

# What are Family Empowerment Centers?

California's fourteen Family Empowerment Centers (FECs) are parent lead nonprofit organizations with a mission to assist families of children with disabilities age three to twenty-two in the area of educational needs. Family Empowerment Centers help families navigate the educational system and ensure that each child is receiving a free and appropriate education.



Family Empowerment Centers are the result of parents working together to have a voice in the education of their children, regardless of abilities. In 2001 the California legislature passed a law (SB 511) to create 32 Family Empowerment Centers across the state. These centers were to educate, assist and support parents on matters of education. to ensure a quality education for all children and young adults with disabilities. Funding was provided for the first twelve centers.

## What will I find at a Family Empowerment Center?

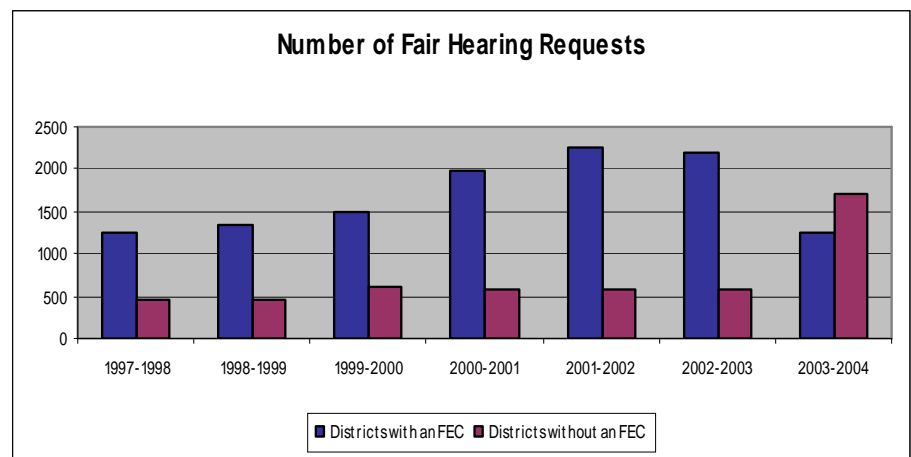
Family Empowerment Centers provide trainings, peer support, counseling, information and referral services and parent-professional collaborative activities. Services vary based on the needs of the community. Most services are available in English and Spanish, as well as other languages, when required. Here is a list of some of the typical services provided by the Family Empowerment Centers:

- **Individualized Education Plan Workshops** - Parents learn about the IEP and how to work with their local school to structure an IEP that works for their child.
- **Disability and Education Resource Library** - Each center has books, videos and other material available for parents to learn about educational resources and their child's disability.
- **Parent Support and Mentoring** - Most centers host support groups or provide mentoring so parents can meet to share encouragement, ideas and resources.
- **Disability Training** - Centers provide a variety of trainings on topics such as disability advocacy, assistive technology and disability specific workshops.

# “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” – Nelson Mandela

Family Empowerment Centers have a proven track record for providing cost effective services that save state dollars. They help reduce the number of costly legal hearings that can occur when there is a disagreement between families and school districts. The Family Empowerment Centers work with parents and schools to resolve conflicts early and avoid lawsuits that lead to both lost time and money.

Between 2001–02 (when the FECs were established) and 2003-04, fair hearings decreased 44% in districts served by a Family Empowerment Center, but nearly tripled in districts not served by a center. The chart to the right shows that the number of fair hearings was increasing throughout the state, but



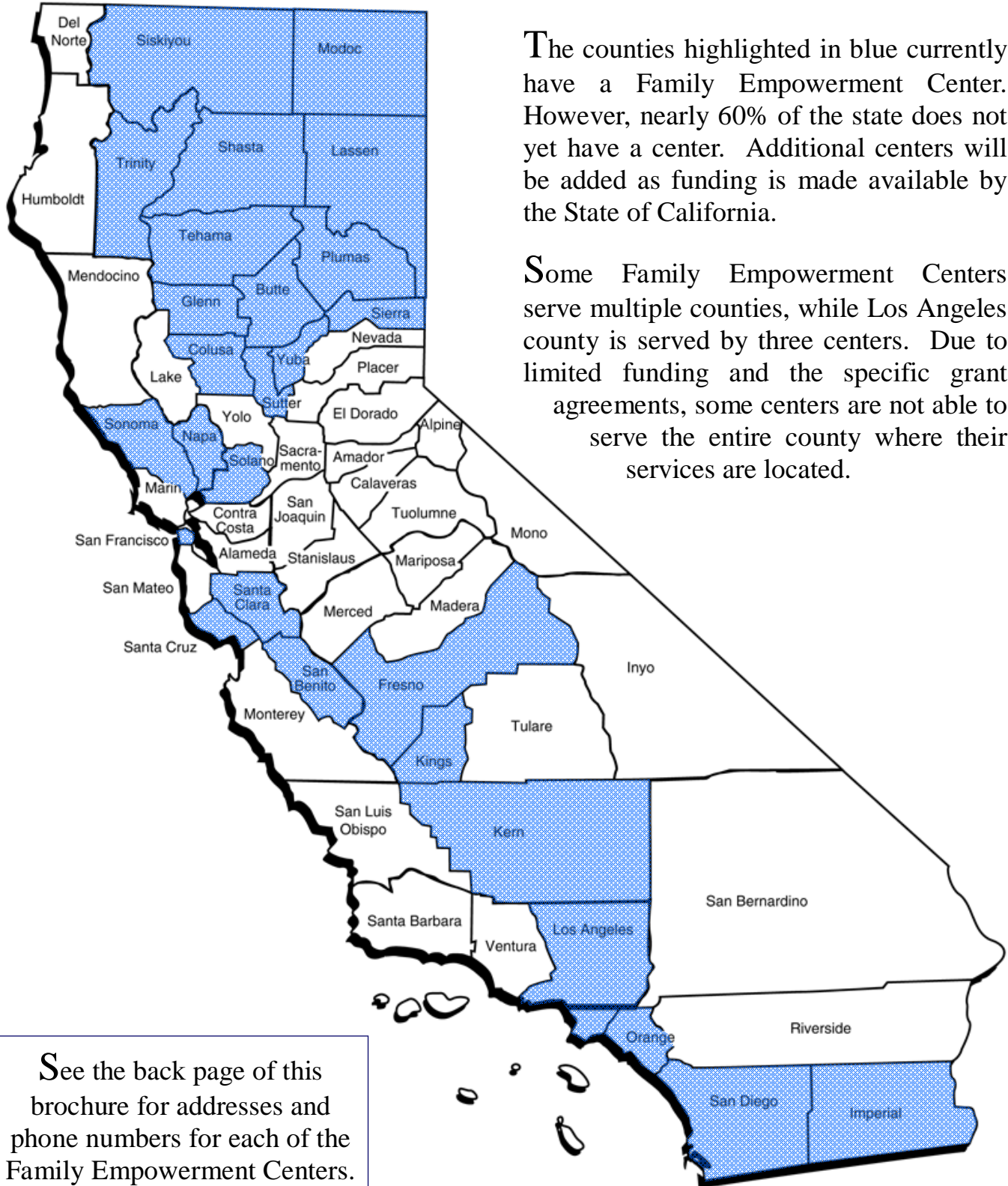
began to drop in 2001-02 in those districts with a Family Empowerment Center. The change in the number of fair hearing requests is due, in part, to the centers’ efforts to help families resolve matters with the school districts in a timely and cooperative fashion.



