

## Part 1: What is an Enhanced Care Program?

Enhanced Care Programs (ECPs) are an adaptation of existing program models, but are based on the understanding that youth may require treatment interventions and placement settings distinct from existing models, and therefore the solutions must be individualized. The development of these programs reflects the gap in the current continuum of services available, and are designed to be youth and family-centered. The ECP model is assessment-driven and highly individualized, using a variety of interventions and modalities adapted to meet the particular needs of individual youth with multiple identified needs across various domains, including any mix of the following: multiple mental health and/or substance abuse diagnoses, severe challenges in family, social and/or school functioning, neuropsychological difficulties, and/or developmental delays (referred to throughout this document as “unmet complex needs”).

Many of these “complex” behaviors are rooted in histories of severe, chronic trauma and insecure or disrupted attachment/caregiving experiences. As a result of these early and/or ongoing unmet needs for relational and environmental safety, youth may have adapted behaviors that ensure access to these needs for safety and survival. Many of these youth also have histories of involvement with systems of care (e.g., child welfare, behavioral health, probation, education) that, paralleling their earlier experiences, have been unsuccessful in accurately understanding or appropriately meeting their needs. It follows that, rather than being described as “complex care” youth, these youth may be better understood as youth with *unmet* complex needs. Although this difference in language is subtle, the invitation is profound: to promote trauma-responsive care and emphasize systemic responsibility to address unmet needs, rather than situating problems within youth and families by describing them as “complex”.

ECPs, including **Enhanced Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Program (E-STRTP, also known as “STRTP of 1”)** or **Enhanced Intensive Services Foster Care (E-ISFC, also known as “Enhanced ISFC” or “ISFC Plus”)**, provide an alternative to group residential treatment through the provision of care, treatment and services in an individually-based, intensive and structured environment. These short-term programs are intended to stabilize youth, develop clarity about youth treatment needs, create and support legal and/or emotional/relational permanency plans and enable youth to transition to less intensive services and placements within the current continuum of care, ideally with family, natural supports, or to other community-based settings. ECPs utilize a no reject, no eject model to serve California’s highest need and most vulnerable youth, including minor children and nonminor dependents. A no reject, no eject model is a commitment on the part of the provider, in collaboration with the county Child Welfare, Probation and Behavioral Health departments, to accept all youth referred, and to adjust and change interventions as needed while ensuring that the youth continues to be served by the provider.

### **Permanency Defined**

*Legal Permanency: A youth's relationship with a parenting adult is recognized by law – the adult is the child's birth, kin, foster, guardianship or adoptive parent. Legal status confers emotional, social, financial and other status.*

*Emotional/Relational Permanency: Connection to family, community and culture creates emotional and relational permanency that ensures there are adults who are reliable and committed to the youth throughout their life. Emotional/Relational permanency includes recognizing and supporting many types of important long-term relationships that help a child or young person feel loved and connected. Examples may include relationships with parents, siblings, family friends, extended family and former foster family members.*

In an ECP, youth receive comprehensive assessment, planning, therapy, rehabilitation, collateral and case management services, as well as medication and nursing support as needed. Interventions are culturally-responsive, trauma-informed, highly individualized, creative and designed to target the behaviors or symptoms that most significantly inhibit the youth's ability to be safely and successfully served within the existing continuum of care, in family, or in other community-based placements. In collaboration with the placing county and the Child and Family Team, ECPs support the youth's permanency planning process, including family search, engagement and permanency support activities as appropriate and necessary. For detailed descriptions of the E-STRTP and E-ISFC models, please see the complete guide [here](#).