DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

744 P Street, Sacramento, CA 95814



January 20, 2004

ALL COUNTY LETTER NO. 04-02

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS
ALL CHILD WELFARE SERVICE PROGRAM
MANAGERS
ALL JUVENILE COURT JUDGES
ALL CHIEF PROBATION OFFICERS

REASON FOR THIS TRANSMITTAL

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

SUBJECT: PERIODIC REASSESSMENT OF RELATIVE AND NON-

RELATIVE EXTENDED FAMILY MEMBER FOSTER CARE

PROVIDERS

REFERENCE: All County Letters Nos. 01-69 02-58, 02-78, 02-85 02-97,

County Fiscal letter No. 01/02-61

All County Information Notice No. I-17-03

The purpose of this letter is to clarify for all counties what is required in the use of mandated forms issued via ACL No. 02-78 when performing the periodic reassessment of relative and non-relative and non-relative extended family members (NREFM).

BACKGROUND

The <u>Higgins v. Saenz</u> Settlement Agreement (<u>Higgins v. Saenz</u>) stipulated, in part, that the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) establish a procedure for county approval, and periodic re-approval of licensed foster family homes of relative caregivers and NREFM homes. It was also agreed that the CDSS would develop required forms for counties to use for approving relative caregivers and NREFM homes. This would be part of a process that ensured all said caregivers receiving foster care payments were uniformly initially assessed and periodically reassessed to determine whether they met all licensing/approval requirements.

As requested by the County Welfare Directors' Association, this ACL provides detailed instructions for the completion of the relative/ NFREM approval forms (SOC 815, 817, 818), especially with regard to reassessments for these caregiver categories.

COMPLETION OF REQUIRED FORMS

The SOC 815 – Approval of Family Caregiver Home; SOC 817 – Checklist of Health and

Safety Standards for Approval of Family Caregiver Home; and SOC 818 – Relative or Non-Relative Extended Family Member Caregiver Assessment forms were developed by the parties in <u>Higgins vs. Saenz</u> in part to serve as a useful tool to assist county workers who are assessing relative homes for compliance with licensing standards and must be completed at each initial assessment and every reassessment and attached to the CWS/CMS case documentation file. A copy of the SOC 815 must also be kept in the child's eligibility file to substantiate eligibility for federal Title IV-E funds.

It is expected that county workers will have these forms on hand when performing the on-site assessment of the relative home and that the county worker will complete these forms at the same time of the assessment/re-assessment.

Detailed instructions for the completion of the forms are attached to this letter. At reassessment the child's case file must be reviewed prior to the on-site visit with the caregiver. To verify continued compliance with licensing standards, the county must conduct an onsite assessment and discussion with the caregiver. This activity can be incorporated with any home visit.

CORRECTIVE ACTION PLANS (CAP)/ DOCUMENTED ALTERNATIVE PLANS (DAP)

A CAP is developed by the caregiver, with the assistance of the approving agency representative, describing the actions that he/she will take to bring the home into compliance with licensing/approval standards. The plan of correction includes a timeframe in which the correction(s) will be completed. Any deficiency noted during reassessment that poses an imminent threat to the health or safety of children in care (an immediate impact deficiency) must be corrected immediately; if not immediately correctible, the foster child(ren) must be removed from the home until the correction is completed. If the deficiency does not pose an imminent threat to the health and safety of a child(ren) in care, removal of the child(ren) is not necessary provided that an appropriate CAP is made. A CAP is also to be developed for the correction of potential impact deficiencies identified at the time of the home inspection. (See pages 3, 4, and 5 of the SOC 817 form for detailed discussion of immediate impact deficiencies, potential impact deficiencies and CAP.) Please note, on page 2 of the 815 the date to be entered on the line "Plan of Correction completed on" is the date the CAP "was" completed.

A DAP is a written authorization for a foster family home to use <u>an alternative in limited circumstances</u>, based on a unique need or circumstance specific to a child being considered for placement, <u>to meet the intent of a specified standard</u>. A DAP can be made at any time when conditions in the home change such that a DAP has become the appropriate means to satisfy approval standards. If the circumstances in the home have changed since the previous assessment/reassessment so that a documented alternative plan has become the means to satisfy approval standards, such a plan must be documented at the time of the current reassessment.

