestions for each segment of the training, and indicate what materials are needed, and how to conduct and process the training activities. Facilitators should read these and be familiar with them. This is not a scripted training, so facilitators may want to modify some of the discussion to fit the needs of their particular county or audience.

*Trainee's Guide and/or Supplemental Handouts* – These are part of a separate document, and are intended for the participants or trainees to use. You should have a copy for each person. You may want to print the handouts for each segment on different color paper to make it easier to distinguish them during the training. It is vital that the facilitator knows what all of the participants are using. Again, these may be modified for use with a particular group of trainees or a particular county. *All-County Letters (ACLs)* and *All-County Information Notices (ACINs)* are included in separate pdf-formatted documents. These are the official information released by the state to the counties, and are not modified.

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**COMPETENCIES AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

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**COMPETENCIES**

The trainee will understand the basic elements of the federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits program and how they pertain to a youth in foster care.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

**Knowledge:**

- K1.** The trainee will recognize the unique role that SSI can play in assisting a youth with disabilities make a successful transition from foster care into the community.
- K2.** The trainee will understand the basic elements of SSI eligibility criteria, including levels of cash assistance provided to SSI beneficiaries.
- K3.** The trainee will understand general information about the disability standard used to determine eligibility for a minor and an adult.
- K4.** The trainee will know the definitions of a range of terms used in securing and managing the benefits of a youth making the transition from foster care, including, but not limited to:
  - a.** Disability review
  - b.** Disability standard
  - c.** Presumptive disabilities
  - d.** Representative payee
  - e.** Suspended benefits
  - f.** Maintenance account
  - g.** Dedicated account

- K5.** The trainee will understand why SSI is not largely utilized by the child welfare system based on how the funding is structured.
- K6.** The trainee will learn the process for referrals and SSI applications in their respective county.

**Skills:**

- S1.** Given a case scenario, the trainee will be able to use the SSI screening tool and know when to refer a youth for the completion of a full SSI application.
- S2.** Given a case scenario, the trainee will be able to describe what specific responsibilities the county has in the management of a youth's disability benefits, including the identification of a representative payee.

**Values:**

- V1.** The trainee will recognize and value the importance of ensuring that youth with serious disabilities have access to SSI immediately upon their discharge from the foster care system.
- V2.** The trainee will value the important and singular role that the child welfare agency plays in ensuring that disabled youth receive SSI in a timely manner, and in ensuring a youth's benefits are appropriately managed as they make the transition out of the foster care system.

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**TITLE IV-E CURRICULUM COMPETENCIES**

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*The Title IV-E MSW competencies were developed for the MSW specialization in public child welfare in California, a two-year full-time graduate program. The MSW competencies may overlap with the common core competencies, but are primarily designed for a full MSW program. Learning objectives and competencies in the common core support the MSW Title IV-E competencies, but not all of the IV-E material can be delivered during an in-service training session. MSW Title IV-E competencies may therefore be linked to multiple topic areas of the common core.*

Student demonstrates the ability to identify service/treatment plan requirements to construct measurable objectives for the service plan. (4.4)

Student demonstrates knowledge of after-care services and skill in developing independent living plans with foster youth. (4.6)

Student demonstrates knowledge of the philosophy, purpose, requirements, and application of federal and state child welfare policy and legislation. (4.7)

Student understands the requirements for effectively serving and making decisions regarding children with special needs, including the balancing of parental and child rights. (4.8)

Student is able to plan, prioritize, and effectively complete activities and tasks within required time frames. (7.3)

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**APPLICABLE QUARTERLY EXIT OUTCOMES FOR YOUTH AGING OUT OF FOSTER CARE**

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Part C: Means of financial support and/or other financial resources

18. Youth who are receiving or have applied for SSI

Part E: Health care insurance

42. Youth who have Medi-Cal
43. Youth who have applied for EXTENDED Medi-Cal
44. Youth who have other medical insurance (other than Medi-Cal)
45. Youth who do not have medical insurance (Medi-Cal or other)

