

June 18, 2020

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**ALL COUNTY LETTER NO. 20-71**

The purpose of this All County Letter (ACL) is to alert all county child welfare agencies and juvenile probation departments to the transition and resumption of the in-person requirements related to complaint investigation components of the Resource Family Approval (RFA) Program that were in place prior to the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, as specified in Written Directives Version 6.1.



KIM JOHNSON  
DIRECTOR

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

June 18, 2020

ALL COUNTY LETTER NO. 20-71

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS  
ALL CHIEF PROBATION OFFICERS  
ALL FOSTER CARE MANAGERS  
ALL FOSTER FAMILY AGENCIES  
ALL COUNTY RFA AND ADOPTION PROGRAM MANAGERS  
ALL CDSS ADOPTION REGIONAL OFFICES

SUBJECT: RESUMPTION OF PRE-COVID-19 IN-PERSON REQUIREMENTS  
FOR RFA PROGRAM COMPLAINT INVESTIGATIONS

REFERENCE: [RFA WRITTEN DIRECTIVES VERSION 6.1](#); [GOVERNOR'S PROCLAMATION OF A STATE OF EMERGENCY, MARCH 4, 2020](#)

The purpose of this letter is to advise all county child welfare agencies and juvenile probation departments to **resume** in-person requirements related to complaint investigation within the RFA program that were in place prior to the COVID-19 emergency.

In April 2020, [ACL 20-43](#) provided guidance regarding various waivers and/or flexibilities that were authorized pursuant to [Executive Order \(EO\) N-53-20](#) that could temporarily be utilized by counties while conducting RFA program activities.

Effective July 1, 2020, all existing statutory, regulatory, and Written Directive requirements relative to in-person complaint investigations that were modified by ACL 20-43 are reinstated and all relevant required activities must resume, except as specified below. Counties that have contracted with the Community Care Licensing Division to complete their complaint investigations should contact their RFA liaison for more information.

All other waivers and flexibilities specified in ACL 20-43 remain in place until EO N-53-20 expires, unless ended sooner or extended by the Department in further guidance, in order to facilitate counties safely working with RFA applicants and approved Resource Families to ensure timely and effective operation of their RFA program. The caseworker may call the resource family to pre-screen for COVID-19

[symptoms/exposure](#) by anyone in the household before making the in-person visit if the pre-screen call will not otherwise compromise the investigation or health and safety of the identified victim or a witness in the home. County staff should ask the resource family the following questions:

- Has anyone in your home 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 had close contact with a person who tested positive for COVID-19 with a laboratory-confirmed test in the last 14 days?

If someone in the household has been exposed to COVID-19 or is experiencing symptoms, 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, obtain proper Essential Protective Gear (EPG)<sup>1</sup> before going on the in-person visit, and utilize the preventative practices described below.

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

Pursuant to the authority in [EO N-53-20](#) and [EO N-68-20](#), the provision of waivers and flexibilities specified in ACL 20-43 for investigating complaints that do not allege serious health and safety risks through remote methods may, on a case-by-case basis pursuant to the process in ACL 20-43, continue to be utilized under certain circumstances, including:

- The county or city public health department in the geographical area in which the child resides provides [direction](#) and/or shifts back to [Stage 1](#). In order to determine if the county is currently in Stage 1, use the California Department of Public Health [County Variance information page](#).
- The resource family 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

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<sup>1</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.

conducting interviews 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 resource family, 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-68-20, the provision of waivers and flexibilities specified in ACL 20-43 relative to complaint investigations into non-serious health and safety risk allegations may be utilized, on a case-by-case basis, to continue the processing of the RFA application and/or conducting the complaint investigation. This additional case-by-case use of the ACL 20-43 flexibilities for remote interviews and complaint investigations may be utilized through August 5, 2020 when EO N-68-20 expires, or sooner if determined by the Department.

**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 members of the resource family home<sup>2</sup> to wear a mask during an in-person interview, 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 sneeze into your elbow. Wash hands afterward. 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 RFA staff 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

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<sup>2</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.

directed to the assigned county RFA liaison or the RFA mailbox at [RFA@dss.ca.gov](mailto:RFA@dss.ca.gov).

Sincerely,

***Original Document Signed By***

GREGORY E. ROSE  
Deputy Director  
Children and Family Services Division

c: CWDA  
Title IV-E Agreement Tribes