Existing DAPs should be reviewed at the time of reassessments to determine if they continue to meet the needs of the child(ren).

TITLE IV-E ELIGIBILITY

As set forth in ACL No. 02-97, for purposes of periodic reassessment it has been determined that while completions of all three forms (SOC 815,817,818) are required for reassessment, a newly completed SOC 815 contains all of the information required for inclusion in the eligibility file to document that the approval standards regarding criminal record clearance(s), caregiver qualifications, and the safety of the home and grounds continue to be met. An updated copy of the four-page form (SOC 815) must be sent to the eligibility worker for inclusion in the income maintenance file for purposes of documenting periodic reassessments for the Title IV-E eligibility purposes and in order for the placement to be eligible for federal reimbursement.

The home of a relative or NREFM cannot be considered Title IV-E eligible unless all the adults who are required to have background checks have received appropriate Child Abuse Central Index (CACI), Department of Justice (DOJ) and/or exemptions; in addition, a Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) fingerprint clearance must have been initiated and/or received; and enrollment in subsequent arrest reporting (rap-backs.) The dates each of these clearances are received must be documented on page three (3) of the SOC 815 form that must be completed at the time of reassessment and included in the eligibility file. If a home was approved, pending receipt of the results of the FBI fingerprint search of its records, an affidavit must first be obtained from each adult that states they have no criminal history. Also, the county must notify the eligibility worker in writing when the FBI fingerprint clearance is received. The notification may be by e-mail or faxed and does not require resubmission of the updated SOC 815 form.

When a CAP is initiated during an assessment/reassessment in order to bring the caregiver up to approval standards (i.e., the deficiency to be corrected does not pose an imminent threat to the health and safety of children in care), foster care payments are available for the entire month if:

- 1. the correction is made timely, and
- 2. the home meets approval standards for at least a portion of the month, and
- 3. the child is otherwise eligible and has resided in that home for the entire month.

However, if all CAP deficiencies are not corrected within 30 days of the date the reassessment is due, state and federal foster care payments must be discontinued until the home meets all of the relative/NREFM approval requirements. As required at the initial assessment, the completion of the CAP must be verified by either an in-person visit to the home or by the caregiver providing the county with acceptable documentation of completion.

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If you have any questions regarding this ACL, or the attached instructions for forms SOC 815, SOC 817, and SOC 818, please contact Mr. Lou Del Gaudio, Manager, of the Kinship Policy Unit at (916) 651-7393 or at lou.delgaudio@dss.ca.gov

Sincerely,
Original signed by
Sylvia Pizzini
SYLVIA PIZZINI
Deputy Director
Children and Family Services Division

c: CWDA

Attachment

PERIODIC REASSESSMENT OF APPROVED RELATIVE/NREFM CAREGIVERS: USE OF FORM SOC 817 (CHECKLIST OF HEALTH AND SAFETY STANDARDS)

An inspection of the home to verify that all standards continue to be met is to be performed as part of each reassessment. The requirements for completing this form at reassessment are the same as for the initial assessment. Only one box should be checked for each standard, as follows:

- If the home does not require either Documented Alternative Plan(s) (DAP) or Corrective Action Plan(s) (CAP) to meet the standard, the box in column "YES" would be checked.
- If a DAP is required, only the box in the column labeled "Alternative" would be checked.
- For standards which do not permit alternatives, a "NO" answer to any item means the home does not meet approval standards and cannot be approved until a CAP is completed.
- The "N/A" box can be checked only for standards which are not applicable
 to the conditions in the particular home (for example, if there are no bunk
 beds used in the home, the requirement that the upper tier has bed rails
 would be checked N/A.)

If the circumstances in the home have changed since the previous assessment/ re-assessment and the DAP is an appropriate means to satisfy approval standards, a DAP should be documented at the time of the current reassessment.

Any deficiency which poses an imminent threat to the health or safety of children in care must be corrected immediately; if not immediately correctible, the foster child(ren) must be removed from the home. A CAP may be entered into for the correction of an immediate or potential impact deficiency that is identified during the reassessment home inspection. (See pages 3, 4 and 5 of SOC 817 for discussion of immediate impact vs. potential impact deficiencies.)