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**LESSON PLAN**

<b>Topic/Time</b>	<b>Learning Objective</b>	<b>Methodology</b>
<p><b>Segment 1</b> <b>30 min</b></p> <p><b>Introduction to SSI: What it is and how it can benefit youth with disabilities transitioning out of foster care.</b></p> <p><i>Why is it important to consider SSI for youth in foster care?</i></p> <p><i>What is SSI/SSP?</i></p> <p><i>What are the SSI eligibility criteria?</i></p> <p><i>What is the disability standard for SSI as a minor and adult?</i></p> <p><i>What level of cash benefit does SSI provide?</i></p> <p><i>What disabilities does the Social Security Administration consider "presumptive?"</i></p>	<p>K1. The trainee will recognize the unique role that SSI can play in assisting a youth with disabilities make a successful transition from foster care into the community.</p> <p>K2. The trainee will understand the basic elements of SSI eligibility criteria, including levels of cash assistance provided to SSI beneficiaries.</p> <p>K3. The trainee will understand general information about the disability standard used to determine eligibility for a minor and an adult.</p> <p>K4. The trainee will know the definitions of a range of terms used in securing and managing the benefits of a youth making the transition from foster care, including: disability review, disability standard, presumptive disabilities, representative payee,</p>	<p><b>Activity 1A:</b></p> <p>Ask people what questions they have about SSI prior to the start of the training.</p> <p>Review following Trainee Content:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. "Overview of SSI in California"</li> <li>2. "Benefits of SSI for transition-age youth"</li> <li>3. "On-the-job cheat sheet of important terms"</li> <li>4. "Eligibility criteria for SSI"</li> <li>5. "Disability criteria under SSI"</li> <li>6. "Chart outlining levels of cash aid provided by SSI in California" (Clarify that youth in foster care receive the non-medical board and care rate.)</li> <li>7. "List of presumptive disabilities" (Ask CWWs if they have experience with children or youth with these disabilities and whether SSI was considered.)</li> <li>8. "Case worker's duties in regards to Assembly Bill 1331"</li> </ol>

Topic/Time	Learning Objective	Methodology
	<p>suspended benefits, maintenance and dedicated accounts.</p> <p>K5. The trainee will understand why SSI is not largely utilized by the child welfare system based on how the funding is structured.</p> <p>K6. The trainee will learn the process for referrals and SSI applications in their respective county.</p>	(AB 1331)”
<p><b>Segment 2</b> <b>30 min</b></p> <p><b>How AB 1331 affects daily practice for the CWW</b></p> <p><i>Why don't more children and youth in foster care get SSI?</i></p> <p><i>How are youth screened for SSI under AB 1331?</i></p> <p><i>What are the duties of the county under AB 1331 when a youth is screened as potentially eligible for SSI?</i></p> <p><i>How are a youth's SSI benefits managed as he or she makes the transition out of foster care?</i></p> <p><i>What are the duties of the county under AB 1633?</i></p> <p><i>What is the process in my county: contracted vs. specialized unit</i></p> <p><i>Barriers &amp; Troubleshooting</i></p>	<p>V1. The trainee will recognize and value the importance of ensuring that youth with serious disabilities have access to SSI immediately upon their discharge from the foster care system.</p> <p>V2. The trainee will value the important and singular role that the child welfare agency plays in ensuring that disabled youth receive SSI in a timely manner, and in ensuring a youth's benefits are appropriately managed as they make the transition out of the foster care system.</p>	<p><b>Activity 2A:</b></p> <p>Review following trainee content:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. “Benefits of SSI for transition-age youth” (same handout from Activity 1A: Explain why counties elect to receive Title IV-E payments instead of SSI for seriously disabled youth.)</li> <li>2. “SSI: Disability screening tool”</li> <li>3. “AB 1331 application timeline”</li> <li>4. “CDSS ACL 08-12”</li> <li>5. “AB 1633: County duties”</li> <li>6. “Crossover youth: Youth in the juvenile justice system”</li> </ol> <p>Review protocols in the county for making a referral and/or assisting a youth in applying for SSI.</p> <p>Discuss how this process plays out in the specific county. This includes identifying who in the county is the AB 1331 liaison.</p>

Topic/Time	Learning Objective	Methodology
<p><b>Segment 3</b> <b>25 min</b></p> <p><b>Applying the tools of AB 1331</b></p> <p><i>(Practice sample case study)</i></p> <p><i>Goals/Expected Outcomes re: AB 1331</i></p> <p><i>Resources</i></p>	<p>S1. Given a case scenario, the trainee will be able to use the SSI screening tool and know when to refer a youth for the completion of a full SSI application.</p> <p>S2. Given a case scenario, the trainee will be able to describe what specific responsibilities the county has in the management of a youth’s disability benefits, including the identification of a representative payee</p>	<p><b>Activity 3A:</b></p> <p>Ask the trainees to read the case study on “Cory”, which outlines the experience of a 16 year-old in foster care.</p> <p>Ask people to break into small groups and discuss how they would proceed for both Case Profile 1 and Case Profile 2 of “Cory”, based on their knowledge gained from the two previous segments.</p>
<p><b>Segment 4</b> <b>5 min</b></p> <p><b>Closing</b></p>		<p>Ask for any last questions about the training and content.</p> <p>Refer trainees to the References and Bibliography as another source of information.</p> <p>Thank trainees for their time.</p>

