

August 10, 2020

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ALL COUNTY LETTER NO. 20-92

The purpose of this All County Letter (ACL) is to alert California Department of Social Services Regional Offices, delegated county adoption agencies, licensed adoption agencies, and adoption service providers to the resumption of the in-person requirements related to visits that were in place prior to the Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) State of Emergency and ACL 20-56, except for the exceptions described. This letter also provides for the extension of other flexibilities related to the Independent Adoptions Program as outlined in ACL 20-56.



KIM JOHNSON
DIRECTOR

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

August 10, 2020

ALL COUNTY LETTER NO. 20-92

TO: ALL CDSS ADOPTION REGIONAL OFFICES
ALL DELEGATED COUNTY ADOPTION AGENCIES
ALL ADOPTION SERVICES PROVIDERS
ALL LICENSED ADOPTION AGENCIES

SUBJECT: RESUMING IN-PERSON VISITATION REQUIREMENTS AND
EXTENDING ALL OTHER COVID-19 RELATED WAIVERS AND
FLEXIBILITIES IN THE INDEPENDENT ADOPTION PROGRAM
AS PREVIOUSLY OUTLINED IN ACL 20-56

REFERENCE: [TITLE 22, DIVISION 2, CHAPTER 3 ADOPTION PROGRAM
REGULATIONS; FAMILY CODE SECTIONS 8800 ET. SEQ.; ACL
20-56; EXECUTIVE ORDER \(EO\) N-53-20, EO N-68-20, EO N-69-
20 AND EO N-71-20; GOVERNOR'S PROCLAMATION OF A
STATE OF EMERGENCY, MARCH 4, 2020](#)

The purpose of this letter is to advise the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Regional Offices (RO), delegated county adoption agencies, adoption services providers (ASP) and licensed adoption agencies to **resume**, except as described below, the in-person requirements related to adoption specialist visits in the Independent Adoption Program that were in place prior to the COVID-19 declaration of a state of emergency and the flexibilities authorized by [ACL 20-56](#). Additionally, this letter provides for the extension of all other waivers and flexibilities specified in [ACL 20-56](#) for the duration of the Governor's Declared State of Emergency due to COVID-19, unless a future EO or CDSS guidance ends or modifies it sooner.

On May 18, 2020, [ACL 20-56](#) provided guidance regarding case-by-case waivers of in-person adoption specialist visits that were authorized pursuant to [EO N-53-20](#) and could be temporarily utilized by the CDSS RO and delegated county adoption agencies while conducting visits pursuant to [Adoption Regulation section 35083\(a\)](#) and [Family Code section 8808](#).

Effective immediately, all existing statutory and regulatory requirements relative to all in-person adoption specialist visits that were modified by [ACL 20-56](#) are reinstated and all relevant required activities must resume, except as specified below.

Prior to conducting any in-person visits, CDSS RO and delegated county adoption services staff should ask the 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 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 adoption specialist should obtain proper Essential Protective Gear (EPG)¹ before going on an in-person visit, and utilize the preventative practices described below.

Exceptions and Additional Considerations:

Based on the authority provided by [EO N-53-20](#) and [EO N-71-20](#), the waivers and flexibilities specified in [ACL 20-56](#) for remote methods of conducting in-person visits that do not involve serious safety concerns may continue to be used on a case-by-case basis only in the following circumstances:

- The state, county, or city public health department in the geographical area in which the petitioner(s) 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

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.

required and for which remote options are authorized under this exception, use the California Department of Public Health [County Variance information page](#) or reach out to the county welfare department in which the petitioner resides to determine if the local public health department has provided the county with such direction.

- The petitioner(s) refuses entry due to their own health and safety concerns related to the risk of COVID-19 infection. In this case, please identify additional options for completing 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 petitioner(s), child, or someone else in the household has 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 child to be adopted.

In the event that in-person contact is not a viable option based on the exceptions and additional considerations detailed above, pursuant to the authority in [EO N-71-20](#), the waivers and flexibilities specified in [ACL 20-56](#) related to remote methods of conducting in-person visits may be reinstated, on a case-by-case basis, to accomplish the visit. This additional temporary case-by-case use of the [ACL 20-56](#) flexibilities for remote visits may be utilized through the duration of the state of emergency, unless a future EO or CDSS guidance ends or modifies it sooner.

All remote contacts must be documented in accordance with the instructions set forth in [ACL 20-56](#). As a reminder, only videoconference contacts will be a sufficient substitute to meet state face-to-face visit requirements.

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.
- Adoption specialist may ask the petitioner(s)² 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.

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.

- 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.

Delegated county adoption agencies, please work with your county Office of Emergency Services to obtain EPG for your caseworkers as needed. For problems obtaining EPG, please contact your local Office of Emergency Services immediately. Please also inform CDSS if the issue is not resolved quickly. Licensed adoption agencies are responsible for obtaining EPG for their staff, and ASP are responsible for obtaining their own EPG. CDSS will continue to provide EPG for their RO staff.

If you have any questions or need additional guidance regarding the information in this letter, contact the Adoptions Services Bureau at (916) 651-8089 or at CFSD@dss.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Original Document Signed By

GREGORY E. ROSE
Deputy Director
Children and Family Services Division