PERIODIC REASSESSMENT OF APPROVED RELATIVE/NREFM CAREGIVERS: **USE OF FORM SOC 818 (CAREGIVER ASSESSMENT)**

At the time of each reassessment, a discussion with the caregiver is necessary to verify that the requirements set out in SOC 818 continue to be met. For each item to be reassessed, guidance regarding what the social worker should consider when determining whether the caregiver meets the standard has been provided in italics. As at the initial assessment, if any statement on the form SOC 818 is answered "No", the caregiver cannot be considered as meeting approval standards.

This annotated version of form SOC 818 is for reference only; a standard form SOC 818 should be completed at reassessment, and the caregiver(s) signature obtained on page 5

obtained on page o.
1. The caregiver has been provided a summary of State home approval regulations and is capable, having sufficient physical and mental health, to meet these requirements for the care and supervision appropriate to the type of child(ren) to be served. [89317] [] Yes [] No
Assess as at initial assessment.
 The caregiver is aware of the child(ren)'s immediate medical, psychological, and educational needs and is able to respond to those needs. [89378] Yes [] No
At reassessment, verify that caregiver has received the child's case plan, is aware of its contents, and has a plan for meeting any special needs.
3. The caregiver understands State child abuse and neglect laws and agrees to report any circumstances indicating the child(ren) has been abused or neglected [89361]. [] Yes [] No
Prior to visit with caregiver, check the case file to verify that the caregiver was previously informed of this requirement; verify whether any reports of neglect or abuse have been reported for child(ren) in the home, and whether caregiver reported appropriately.

whether caregiver reported appropriately.

 4. The caregiver can provide the children opportunities for and encouragement to participate in group sports, leisure time, family, school and daily living activities [89379(a)]. [] Yes [] No
At reassessment, verify that appropriate opportunities are being made available to the child(ren).
5. The caregiver is able to care for the child(ren) in a healthy and safe way [89378].[] Yes [] No
Assess as at initial assessment.
6. The caregiver will ensure that only positive discipline practices which promote the health and well being of the child(ren) are used in the home, and will not use nor allow any form of discipline that violates the child's personal rights [89372]. [] Yes []No
Assess as at initial assessment.
7. The caregiver understands and agrees to maintain the child's records, including the placement agreement, health and educational records and written consent for medical/dental treatment [§89370]. [] Yes [] No
At reassessment, review the caregiver's records for completeness. Incomplete records require a CAP.
8. The caregiver agrees to report all changes in household composition, or change in the residence or mailing address, or absence of the caregiver from the home of more than 48 hours [89370]. [] Yes [] No
Prior to reassessment visit with caregiver, review case file to determine if any changes have occurred and whether they have been reported by caregiver. At re- assessment visit, verify that any changes were reported.
9. The caregiver agrees to post emergency telephone numbers, discuss emergency situations with children and practice emergency procedures every six months [89323].[] Yes [] No

At reassessment, verify that emergency numbers are posted and that caregiver has discussed emergency procedures and practiced emergency procedures with the children every six months. If numbers are not posted and/or caregiver has not developed and practiced emergency procedures, a corrective action plan is required.

10. The caregiver agrees to report any accidents, injuries or incidents that threaten to harm the physical or emotional health or safety of the child [89361].[] Yes [] No
Prior to reassessment visit with caregiver, review case file to verify that caregiver previously agreed to these reporting requirements, and to determine if any accidents, injuries or incidents have occurred with the child(ren) and whether caregiver reported them appropriately.
11. The caregiver has been provided with a copy of the child's personal rights and understands them and agrees to ensure that all members of the household will abide by them [89372].
[] Yes [] No
At reassessment, verify that caregiver has a copy of the rights of children in out of home care.
12. The caregiver agrees to ensure direct care and supervision is provided to meet the child's needs during participation in those activities that are sponsored by third parties [89379(b)]. [] Yes [] No
Prior to reassessment visit with caregiver, review case file to verify that caregiver previously agreed to these supervision requirements. At reassessment, determine what activities child(ren) participate in and how they are supervised.
13. The caregiver will provide at least three nutritious meals daily to meet the child's dietary needs. [89376]. [] Yes [] No
Assess as at initial assessment
14. The caregiver will ensure all transportation for children is provided in vehicles in safe operating condition, by a driver complying with all applicable laws [89374]. [] Yes [] No Assess as at initial assessment