**DAY 1, SEGMENT 1:  
TRAINING ACTIVITY 1A:  
INTRODUCTION TO SSI: WHAT IT IS AND HOW IT CAN BENEFIT YOUTH WITH  
DISABILITIES TRANSITIONING OUT OF FOSTER CARE**

**Approximate time:** 30 minutes

**Materials:**

- Trainee Content: *“Overview of SSI in California”*
- Trainee Content: *“Benefits of SSI for Transition-Age Youth”*
- Trainee Content: *“On-the-Job Cheat Sheet of Important Terms”*
- Trainee Content: *“Eligibility Criteria for SSI”*
- Trainee Content: *“Disability Criteria under SSI”*
- Trainee Content: *“Chart Outlining Levels of Cash Aid Provided by SSI in California”*
- Trainee Content: *“List of Presumptive Disabilities”*
- Trainee Content: *“Case Worker’s Duties in regard to Assembly Bill 1331 (AB 1331)”*

**Training Activity:**

- Explain the purpose of the training.
- Provide trainees with the above listed handouts
- Ask participants about their current knowledge level about SSI and what specific questions they would like addressed in the training.
- Review “Overview of SSI in California”, including the differences between two California laws that affect SSI and children/youth in foster care: AB1633 and AB1331.
- Review “Benefits of SSI for Transition-Age Youth.” Review with CWWs the importance of explaining to the youth the advantages that SSI provides. The CWW needs to be aware of the stigma that some youth attach to receiving SSI, so point out last paragraph in “Benefits of SSI for Transition-Age Youth” handout.
- Review the definitions of SSI and SSP on the “On-the-Job Cheat Sheet of Important Terms”
- Review “Eligibility Criteria for SSI”
- Review “Disability Criteria for SSI” for minors and adults.
- Review “Chart Outlining Levels of Cash Aid Provided by SSI in California”; clarify that youth in foster care receive the board and care rate.
- Review “List of Presumptive Disabilities”. Ask CWWs if they have experience with children or youth with these disabilities and whether SSI was considered.
- Review “Case Worker’s Duties in regard to AB1331”. Inform CWWs that they can use this as an on-the-job tool.
- Refer back to the “On-the-Job Cheat Sheet of Important Terms” and review the rest of the terms and definitions. Inform CWWs that they can use this as an on-the-job tool. Also point out that the URL for the SSI Transitions Project is on this OTJ Tool. Inform CWWs that they can access each of these documents and other resources here.

**Processing this Activity:**

Some questions for discussion include:

- Is SSI something that you have considered in the past for a youth preparing to “age out” of foster care?
- How was the issue of SSI benefits broached with the youth? Do you feel prepared for that conversation or would they like additional resources?
- What barriers did you face as you attempted to assist youth in accessing SSI?
- How is SSI perceived by our providers, extended family members, and other individuals who are involved in the life of the youth? Do you think there will be resistance to accessing SSI for youth in transition? If so, what is the best process for addressing that resistance?

*End of Activity*

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**DAY 1, SEGMENT 2:  
TRAINING ACTIVITY 2A:  
HOW AB 1331 AFFECTS DAILY PRACTICE  
FOR THE CHILD WELFARE WORKER**

**Approximate time:** 30 minutes

**Materials:**

- Trainee Content: “*Benefits of SSI for Transition-Age Youth*” (from Activity 1A)
- Trainee Content: “*SSI: Disability Screening Tool*”
- Trainee Content: “*AB 1331 Application Timeline*”
- Trainee Content: “*CDSS All County Letter 08-12 (re: Implementation of AB1331)*”
- Trainee Content: “*AB 1633: County Duties*”
- Trainee Content: “*Crossover Youth: Youth in the Juvenile Justice System*”

**Training Activity:**

- Provide trainees with the above-listed handouts
- Review “Benefits of SSI for Transition-Age Youth” and explain why counties elect to receive Title IV-E payments instead of SSI for seriously disabled youth.
  - ***Reason: Federal law permits the concurrent receipt of SSI benefits and federal foster care benefits (Title IV-E benefits), but the SSI benefits are offset dollar-for-dollar by the amount of federal foster care benefits a youth receives. Thus, in practice a youth can only receive both SSI and federal foster care if the SSI benefit is more than the federal foster care payment. However, in many cases, the amount of the foster care payment exceeds the amount of the SSI payment. In this situation, a youth cannot even apply for SSI benefits unless s/he either foregoes the federal foster care benefit for one month or until 30 days before his/her foster care benefits will terminate.*** (The rationale for explaining this is to help CWWs understand why more youth in foster care don’t receive SSI and why the workaround was necessary, despite a relatively high level of disability in the population.)

