

July 28, 2025

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**ALL COUNTY LETTER NO. 25-48**

The purpose of this All County Letter is to provide federally recognized tribes, county child welfare agencies, and probation departments with information, guidance, requirements, and best practices on updating the Resource Family Approval (RFA) Implementation Plan, now referred to as the RFA Program Plan.



JENNIFER TROIA  
DIRECTOR

CALIFORNIA HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY  
**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES**  
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GAVIN NEWSOM  
GOVERNOR

July 28, 2025

ALL COUNTY LETTER NO. 25-48

TO: ALL COUNTY CHILD WELFARE DIRECTORS  
ALL CHIEF PROBATION OFFICERS  
ALL CHILD WELFARE SERVICES PROGRAM MANAGERS  
ALL COUNTY FOSTER CARE MANAGERS  
ALL COUNTY ELIGIBILITY SUPERVISORS  
ALL TRIBES WITH A TITLE IV-E AGREEMENT WITH CDSS

SUBJECT: UPDATED RESOURCE FAMILY APPROVAL IMPLEMENTATION  
PLAN REQUIREMENTS

REFERENCE: [WELFARE AND INSTITUTIONS CODE SECTION 16519.5](#);  
[RESOURCE FAMILY APPROVAL \(RFA\) WRITTEN DIRECTIVES](#);  
[ALL COUNTY LETTER \(ACL\) NO. 16-10](#)

**Purpose**

The purpose of this All-County Letter (ACL) is to provide child welfare agencies, probation departments, and federally recognized tribes with updated information regarding the Resource Family Approval (RFA) Implementation Plan, as described in [ACL 16-10](#), and hereinafter referred to as the RFA Program Plan.

**BACKGROUND/OVERVIEW**

Per [Welfare and Institutions Code section 16519.5](#), county child welfare agencies, in consultation with county probation departments, were required to provide the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) with a plan that outlined policies and procedures for their RFA program. The [Written Directives \(WD\) Section 4-01](#) states the CDSS may require modifications to the RFA Program Plan at the time of the biennial review. As the laws and WDs regarding RFA have changed significantly in the last eight years, it is imperative that the RFA Program Plans on file reflect changes in policies and procedure. Updated RFA Program Plans will assist the CDSS RFA County Liaisons responsible for biennial reviews to better understand the full spectrum of counties' RFA programs and the services provided to families. This will enable better partnership and collaboration between the counties and the CDSS and allow the CDSS to provide more comprehensive technical assistance at the time of the biennial review.

### **RFA PROGRAM PLAN BACKGROUND**

When the RFA program was implemented in 2017, each county was required to submit an RFA Program Plan. A joint plan between a child welfare agency and a probation department was accepted when the child welfare agency was operating on behalf of the probation department. If a probation department was operating their own RFA program, they submitted their own RFA Program Plan.

The RFA Program Plan details the key components, as outlined in [WD Section 4-01](#), that describe how the county's RFA program will operate. Additional topics have been added to the revised RFA Program Plan template (Attachment A) that include information about onboarding, supporting non-English speaking families, ongoing trainings, and supporting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, and related (LGBTQIA+) youth. It also includes information about how the county will engage with Tribes to incorporate Indian Community Standards into the RFA process on any application where placement with an Indian Child Welfare Act eligible child is being considered. Counties should consult with their local Tribal partners on the development of this aspect of the RFA Program Plan. The additional and updated information requested in the RFA Program Plan will broaden a county's RFA program to further improve the experiences of applicants and Resource Families.

### **RFA PROGRAM PLAN COMPONENTS**

- 1) Program statement and vision.
- 2) Program goals, objectives, and intended outcomes.
- 3) The county's organizational structure, including child welfare agency and probation department staff roles and responsibilities, including the number of positions assigned to RFA.
- 4) Description of how the county will maintain separation between the operation of the RFA program and its placement, adoption, and social work responsibilities.
- 5) The county's requirements for onboarding, ongoing training, and maintaining program expertise for RFA staff, etc.
- 6) Description of training plan for Resource Families/applicants including for families that may speak languages other than English or may be illiterate.
- 7) If applicable, identification of the role of any contracted agency, such as a Foster Family Agency or the CDSS, that will be involved with the operation of the program.
- 8) Description of the county's RFA Program Plan for tribal outreach, when applicable, which should include how to engage with local Tribes on how Indian Community Standards will be incorporated as set forth by each Tribe in the RFA process.
- 9) Description of the county plan to ensure Resource Families understand and are willing and able to support all components of the Foster Youth Bill of Rights.
- 10) Procedures for the monitoring of Resource Families.
- 11) Description of the county policies and procedures for responses to complaint allegations.

- 12) A list and copy of RFA related forms created by the county and not provided by CDSS attached to the RFA Program Plan.
- 13) Any additional information related to the county RFA program.

### **REVISIONS TO THE RFA PROGRAM PLAN**

As part of the continuous quality improvement for RFA, the CDSS will review the RFA Program Plans to ensure alignment with the WDs and applicable law. Counties should consult with their probation department and local Tribes prior to updating their RFA Program Plan when there are changes in processes or procedures or when advised by the CDSS. The updated RFA Program Plan should then be resubmitted to the CDSS RFA County Liaison for review and possible suggested edits back to the county, if needed. With the updated RFA Program Plans, the CDSS RFA County Liaisons will be able to provide high quality service and technical assistance to counties, which shall in turn provide improved outcomes for families and youth in foster care.