PERIODIC REASSESSMENT OF APPROVED RELATIVE/NREFM CAREGIVERS: USE OF FORM SOC 815: (APPROVAL OF FAMILY CAREGIVER HOME)

The SOC 815 is required as the primary document used to verify overall compliance with approval requirements. For reassessment purposes, completion of the SOC 815 is meant to verify that the home has been inspected, the required records and documentation have been reviewed, and that a county worker has reviewed caregiver responsibilities with the caregiver(s) and assessed that caregiver's continuing ability to provide appropriate care and supervision. In signing the SOC 815, the supervisor certifies that the home continues to meet all approval standards. The SOC 815 should be completed using the following guidelines:

1. Criminal Record/Prior Abuse Clearances

Page three of SOC 815 "Criminal Background Checks" must be completed at the time of reassessment. This does not mean, however, that criminal background checks have to be conducted periodically. Rather, specific information must be entered to show that all the adults who are required to have criminal background checks have the appropriate clearances. (Adults who are required to have criminal background clearances are defined in Health and Safety Code §1522; in this ACL such adults are also referred to as adults associated with the home.)

At the time of initial assessment, the home of a relative or NREFM cannot be approved as a foster family home unless all the adults who are required to have criminal background clearances have:

- 1) A Child Abuse Central Index (CACI) clearance.
- 2) A fingerprint criminal record clearance from DOJ or a criminal record exemption.
- 3) Fingerprints for FBI records search submitted to DOJ, and, if fingerprint criminal record clearance has not been received, an affidavit from each adult which states they have no criminal history.
- 4) Subsequent arrest (rap-back) service established.

Whether any criminal records checks and fingerprint criminal record clearances must be processed at the time of reassessment depends on what has been completed and documented during prior assessments/reassessments, and whether additional adults who require background checks and clearances have become associated with the household.

For adults who were associated with the home at the time of the most recent prior assessment: No new fingerprint, CACI and criminal record clearances are required for those who have fingerprint, CACI and criminal record clearances from California DOJ and the FBI, and for whom subsequent arrest reports (rapbacks) were requested at the time the fingerprints were submitted. The dates to be entered on the table can be obtained from a SOC 815 completed at that time, or from information contained in the case file. At reassessment, it is not necessary to complete the first three columns (CLETS, CWS/CMS, and Live Scan Appointment) for these individuals.

However, if during reassessment the worker determines that criminal records requirements for adults who were cleared during the initial assessment were not completely satisfied, the worker must ensure that all deficiencies are corrected. Fingerprint criminal record clearances will have to be processed for any of these individuals for whom any of the following is true:

- Fingerprints have not yet been submitted to DOJ.
- Subsequent arrest service (rap-back) was not established with DOJ at the time fingerprints were submitted.
- Fingerprints have not been submitted to DOJ for a search of the FBI records, or more than six months have elapsed since submission and no results have been received.

For adults who have become associated with the household since the most recent prior assessment ("new adults"), the case file should be reviewed to determine whether required criminal record clearances have been obtained. If so, the relevant information would be entered on page three of form SOC 815. At reassessment, it is not necessary to complete the first three columns (CLETS, CWS/CMS, and Live Scan Appointment) for these individuals, provided subsequent arrest notification ("rap-backs") has been established for them.

For all adults associated with the home at the time of reassessment: If all the required background checks and clearances have not been obtained, the county must immediately have a CLETS and CACI check performed. If these checks show convictions of non-exemptible criminal offenses, the social worker shall either verify that the adult is not residing in the home, or immediately remove the child from the home. If these checks show convictions that may be exempted, the placement may be continued while an exemption request is processed only if the worker determines that based on the nature of the reported conviction and the circumstances of the conviction as described by the convicted adult, the child's best interest will be served by continued placement in the home. This determination, and the facts and circumstances supporting it, must be documented in the case file within forty-eight hours of the placement of the child.