Another outcome of the work the centers do to help families solve disagreements with their school districts can be seen in the number of mediation requests from parents. Between 2001–02 and 2003-04, mediation requests nearly doubled from 184 to 367 in areas served by an FEC, but reduced by half from 84 to 42 in areas not served by a center. This reflects the Family Empowerment Centers effort to help families find resolution through less costly, more collaborative processes such as mediation or informal meetings with school personnel.

California’s Family Empowerment Centers are working with both families and school districts to find cooperative solutions to provide children with the education they need. The centers are helping to avoid costly court battles and get children services without unnecessary delays.

# Is there a center in my county?



The counties highlighted in blue currently have a Family Empowerment Center. However, nearly 60% of the state does not yet have a center. Additional centers will be added as funding is made available by the State of California.

Some Family Empowerment Centers serve multiple counties, while Los Angeles county is served by three centers. Due to limited funding and the specific grant agreements, some centers are not able to serve the entire county where their services are located.

See the back page of this brochure for addresses and phone numbers for each of the Family Empowerment Centers.

**There are currently 14 Family Empowerment Centers in California with more than twenty additional centers to be added as soon as funding is made available. Please visit [CAFEC.org](http://CAFEC.org) for more information.**

**Exceptional Family Resource Center**

9245 Sky Park Court, Suite 130  
San Diego, CA 92123  
(619) 594-7394  
(Imperial & San Diego Counties)

**Exceptional Parents Unlimited**

4440 North First Street  
Fresno, CA 93726  
(559) 229-2000  
(Fresno & Kings Counties)

**Family Focus Empowerment Center**

College of Education, Room 109-I  
California State University, Northridge  
18111 Nordhoff Street  
Northridge, CA 91330  
(818) 677-2598  
(Los Angeles County)

**Family Soup**

1506 Starr Drive, Suite C  
Yuba City, CA 95993  
(916) 751-1925  
(Sutter, Yuba & Colusa Counties)

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

3101 North Sillect Avenue, Suite 115  
Bakersfield, CA 93308  
(800) 210-7633  
(Kern County)

**Matrix Parent Network Resource Center**

94 Galli Drive, Suite C  
Novato, CA 94949  
(415) 475-2114  
(Napa, Solano & Sonoma Counties)

**Parents Helping Parents**

3041 Olcott Street  
Santa Clara, CA 95054  
(408) 727-5775  
(Santa Clara County)

**Parent's Place – San Gabriel/Pomona**

1500 S. Hyacinth Avenue, Suite B  
West Covina, CA 91791  
(626) 919-1091  
(Los Angeles County)

**Plumas Rural Services**

586 Jackson Street  
Quincy, CA 95971  
(800) 826-0842  
(Lassen, Modoc, Plumas & Sierra Counties)

**Rowell Family Resource Center**

3830 Rancho Road  
Redding, CA 96002  
(530) 226-5129  
(Butte, Glenn, Shasta, Siskiyou, Tehama & Trinity Counties)

**Special Parents Information Network (SPIN)**

P.O. Box 2367  
Santa Cruz, CA 95063  
(831) 722-2800  
(San Benito & Santa Cruz County)

**Support for Families of Children with Disabilities**

2601 Mission Street, Suite 606  
San Francisco, CA 94110  
(415) 282-7494  
(San Francisco County)

**Team of Advocates for Special Kids (TASK)**

100 Cerritos Avenue  
Anaheim, CA 92805  
(714) 533-8275  
(Orange County)

**Westside Family Resource Center**

5901 Green Valley Circle, Suite 320  
Culver City, CA 90230  
(310) 258-4218  
(Los Angeles County)



California Association of  
Family Empowerment Centers

The **California Association of Family Empowerment Centers (CAFEC)** is a direct link between policy makers in Sacramento and parents of children with disabilities and brings the issues important to parents of children with disabilities to state policymakers, including the State Board of Education, the Governor's office and the legislature.

**Contact Us At:** CAFEC 1029 J Street, Suite 120, Sacramento, CA 95814 (916) 325-1690, x306