

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

744 P Street, Sacramento, California 95814



June 2, 2003

ALL COUNTY INFORMATION NOTICE NO. I-34-03

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS
ALL ELIGIBILITY SUPERVISORS
ALL COUNTY CHILD WELFARE SERVICES PROGRAM MANAGERS

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: THE STRUCTURED APPLICANT FAMILY EVALUATION ASSESSMENT TOOL

This All County Information Notice provides clarification regarding the appropriate use of the Structured Applicant Family Evaluation (SAFE) assessment tool and explains changes in the tool.

The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) developed SAFE to assist in the evaluation of prospective foster or adoptive families for children in need of homes. Many county and private agencies have a copy of the SAFE document and are using it in their daily practice. However, use of the document remains optional.

The United States Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Civil Rights (OCR) has raised concerns that agencies are using SAFE in a manner inconsistent with the intent of the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act of 1994 and the Inter-Ethnic Adoptions Provisions of the Small Business Job Protection Act of 1996 (MEPA-IEP.)

The provisions of MEPA-IEP are intended to:

- Affirm a person's right to receive the same services, consideration and treatment in the placement of children as all other persons regardless of race, color, or national origin;
- Decrease the time children wait for permanent homes;
- Increase the number of children who are adopted;
- Eliminate any avoidable delays in placement; and,
- Facilitate the recruitment and retention of foster and adoptive parents who can meet the distinctive needs of children awaiting placement.

To ensure that the intent of MEPA/IEP is met, agencies should use all components of SAFE when they conduct an assessment of a prospective adoptive family. The SAFE should be used to assess all prospective adoptive families, with necessary adjustments made for family composition. The tool should not be used selectively, e.g., only when applicants are interested in adopting children of a different race.

As a result of OCR's review, the following revisions have been made to bring SAFE into compliance with MEPA/IEP:

- Acceptance of Differences – Revised. Please remove existing Section B-7 and replace with the revised page enclosed.
- Cultural Competence – Removed. Please remove the existing Section H-10. There is no replacement page.

In addition, CDSS is working with OCR to update the training curriculum to ensure that public and private agency staff will use SAFE in a manner that is consistent with the intent of MEPA/IEP. The CDSS will also pursue related regulatory changes.

For more information about MEPA/IEP, visit OCR's website at www.hhs.gov/ocr. If you need more information or have any questions relating to this notice, please contact Francine Curtis-Smith, Consultant, Permanency Policy Bureau, at (916) 653-6306.

Sincerely,

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY

SYLVIA PIZZINI

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Deputy Director

Children and Family Services Division

Enclosure

B-7. Acceptance of Differences

Refers to the applicant's acceptance of the customs and values of individuals from a different culture, generation, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, religion, political group, etc....

Rating	
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • highly respectful of and eager to learn about different customs • keenly interested in gaining an understanding of the varying world views, values and belief systems of others • actively strives to counter the destructive effect of stereotypic thinking • very open to and enjoys maintaining personal relationships with individuals from different backgrounds and lifestyles
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • respects and open to learning about different customs • tries to understand the varying world views, values and belief systems of others • aware of and concerned about the destructive effect of stereotypic thinking • open to relationships with individuals from different backgrounds and lifestyles
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • little interest in learning about different customs • limited ability to understand the varying world views, values and belief systems of others • unaware of the destructive effect of stereotypic thinking • limited ability to relate in a meaningful way to individuals from different background and lifestyles
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • degrades the customs of other individuals or groups • believes he/she is intellectually/morally superior and/or pathologizes individuals or groups with different lifestyles and world views • engages in stereotypic thinking; with little or no factual information • consistently rejects anything that is perceived as being different • refuses to establish meaningful relationships with individuals from different backgrounds and lifestyles
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strong animosity towards and rejection of the customs of other groups or individuals • vehement opposition against those whose world views, values and belief systems are foreign to them • seeks to repress the ability of others to voice their perspective • openly hostile towards individuals perceived as different