At the time the CLETS and CACI checks are performed, the worker must inform these individuals that they must initiate the fingerprint criminal record clearance process by submitting fingerprints within five business days to the Department of Justice via LiveScan (When there are individual circumstances, such as incapacitating illness or unavailability of Live Scan appointments, that prevent the individual from submitting fingerprints within five business days, the county may make alternative arrangements to ensure the required clearance(s) are obtained). Please note: when making a CLETS request for a criminal background clearance a separate request also needs to be made for CACI.

After five business days from the date of the reassessment, the placement worker must determine whether all adults residing in the home have submitted fingerprints to the Department of Justice. If it is determined that all adults residing in the home have not submitted fingerprints to the Department of Justice, the caseworker must verify that any adults who have not done so have either made alternative arrangements to obtain the required clearances or are no longer residing in the home, or the child must be removed from the home.

Each adult must also sign an affidavit that they have not been convicted for any crime other than a minor traffic infraction anywhere in the United States.

If during the reassessment it has been necessary to submit fingerprints to DOJ, the following steps must be followed upon receipt of the report from DOJ or FBI:

- If the report clears all of the adults residing in the home, the County must document that on the SOC 815 form.
- If the report contains information that any adult residing in the home has been convicted of a non-exemptible offense, the county must immediately verify that the adult is no longer residing in the home, or remove the child from the home.
- If the report contains information that any adult residing in the home has been convicted of an exemptible offense, the county shall either immediately verify that the adult is no longer residing in the home or begin a process to grant an exemption. The children in care may remain in the home while an exemption request is processed only if the placement worker determines that based on the nature of the reported conviction and the circumstances of the conviction as described by the convicted adult, the child's best interest will be served by continued placement. However, the home cannot be approved as meeting all standards until required exemptions and clearances are received. Resolution of this issue must be addressed through a CAP. As noted previously, if all CAP deficiencies are not corrected within 30 days of the date the reassessment is due, state and federal foster care payments must be discontinued until the home meets all of the relative/NREFM approval regirements.

All actions shall be documented in the child's case file.

If an exemption is requested, the county must comply with the requirements of the California Code of Regulations, Title 22, Division 6, Chapter 9.5, Article 2, Section 89219.1 Criminal Records Exemptions and Sections 7-1700 through 7-1736 of Community Care Licensing Division's EVALUATOR MANUAL, which describes all the actions that are necessary for purposes of evaluating whether or not an exemption should be issued, and the processes to grant an exemption. If the decision is made to deny the exemption, the child must be immediately removed from the home unless the worker verifies that the adult no longer resides in the home. An adult whose exemption is denied must be notified in writing of the decision denying the criminal records exemption, and of his or her right to grieve the exemption decision.

To complete the criminal records section of the SOC 815 form, please see the instructions below:

CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECKS

	CLETS	CWS/CMS Search	Live Scan Appointment Made for	LIVESCAN	DOJ CACI	FBI Requested	FBI Received	Exemption Requested	Exemption Granted	Exemption Denied	DOJ RAP-Backs Requested
Caregiver:											
	X	\boxtimes	\boxtimes	\bigcirc	2	3	P	①	3	(3)	4
Other Adults											
	X	X	\boxtimes	1	2	3	R	①	©	8	4

Page three of the Soc 815 should be completed as follows:

The caregiver and the other adults requiring criminal record clearances as a condition for approval of the home should be listed in the first column of the form.

It is recommended that individuals not be identified by their full names as this form contains sensitive information.

The clearances required for approval are in columns ①, ②, ③, and ④; Live Scan, DOJ, CACI, FBI Requested, and DOJ Rap-Backs Requested, respectively. If all of these clearances have been received for the individual, you would enter the date they were received in the appropriate box. If the FBI clearance has been requested and not yet received, the date the request for a fingerprint check of FBI records was submitted to DOJ would be entered in the box marked ③. The column for "FBI Received" (🏱) would be completed when the FBI fingerprint criminal record clearance has been received.

If any of the required clearances remain pending, the boxes marked with \boxtimes must be completed. The date the most recent CLETS and name-based CACI clearances were received, and the date of the Live Scan appointment would be entered in the respective boxes.

If a criminal record exemption is required and requested, the columns marked with =,=, and = would be used to document the date the clearance was requested, and either granted or denied.

