



CDSS

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STATE OF CALIFORNIA—HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

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REASON FOR THIS TRANSMITTAL

- State Law Change
- Federal Law or Regulation Change
- Court Order
- Clarification Requested by One or More Counties
- Initiated by CDSS

January 18, 2018

ALL COUNTY INFORMATION NOTICE (ACIN) NO. I-01-18

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS
 ALL CHIEF PROBATION OFFICERS
 COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION OF CALIFORNIA
 ALL FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY DIRECTORS
 ALL CDSS ADOPTION REGIONAL OFFICES
 ALL TITLE IV-E AGREEMENT TRIBES
 ALL CDSS COMMUNITY CARE LICENSING DIVISION (CCLD)
 COUNTY LIAISONS

SUBJECT: OUT-OF-COUNTY EMERGENCY PLACEMENT ASSESSMENT AND
 RESOURCE FAMILY APPROVAL (RFA) PROTOCOL

REFERENCE: [WELFARE AND INSTITUTIONS CODE \(W&IC\) SECTIONS 309, 361.45, 16519.5;](#)
[ASSEMBLY BILL \(AB\) 403 \(CHAPTER 773, STATUTES OF 2015\)](#)
[ALL COUNTY LETTERS \(ACLs\) 16-10, 16-58.](#)

The purpose of this ACIN is to inform county child welfare agencies and probation departments of the statewide out-of-county approval protocol adopted by the County Welfare Directors Association (CWDA) in collaboration with the Chief Probation Officers of California (CPOC). The protocol, developed as a result of a workgroup conducted by CWDA and CDSS, facilitates out-of-county emergency placement assessments and approval of relatives and nonrelative extended family members (NREFM) as Resource Families.

Background/Overview

Prior to the implementation of RFA, there was an established agreement between county child welfare agencies when conducting the relative approval process for relatives or NREFMs who lived outside the relative child’s county of jurisdiction.

When a relative or NREFM who lived out of the placing county's jurisdiction was identified, the placing county would either make a request to the county where the individual resided to complete the relative approval process or the placing county would complete the process itself. The relative or NREFM approval was also child specific for the particular child(ren) being placed, and the caregiver was not eligible to receive placement of any other children. If a complaint was made about a relative or NREFM home, then the approving county's case carrying social worker would assess the complaint, and, if it was determined the complaint included allegations of abuse or neglect, a referral would be made to child protective services.

The RFA process is significantly different in many respects. Resource Families, regardless of relationship to the child, must be approved with the same approval process. RFA permits a Resource Family to accept the placement of any child from any county, unless the approval is limited to a specific child(ren). Counties are now also required to investigate all complaints made against a Resource Family, not just those pertaining to abuse or neglect, provide training to Resource Family applicants and Resource Families, to conduct inperson interviews in order to identify strengths and needs of Resource Family applicants and Resource Families and link them to supportive services if needed, and to perform annual approval updates of Resource Families.

RFA brings different approval and ongoing oversight requirements and responsibilities for the approving county, making it more challenging for the placing county to provide the initial and ongoing assessments of, and services to, an applicant or Resource Family. When there is a great distance between the placing county and the county where the relative or NREFM resides, completing any of these initial and ongoing activities could be burdensome on the family and the county.

Statewide Protocol for Out-of-County R/NREFM Emergency Placements and RFA Assessments

In order to effectively implement RFA, provide the most support to families, and address county workload difficulties, the CWDA and CDSS conducted a workgroup to develop the Out-of-County Approval Protocol for Resource Family Approval and Emergency Placements. The protocol, which has been adopted by CWDA, outlines the steps by which a placing county may request that another county assess a relative or NREFM for the emergency placement of a child or nonminor dependent (NMD) and perform the comprehensive assessment for RFA. The workgroup has concluded that the protocol will reduce the need for RFA staff to travel long distances to assess relatives and NREFMs for emergency placement and for RFA. Under the RFA Program, best practice has demonstrated that when Resource Families are fully supported, engaged

in, and receiving services within their community, they are more likely to consider accepting additional placements of non-related children or NMDs.

This may take place both during the placement of the relative or NREFM child or when that placement ends. As a result, the workgroup views out-of-county approvals as an opportunity to increase the placement opportunities for children within the host county.

As stated in the protocol, a placing county may request that a host county (the county in which the relative or NREFM resides) assess a relative or NREFM for an emergency placement. If the host county agrees to process the emergency placement, then it must assess the relative or NREFM in accordance with Welfare and Institutions Code section 309 or 361.45. If the emergency placement is made by the placing county, a referral will be sent for the RFA comprehensive assessment to the host county.

According to the protocol, the host county shall accept the referral for the RFA comprehensive assessment from the placing county and initiate the assessment within five (5) business days of the placement as specified in RFA Written Directives regardless of which county completed the emergency placement. The RFA comprehensive assessment is to be completed within 90 days of the emergency placement of a child or NMD with a relative or NREFM. Accordingly, out-of-county RFA comprehensive assessments should be prioritized along with other assessments in the host county.

If the host county does not agree to process the emergency placement using the protocol, the placing county continues to be required to assess the interested relative or NREFM for emergency placement.

If the host county does not process the emergency placement, it is still required to initiate the RFA comprehensive assessment upon receipt of the referral as stated in the protocol. Please note that the protocol does not replace the need to request a courtesy worker for children or NMDs placed out-of-county to meet case management and monthly in-person visit requirements.

Probation Departments

CPOC reviewed and provided input to the Out-of-County Approval Protocol for Resource Family Approval and Emergency Placements.

Probation departments will retain responsibility for approving Resource Families for their youth when placing a youth out of county, unless the probation department has made other arrangements with the county in which the resource family resides, to ensure timely out-of-county approvals and placements.

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If a probation department has recruited a prospective Resource Family and requests that a county child welfare agency approve and monitor the Resource Family with whom a delinquent youth is or will be placed, then the probation department's request shall meet the requirements outlined in the protocol.

The Out-of-County Approval Protocol for Resource Family Approval and Emergency Placements is located on the CDSS RFA Program website in the "RFA Resources" section. You may access the Out-of-County Approval Protocol [here](#).

If you have any questions regarding this ACIN, please email the RFA Program Unit at RFA@dss.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Original Document Signed By:

SARA E. ROGERS, Branch Chief
Continuum of Care Reform Branch