

June 17, 2020

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**ALL COUNTY LETTER NO. 20-70**

The purpose of this All County Letter (ACL) is to alert all county child welfare agencies and probation departments to the transition and resumption of the in-person requirements related to monthly caseworker visits that were in place prior to the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) state of emergency, as specified in existing laws, regulations, and written guidance



KIM JOHNSON  
DIRECTOR

STATE OF CALIFORNIA—HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY  
**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES**  
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GAVIN NEWSOM  
GOVERNOR

June 17, 2020

ALL COUNTY LETTER NO. 20-70

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: RESUMING IN-PERSON CASEWORKER VISITATION  
REQUIREMENTS FOR DEPENDENT CHILDREN 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](#)

The purpose of this letter is to advise all county child welfare agencies and juvenile probation departments to **resume** the in-person requirements related to 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 are reinstated and all relevant required activities must resume, except as specified below.

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.

Prior to conducting any in-person visits, county staff should ask the family or caregiver<sup>1</sup> 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)<sup>2</sup> before going on an in-person visit, and utilize the preventative practices described below.

The provisions of this ACL are applicable to Foster Family Agencies, and more information will be forthcoming in a future Provider Information Notice.

### **Exceptions and Additional Considerations:**

Pursuant to the authority in [EO N-39-20](#) and [EO N-69-20](#), the provision of waivers and flexibilities specified in ACL 20-25 for remote methods of conducting monthly

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

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

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 other local public health department in the jurisdiction in which the child resides, as applicable, provides [direction](#) and/or shifts back to [Stage 1](#).
- provides [direction](#) and/or shifts back to [Stage 1](#).
- The family or caregiver 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, 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 in care.

In the event that in-person contact is not a viable option based upon the exceptions and additional considerations detailed above, pursuant to the authority in [EO N-69-20](#), the provision of waivers and flexibilities specified in ACL 20-25 relative to remote methods of conducting monthly caseworker visits may be reinstated, on a case-by-case basis, to accomplish the monthly visit. This additional temporary case-by-case use of the ACL 20-25 flexibilities for remote monthly caseworker visits may be utilized through August 14, 2020 when [EO N-69-20](#) expires, or sooner if determined by the Department.

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.<sup>3</sup>

### **Preventative Practices**

- Practice physical distancing when in someone's home – stay six feet away from people when possible in order to accomplish the purpose of the visit.
- Wear the appropriate EPG.
- Caseworkers may ask the family members<sup>4</sup> or caregivers to wear a mask during an in-person visit, but they cannot require it.

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<sup>3</sup> [https://www.cdss.ca.gov/Portals/9/Additional-Resources/Letters-and-Notices/ACINs/2020/I\\_33\\_20.pdf](https://www.cdss.ca.gov/Portals/9/Additional-Resources/Letters-and-Notices/ACINs/2020/I_33_20.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> 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.

- 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.

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](mailto:CFSD@dss.ca.gov).

Sincerely,

***Original Document Signed By***

GREGORY E. ROSE  
Deputy Director  
Children and Family Services Division