

August 7, 2020

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ALL COUNTY LETTER NO. 20-91

The purpose of this All County Letter (ACL) is to alert all county child welfare agencies and juvenile probation departments to the extension of temporary, limited exceptions to the in-person requirements related to complaint investigation components of the Resource Family Approval 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
744 P Street • Sacramento, CA 95814 • www.cdss.ca.gov



GAVIN NEWSOM
GOVERNOR

August 7, 2020

ALL COUNTY LETTER NO. 20-91

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: EXTENSION OF TEMPORARY, LIMITED EXCEPTIONS TO PRE-COVID-19 IN-PERSON REQUIREMENTS RELATED TO COMPLAINT INVESTIGATIONS WITHIN THE RESOURCE FAMILY APPROVAL (RFA) PROGRAM

REFERENCE: [RFA WRITTEN DIRECTIVES VERSION 6.1](#); [GOVERNOR'S PROCLAMATION OF A STATE OF EMERGENCY, MARCH 4, 2020](#); [EXECUTIVE ORDER \(EO\) N-71-20](#); [ACL 20-43](#); [ACL 20-71](#)

The purpose of this letter is to inform county child welfare agencies and juvenile probation departments of the extension of temporary, limited exceptions to the in-person requirements related to complaint investigation within the RFA program that were in place prior to the COVID-19 emergency. as specified in Written Directives Version 6.1 and subsequent RFA Program Written Directives.

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

On July 1, 2020, all existing statutory, regulatory, and Written Directive requirements relative to in-person complaint investigations that were modified by ACL 20-43 were reinstated with specified exceptions through August 5, 2020 by [ACL 20-71](#). This letter extends the exceptions, as described below, to in-person requirements related complaint investigations within the RFA Program through the duration of the Governor's Declared State of Emergency due to COVID-19. Counties that have contracted with the Community Care Licensing Division to complete their complaint investigations should contact their RFA liaison for more information.

The RFA staff or 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)¹ 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-71-20](#), 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 to halt in-person contact and/or shifts back to [Stage 1](#). In order to determine if the county is currently in Stage 1 or has direction 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 California Department of Public Health [County Variance information page](#) or contact the local public health department.

¹ Inclusive of required Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), EPG may include, but is not limited to, gloves, face coverings, hand soap, hand sanitizer, and disinfectant.

- 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 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-71-20, 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 conduct the complaint investigation. This additional case-by-case use of the ACL 20-43 flexibilities for complaint investigations may be utilized for the duration of the Governor's Declared State of Emergency due to COVID-19, unless further guidance is issued from 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 home² 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 and 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.

² 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.

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Questions or requests for clarification regarding the information in this letter should be directed to the assigned county RFA liaison or the RFA mailbox at 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