

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

744 P Street, Sacramento, California 95814



March 7, 2002

ALL COUNTY INFORMATION NOTICE I-21-02

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS
ALL COUNTY CHIEF PROBATION OFFICERS**REASON FOR THIS TRANSMITTAL**

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

SUBJECT: **CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY
ACT OF 2001 (AB 636 (Steinberg), Chapter 678, Statutes of 2001**

AB 636 (Steinberg), Chapter 678, Statutes of 2001, known as the Child Welfare System Improvement and Accountability Act of 2001, is intended to improve outcomes for children in California's Child Welfare System. This new law in its entirety is codified in the Welfare and Institutions Code at Section 10601.2. The main provisions and timeline requirements found in AB 636 are described below.

- Requires, by October 1, 2002, the California Health and Human Services Agency (CHHSA), to establish a workgroup comprised of specified organizations, agencies, and departments, to develop a work plan for child and family service reviews. In developing the work plan, the workgroup shall consider the outcome indicators to be measured, compliance thresholds, and any existing federal program improvement plans entered into by the State pursuant to federal regulations. The work plan must include a process for qualitative peer reviews of case information.
- Requires the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to identify and promote the replication of best practices in child welfare in order to achieve outcome measures developed by HHSA.
- Requires CDSS to establish a Child and Family Service (CFS) Review System, by April 1, 2003, in order to review all county child welfare systems, and to maximize compliance with federal regulations for the receipt of federal IV-E and IV-B funds. CDSS is mandated to commence county CFS reviews beginning January 1, 2004.
- Suspends the existing Division 31 county compliance review system as of April 1, 2003, in order to transition to this new system.
- Requires the first CFS review in each county to be consistent with federal standards. For subsequent reviews the workgroup must consider whether to establish additional indicators that support federal outcomes, and any program

improvement plan, promote good health, mental health, behavioral, educational and other positive outcomes for children.

- Requires counties that do not meet the CFS review outcome standards to receive technical assistance from teams made up of state and peer-county administrators in order to assist with implementation of best practices to improve the county's performance and make progress toward meeting established levels of compliance.
- Requires CDSS to report to the legislative budget committees and appropriate legislative policy committees each year, beginning with the 2002-03 fiscal year, on progress in implementing the California child and family service reviews, as well as progress on the federal review.
- Appropriates \$100,000 from the General Fund to the CHHSA for purposes of convening the workgroup.

It is imperative that all counties understand that the current Division 31 compliance reviews will continue until at least April 1, 2003.

Please pay particular attention to the timeline set out in the legislation, as summarized below:

- **by October 1, 2002** **CHHSA to establish workgroup**
- **by April 1, 2003** **CDSS to develop a CFS Review System**
- **April 1, 2003** **Suspend existing Division 31 county compliance review system/transition to new system**
- **by January 1, 2004** **CDSS to commence county CFS reviews**

CDSS will provide further information regarding this project, as it becomes available. If you have questions related to this letter, please contact Barbara Eaton, Chief, Children's Services Operations Bureau at (916) 445-2832.

Sincerely,

***Original document
signed by***

SYLVIA PIZZINI, Deputy Director
Children and Family Services Division

cCWDA