

Senate Bill 511, enacted as *Education Code 56400–56414* in 2001, established the Family Empowerment Centers (FECs) funded by the California Department of Education (CDE) through an IDEA state set-aside. The FECs provide services to families with children with disabilities who are between the ages of 3 and 22 to ensure that parents, guardians, and families of children and young adults with disabilities have access to accurate information, specialized training, and peer-to-peer support.

FECs are nonprofit organizations staffed and run primarily by parents, guardians, and family members of children and young adults with disabilities and by adults with disabilities. As a condition of funding each FEC must provide training and information that meets the needs of the parents and guardians of children and young adults with disabilities and work with community-based organizations.

FEC training, information, and support assist parents and guardians of children and young adults with disabilities to:

- Better understand the nature of their children’s disabilities and their children’s educational and developmental needs.
- Communicate effectively with personnel responsible for providing special education, early intervention, and related services.
- Participate in decision-making processes and the development of individualized education programs.
- Obtain appropriate information regarding the range of options, programs, services, and resources available to assist children and young adults with disabilities and their families.
- Participate in school improvement and reform activities.
- Advocate for the child’s needs in a manner that promotes alternative forms of dispute resolution and positive relationships between parents and professionals.

There are 14 FECs throughout California. Services provided by individual centers vary, based on the training and support needs as well as the cultural or regional characteristics of families in the communities served. Resources and information are available in a variety of languages, based on the needs and characteristics of the community. Services include:

- Review, consultation, and training on individualized education programs
- Parent-to-parent/peer-to-peer support and mentoring
- Parent training
- Professional and community training
- Advocacy assistance
- Support and information about assessment
- Surrogate parent collaborations

FAMILY EMPOWERMENT AND DISABILITY COUNCIL

SB 511 also established a statewide Family Empowerment and Disability Council (FEDC) composed of the executive directors for the FECs. The FEDC, coordinated by the WestEd Center for Prevention & Early Intervention under a contract with the CDE, provides:

- Central coordination of training and information dissemination, content, and materials for FECs;
- Technical assistance and training activities;
- Evaluation of the service delivery and management of each FEC;
- Capacity-building activities;
- Uniform tracking and data collection;
- Outcome-based evaluation procedures and processes;
- Media outreach and other public education efforts to promote the goals of the FECs; and
- Support and coordination for local, state, and national system change advocacy efforts.

For more information on the Family Empowerment and Disability Council, visit the Website at www.calfedc.org or call (916) 492-4000.

SB 511's intention is the establishment of 32 Family Empowerment Centers. Current funding levels provide for 14 centers serving families in 27 of California's 85 counties. Additional centers will be added as funding is made available by the California Legislature.

Rowell Family Empowerment of Northern California

Butte, Glenn, Shasta, Siskiyou, Tehama, Trinity
www.empoweryourfamily.org
 (530) 226-5129 – local
 (877) 227-3471 – toll free

Matrix Parent Network and Resource Center

Napa, Solano, Sonoma
www.matrixparents.org
 (800) 578-2592

Support for Families of Children with Disabilities

San Francisco
www.supportforfamilies.org
 (415) 920-5040

Parents Helping Parents

Santa Clara
www.php.com
 (408) 727-5775 – local
 (855) 727-5775 – toll free

Special Parents Information Network

San Benito, Santa Cruz
www.spinsc.org | (831) 722-2800

Family Focus Resource and Empowerment Center

Portion of Los Angeles
www.familyfocusresourcecenter.org | (818) 677-6854

The Parents' Place Family Resource Center

Portion of Los Angeles
www.parentsplacefrc.com | (800) 422-2022

Westside Family Resource and Empowerment Center

Portion of Los Angeles
www.wfrec.org | (310) 258-4063

Plumas Rural Service

Lassen, Modoc, Plumas, Sierra
www.plumasruralservices.org
 (530) 283-1136

Family SOUP

Yuba, Sutter, Colusa
www.familysoup.org | (530) 751-1925

Exceptional Parents Unlimited

Fresno, Kings
www.exceptionalparents.org | (559) 229-2000

H.E.A.R.T.S. Connection Family Resource Center

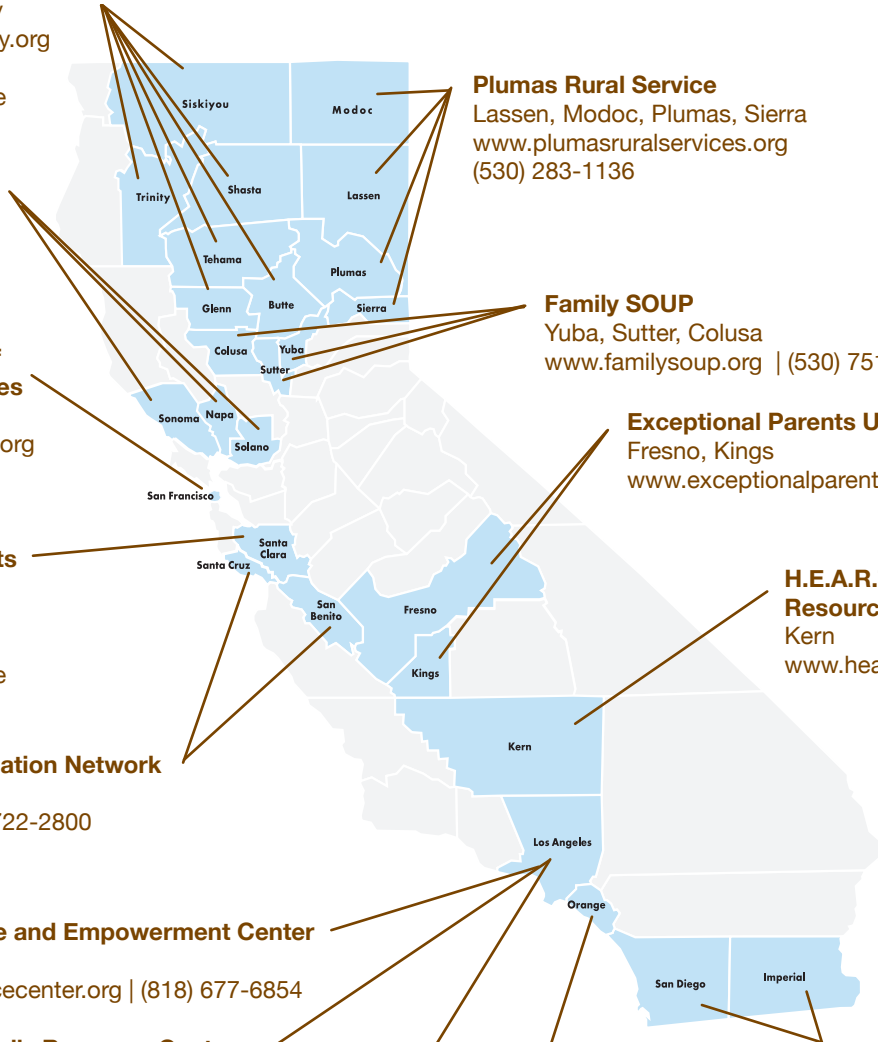
Kern
www.heartsfrc.org | (800) 210-7633

Team of Advocates for Special Kids

Orange
www.taskca.org
 (866) 828-8275

Exceptional Family Resource Center

San Diego, Imperial
www.efrconline.org | (800) 281-8252



The Family Empowerment and Disability Council is sponsored by the California Department of Education and coordinated under a contract with the WestEd Center for Prevention and Early Intervention.

September 2011 v1

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