- Review “SSI: Disability Screening Tool.”
- Review “AB 1331 Application Timeline.”

Emphasize that there is no general timeline that can be applied. The individual circumstances for each youth must be considered when determining whether or not to submit an application. The reason for this is that SSI benefits can only be in suspense for 12 months. That requires careful consideration of when a youth in care will be discharged, to prevent exceeding that 12-month time period. If a youth is in fact going to age out at 18, an application should be submitted to SSA no later than age 17.5 due to the length of time required processing SSI applications.

- Review “CDSS ACL 08-12.”

Specifically highlight the last full paragraph in the two-page letter—that in addition to attending to the time frames mentioned in the letter, “It is important that applications not be made so early that this 12-month period is exceeded and the youth has to begin the

application process over again. It is the county's responsibility to contact the SSA to have the benefits reinstated prior to the youth aging out of foster care. The SSA does NOT initiate the request for reinstatement..."

- Review "AB 1633: County Duties."

Discuss how this process plays out in the specific county. Specifically, whose responsibility will it be to:

- (1) determine when an application is made on behalf of a youth,
- (2) remove the SSI benefits from suspense in a timely manner,
- (3) assist the youth in receiving direct payment or finding a representative payee in a timely manner, and
- (4) inform youth of the process of maintaining eligibility as adults?

*\*\*\*It is important to note in the training that each county may answer these questions differently. Therefore the training materials cannot specify these answers. The training may well raise a number of questions about the process that can subsequently be addressed in Segment 3.*

- Review "Crossover Youth: Youth in the Juvenile Justice System."

### **Processing this activity:**

- Some questions for discussion include:
  - How does this process sync with the Transitional Independent Living Plan and the 391 hearing?
  - Who is the individual in the county that currently deals with SSI?
  - Will that person be the one who leads the AB 1331 implementation?
  - Who can answer CWW questions about the county-specific process?
  - How will the process occur for youth in the probation system?
  - How can we ensure smooth transition-planning for youth who "cross over" from the dependency into the juvenile probation system, as it relates to their SSI?
  - How can we educate our foster care placements about AB 1331 and their role in submitting high quality quarterly reports that support a successful application?

*End of Activity*

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**DAY 1, SEGMENT 3**  
**TRAINING ACTIVITY 3A:**  
**APPLYING THE TOOLS OF AB 1331 TO A CASE STUDY**

**Approximate time:** 25 minutes

**Materials:**

- Case study: “Cory” including profile #1 and profile #2

**Training Activity:**

- Using the case study, break into small groups for 10 minutes and discuss two things. First, discuss how the child welfare agency would proceed with the case prior to the implementation of AB 1331. Secondly, ask trainees to discuss how they would proceed with their knowledge of AB 1331 for both profile #1 and profile #2. Ask trainees, “How does the case profile in #2 change the process?”.
- Reconvene as a group and ask one person from each group to report the conclusions of the group for both case profile #1 **AND** case profile #2.
- The trainer should note areas of consensus and areas where the process was not clear. If possible, the training will include an individual with the knowledge to answer questions about how the process will occur in the specific county.
- The trainer should point out that in case profile #2 (where Cory ages out of foster care at 19), the time for applying for SSI changes no longer begins at age 16.5. Alternatively, the child welfare agency should apply at age 17.5. The key in determining when to submit an SSI application for a youth is based on when the youth will leave the foster care system, which is usually based on when he/she will graduate from high school.

**Processing this activity:**

- Some questions for discussion include:
  - Was it clear from the case presentation that this individual was a good candidate for an SSI application? Why or why not?
  - What factors should be considered to determine when this individual’s SSI application should be submitted?
  - If this minor were on your case, what resources would you access to support him in his transition from foster care, specific to his disability?
  - How would you approach the issue of identifying a representative payee? Do you know about local programs that could serve this function, if necessary?
  - Given your new knowledge about AB 1331 and SSI, what steps will you take to ensure that it is comprehensively implemented in the county?
  - What barriers do you see for a full implementation of the policy and what recommendations would you make to remove them?

*End of Activity*

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**DAY 1, SEGMENT 4:  
TRAINING ACTIVITY 4A:  
CLOSING**

**Approximate time:** 5 minutes

**Materials:**

- Trainee Content: *References and Bibliography*

**Training Activity:**

- Trainer should ask if there are any last questions about the content of this training.
- Trainer should refer trainees to the References and Bibliography at the end of the trainee packet as another source of information.
- If there are any questions the trainer cannot answer, the trainer/trainees can contact Amy Lemley at the John Burton Foundation ([amy@johnburtonfoundation.org](mailto:amy@johnburtonfoundation.org)).
- Thank the trainees for their time.

*End of Activity*

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