When page three is completed, return to page one of the SOC 815 and complete item #1 as follows:

- If the required fingerprint criminal background clearances have been obtained for the caregiver and all adults associated with the home the box "ALL ADULTS CLEARED" should be checked.
- If the only clearances pending are for adults who do not live in the home, and with whom the caregiver has agreed the child(ren) will not have unsupervised contact until after clearances are received (for example, a potential babysitter or adult relatives who will be visiting the child), the box "ALL ADULTS CLEARED" should be checked.
- If CLETS and CACI clearances have been obtained and requests for fingerprint criminal record clearances have been submitted for "new" adults, but DOJ fingerprint clearances or criminal record exemptions have not been received, the box "NOT ALL ADULTS CLEARED" must be checked. (The dates of the CLETS and CACI clearances and the date of the Live Scan appointment should be entered on page three of the form.)

2. Caregiver Qualifications.

A SOC 818 completed at the time of the reassessment is the required documentation that the caregiver continues to be able to provide care and supervision to the child(ren) in his or her care. If all questions are answered "YES", the block indicating approval may be checked. If CAPs were required for

any questions on the SOC 818, the box indicating approval cannot be checked off until all CAPs are completed.

3. Safety of the Home and Grounds.

A SOC 817 completed at the time of the reassessment is the required documentation that the home continues to be clean, safe, sanitary and in good repair, and meets all licensing/approval standards. The information from that form should be summarized on page four of the SOC 815 form. Item #3 should not be completed until the certification block on page two of the SOC 815 is completed as instructed below.

4. Child's Personal Rights, and

5. Completion of Orientation and Training.

Providing the caregiver with information regarding children's rights and providing orientation and training are each a one-time event. Prior to the reassessment visit with the caregiver, the child's case file should be reviewed. If the previous assessment/reassessment of the relative/NREFM caregiver's home was documented using form SOC 815, and these two items are checked as completed on that form, they can be checked off on the SOC 815 being filled out at reassessment as well. If the home was assessed and approved prior to November 1, 2002, and has not been subsequently reassessed, these items cannot be checked off as completed unless either (1) documentation that they were completed is located in the file, or (2) the required information is provided to the caregiver at the time of reassessment.

6. Certification.

The certification block of the SOC 815, is to be completed as described below:

① I certify that the above named caregiver meets the sta	andards for relative or non-
relative extended family member home approval as of ${\mathbb Q}_{\underline{}}$	Date
③ I certify that as of ④	the above named
caregiver meets the standards for relative or non-relative ext	tended family member home
approval pending completion of the Plan of Correction.	
S Plan of Correction completed on Date	
Plan of Correction not completed by agreed to	due date.
[®] ☐ I certify that the above named caregiver DOES NOT relative	neet the standards for
or non-relative extended family member home approval as o	
	Date
Assessment Approval Worker's Signature	Date
Supervisor's Signature	Date

If all the required documentation is complete and corrective action plans were either unnecessary or have been completed, block ① would be checked, indicating that all approval standards are met as of the date entered on line ②, which would be the date the reassessment was completed. Item three on page one would then be completed by checking the first box and entering the name of the individual who completed the in-home inspection and the date on which that home inspection was conducted

If all the other requirements for approval have been met except the completion of a CAP, block ③ would be checked at the time of reassessment, and the date on which the assessment worker verifies that all other approval requirements have been met would be entered on line ④. Then,

- If the CAP is completed timely, block ⑤ is checked and the date the CAP
 was completed is entered on line ⑥. Item #3 on page one would then be
 completed by checking the first box and entering the name of the
 individual who completed the in-home inspection and the date it was
 conducted.
- If the CAP is not completed, block ② and block ® are both checked and the date entered on line ③, indicating that the CAP was not completed and that the home does not meet approval standards effective that date. Item #3 on page one would then be completed by checking the second box, indicating that the home did not meet approval standards.

If deficiencies which pose an imminent threat to the child(ren) were noted and not immediately corrected, block ©, indicating that the approval standards are not met, must be checked and the date of the reassessment entered on line ©. Item #3 on page one would then be completed by checking the second box, indicating that the home did not meet approval standards.

The signature of both the assessment worker and the Supervisor must be on the hard copy of form SOC 815. (When entering this form on CWS/CMS the name of the individual signing and the date should be noted on the signature line.)