

November 20, 2020

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ALL COUNTY LETTER NO. 20-130

The purpose of this All County Letter (ACL) is to inform all county child welfare agencies and probation departments of the temporary extension of limited exceptions to the in-person monthly caseworker visitation requirements, as previously outlined in ACL 20-70.



KIM JOHNSON
DIRECTOR

STATE OF CALIFORNIA—HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
744 P Street • Sacramento, CA 95814 • www.cdss.ca.gov



GAVIN NEWSOM
GOVERNOR

November 20, 2020

ALL COUNTY LETTER NO. 20-130

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS
ALL CHIEF PROBATION OFFICERS
ALL CHILD WELFARE SERVICES PROGRAM MANAGERS
ALL LICENSED CHILDREN'S RESIDENTIAL FACILITIES
ALL LICENSED CHILDREN'S RESIDENTIAL PROVIDERS
ALL CDSS ADOPTION REGIONAL OFFICES

SUBJECT: TEMPORARY, LIMITED EXCEPTIONS TO IN-PERSON
CASEWORKER VISITATION REQUIREMENTS FOR
DEPENDENT CHILDREN, NONMINOR DEPENDENTS, AND
WARDS

REFERENCE: [MANUAL OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES \(MPP\) DIVISION 31
SECTION 320; GOVERNOR'S PROCLAMATION OF A STATE OF
EMERGENCY, MARCH 4, 2020; ACL 19-87; ACL 20-25;
EXECUTIVE ORDER \(EO\) N-71-20; EO N-75-20](#)

The purpose of this All County Letter (ACL) is to inform all county child welfare agencies and juvenile probation departments of the extension of temporary, limited exceptions to the in-person requirements for caseworker visits for children, wards, and nonminor dependents that were in place prior to the COVID-19 declaration of a state of emergency.

On March 21, 2020, [ACL 20-25](#) provided guidance regarding case-by-case waivers of in-person monthly caseworker visits that were authorized pursuant to [Executive Order \(EO\) N-39-20](#) and could be temporarily utilized by county placing agencies while conducting needed casework activities.

Effective July 1, 2020, all existing statutory, regulatory, and written guidance requirements relative to all monthly caseworker visits that were modified by ACL 20-25 were reinstated with specified exceptions through August 15, 2020 by [ACL 20-70](#). This letter extends the exceptions, as described below, to the in-person aspect of monthly caseworker visit requirements.

For children placed out of state, when the receiving state, consistent with Regulation 11 of the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC), is responsible for providing supervision and monthly visitation, the county social worker or probation officer should continue to consult with the responsible agency in the receiving state and document the monthly visitation plan established by the receiving state. When the county child welfare agency or probation department is responsible for providing monthly visitation, in-person caseworker visitation must be consistent with the guidance in this letter.

Conducting In-Person Visits

Prior to conducting any in-person visits, county staff should ask the family or caregiver¹ and child or NMD, as appropriate, the following questions:

- Has anyone in your home/facility tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 14 days?
- In the past 14 days have you, your children, and/or anyone else in your household had [any of the following symptoms](#)?
 - Fever
 - Cough
 - Shortness of breath
 - Chills
 - Repeated shaking with chills
 - Muscle pain
 - Headache
 - Sore Throat
 - New loss of taste or smell
- Have you, your children, and/or anyone in your household/facility had close contact with a person who tested positive for COVID-19 with a laboratory-confirmed test in the last 14 days?

If someone answers “yes” to any of the questions, they should be encouraged to contact their doctor and let them know about their symptoms and/or exposure. If someone in the household has been exposed to COVID-19 or is experiencing symptoms, the caseworker should obtain proper Essential Protective Gear (EPG)² before going on an in-person visit, and utilize the preventative practices described below.

¹ For the purposes of this ACL, caregiver includes home-based and facility-based care providers.

² Inclusive of required Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), EPG may include, but is not limited to, gloves, face coverings, hand soap, hand sanitizer, and disinfectant.

Exceptions and Additional Considerations:

Pursuant to the authority in [EO N-71-20](#) and [EO N-75-20](#), the provision of waivers and flexibilities specified in ACL 20-25 for remote methods of conducting monthly caseworker visits may, on a case-by-case basis pursuant to the guidance in ACL 20-25, continue to be utilized under certain circumstances, including:

- The state, county, or city public health department in the geographical area in which the child or NMD resides provides direction to halt in-person contact and/or shifts to the [Widespread \(Purple\) Tier](#). In order to determine if the county is currently in the Purple Tier to halt the resumption of certain in-person contacts that are not otherwise required and for which remote options are authorized under this exception, use the [State of California Blueprint webpage](#) or contact the state or local public health department where the child resides.
- The family, caregiver, or NMD refuses entry due to their own health and safety concerns related to the risk of COVID-19 infection. In this case, please identify additional means for accomplishing the visit, such as conducting visits outdoors with appropriate physical distancing or utilizing videoconferencing. Staff should consult with their supervisor for the appropriate measures and actions needed to facilitate contact.
- The family, caregiver, child, NMD, or someone else in the household been exposed to, is experiencing symptoms of, or has tested positive for, COVID-19. Staff should consult with their supervisor for the appropriate measures and actions needed in these circumstances to facilitate contact and ensure proper care is being provided to the children and NMDs in care.

Remote visits may only be used after a child or NMD-specific decision, based on the training and experience of the social worker and considering all available information, that an in-person visit is not necessary to ensure the child or NMD's safety or well-being.

All remote contacts must be documented in accordance with the instructions set forth in [ACL 20-31](#). As a reminder, only videoconference contacts will be a sufficient substitute to meet state and federal face-to-face monthly visit requirements.³

Preventative Practices:

- Practice physical distancing when in someone's home – stay six feet away

³ https://www.cdss.ca.gov/Portals/9/Additional-Resources/Letters-and-Notices/ACINs/2020/I_33_20.pdf

- from people when possible in order to accomplish the purpose of the visit.
- Wear the appropriate EPG.
 - Caseworkers may provide and ask the family members,⁴ caregivers, or NMDs to wear a mask during an in-person visit, but they cannot require it.
 - Frequently wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If this is not feasible, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with 60% to 95% alcohol.
 - Avoid touching eyes, nose or mouth.
 - Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue or your elbow or a tissue. Wash hands afterwards. If this is not feasible, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with 60% to 95% alcohol.
 - Follow guidance from public health officials.

Please work with your county Office of Emergency Services to obtain EPG for your caseworkers as needed. If you have problems obtaining EPG, please contact your local Office of Emergency Services immediately. Please also inform CDSS if the issue is not resolved quickly.

The limited exceptions to the in-person aspect of monthly caseworker visits, as outlined in this ACL, may be utilized until further guidance is issued by the Department, or until the Governor's Declared State of Emergency due to COVID-19 is terminated, whichever is sooner.

Questions or requests for clarification regarding the information in this letter should be directed to the Permanency Policy Bureau at (916) 657-1858 or CFSD@dss.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Original Document Signed By

GREGORY E. ROSE
Deputy Director
Children and Family Services Division

⁴ Please note that [public health guidance](#) recommends that children under the age of two or anyone who has trouble breathing or is unable to remove the mask without assistance should not wear face masks or coverings.