

## **California's Governor Makes Protecting Children a Top Priority By Requiring Background Checks for Professional Visitation Monitors**

*Governor Gavin Newsom Signs Into Law a Bill Sponsored by Change for Justice that Helps Protect Children from Predators*

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (October 15, 2019) -- Seeking to protect some of our most vulnerable children from predators, California Governor Gavin Newsom signed [Assembly Bill 1165](#) into law. Sponsored by children's advocacy nonprofit, [Change for Justice](#), the new law requires professional visitation monitors to have background checks and enhanced in-person training. Change for Justice's founder Jennifer Moores says, "Without this law in place, how are parents expected to know if they are entrusting their kids into safe hands? When we learned that professional visitation monitors weren't required to have a background check we thought there must be a mistake. From school volunteers to daycare workers, the people we entrust with our children are required to have a background check. There was no question for us that professional visitation monitors who are often charged with maintaining our kids health and safety in high-conflict situations and who are responsible for transporting the children alone, should be required to have a background check."

The bill received unanimous "Yes" votes in both the California State Senate and the Assembly. The bill passed thanks to the strong leadership of author, Assemblymember Rebecca Bauer-Kahan (D-Orinda). "I am very proud to have AB 1165 signed into law by Governor Newsom," says [Assemblymember Rebecca Bauer-Kahan](#). "Protecting the lives and safety of our children, especially when they are so vulnerable, from unregulated predators is a no brainer when it comes to good governance. Thank you to Change for Justice for their support and sponsorship on this common sense bill." AB 1165 also has the strong support and leadership from coauthor Assemblywoman Lorena Gonzalez (D-San Diego).

In child custody cases, family court judges generally require supervised visitation when there are allegations or a history of domestic violence, child abuse and neglect or substance abuse. Supervised visitation is also generally required when there are parenting concerns such as mental illness or threats of abduction. If a mutually agreed upon family member is not an option to provide this supervision, or the judge otherwise determines it necessary, then paid, professional visitation monitors are frequently chosen to be present during parental visits with their children.

While many monitors advertise their services online and have their business listing on the court's website, there was no way for a parent to verify whether the requisite training was actually done and the qualifications were met. The only required verification was for monitors to fill out a declaration under penalty of perjury that they have undergone training and, for example, have not been convicted of child

molestation, child abuse or other crimes. "The truth is no one was looking at the monitor's background to see if the monitors were putting children in further danger," says Moores. Now that AB 1165 is law, it allows parents to know if their professional monitor passed a background check and is registered as a trustline provider. Monitors are also now required to have enhanced training that includes a standardized online course in child abuse reporting that is a requirement for other mandated reporters. The law will go into effect January 1, 2021.

[Change for Justice](#): Change for Justice is a 501(c)(4) nonprofit in California. Change for Justice is empowering families going through legal transitions with education and inspiring long-term change through meaningful legislation.