To update and/or revise the RFA Program Plan, please see Attachment A which is the County Resource Family Approval (RFA) Program Plan template.

### **WHEN TO SUBMIT RFA PROGRAM PLANS**

Counties that have a biennial review scheduled in 2026 should submit their RFA Program Plan between October to December of 2025. For those biennial reviews taking place in 2027, the RFA Program Plans will be submitted between October to December of 2026 for review. Please see Attachment B for the list of counties to be reviewed in 2026 and 2027. If a county is not able to meet the timeframe, they should consult with their CDSS RFA County Liaison to collaborate on a mutually agreed upon date that is no later than 90 calendar days prior to the scheduled biennial review.

If you are a county child welfare services agency or probation department and have any questions or need additional guidance regarding the information in this letter, please contact [RFA@dss.ca.gov](mailto:RFA@dss.ca.gov) or your [County Liaisons](#).

Sincerely,

### **Original Document Signed By**

ANGIE SCHWARTZ  
Deputy Director  
Children and Family Services Division

Attachments

cc: All Federally Recognized Tribes



# County Resource Family Approval (RFA) Program Plan

County

of

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Resource Family Approval Program (RFA) is a county administered program. Each county is solely responsible for its operation, with oversight by the California Department of Social Services (CDSS). The CDSS provides this oversight through the issuance of Written Directives (WD), which have the same force and effect as regulations, conducting biennial reviews of a county's RFA program, providing training, facilitating legal consultations, and providing technical assistance. As noted in [Welfare and Institutions Code section 16519.5\(g\)](#) and [WD Section 4-01](#), part of the responsibilities of a county requires the submission of a RFA Implementation Plan, now referred to as the RFA Program Plan. With these RFA Program Plans, the CDSS anticipates the ability to provide high quality service and technical assistance to counties which shall in turn provide improved outcomes for families and youth in foster care.

## **PROGRAM PLAN REQUIREMENT**

When the RFA program was implemented in 2017, each county was required to submit an RFA Program Plan. A joint plan between a child welfare agency and a probation department was accepted when the child welfare agency was operating on behalf of the probation department. If the probation department operates their own RFA program, they submit their own RFA Program Plan. Counties should consult with their probation department and local Tribes prior to updating their RFA Program Plan when there are changes in processes or procedures or when advised by the CDSS.

Counties that have a biennial review scheduled in 2026 should submit their RFA Program Plan between October to December of 2025. For those biennial reviews taking place in 2027, the RFA Program Plans will be submitted between October to December of 2026 for review. If a county is not able to meet the timeframe, they should consult with their CDSS RFA County Liaison to collaborate on a mutually agreed upon date that is no later than 90 calendar days prior to the scheduled biennial review.

## **PROGRAM PLAN OBJECTIVE**

The RFA Program Plan details the key components, as outlined in [WD Section 4-01](#), that describe how the county's RFA program will operate. Additional topics have been added to the revised RFA Program Plan template that include information about onboarding, supporting non-English speaking families, ongoing trainings, and supporting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, and related (LGBTQIA+) youth. This additional information will broaden a county's RFA program to further improve the experiences of applicants and Resource Families.

## **REVISIONS TO PROGRAM PLAN**

As part of the continuous quality improvement for RFA, the CDSS will review these plans, which counties should be updating on a regular basis. Counties should consult with their probation department and local Tribes prior to updating their RFA Program Plan when there are changes in processes or procedures or when advised by the CDSS. The updated RFA Program Plan should then be resubmitted to the CDSS RFA County Liaison for review. With the updated RFA Program Plans, the CDSS RFA County Liaisons will be able to provide high quality service and technical assistance to counties, which shall in turn provide improved outcomes for families and youth in foster care.

## **PROCESS FOR SUBMISSION OF PROGRAM PLAN**

1. Prepare the RFA Program Plan utilizing the table of contents and template provided below.
2. A county shall maintain a hard copy or electronic copy of its RFA Program Plan and any amendments to the RFA Program Plan.
3. Electronically submit the completed RFA Program Plan to the assigned CDSS RFA County Liaison on the timeline provided.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

#	COMPONENT	INITIAL SUBMISSION DATE	AMENDED DATE
1	<a href="#"><u>Program statement and vision.</u></a>		
2	<a href="#"><u>Program goals, objectives, and intended outcomes.</u></a>		
3	<a href="#"><u>The county's organizational structure, including child welfare agency and probation department staff roles and responsibilities. Include number of positions assigned to RFA.</u></a>		
4	<a href="#"><u>Description of how the county will maintain separation between the operation of the RFA program and its placement, adoption, and social work responsibilities.</u></a>		
5	<a href="#"><u>The county's requirements for onboarding, training, and maintaining program expertise for your RFA staff, etc.</u></a>		
6	<a href="#"><u>Description of training plan for Resource Families/applicants including for families that may speak languages other than English or may be illiterate.</u></a>		
7	<a href="#"><u>If applicable, identification of the role of any contracted agency such as Foster Family Agencies or the CDSS that will be involved with the operation of the program.</u></a>		
8	<a href="#"><u>Description of the county's RFA Program Plan for tribal outreach, when applicable, which should include process to engage with Tribes regarding incorporation of Indian Community Standards in the RFA process on a case specific basis.</u></a>		
9	<a href="#"><u>Description of the county plan to ensure Resource Families understand and are capable of supporting all components of the Foster Youth Bill of Rights.</u></a>		
10	<a href="#"><u>Procedures for the monitoring of Resource Families.</u></a>		



11	<a href="#"><u>Description of county policies and procedures for response to complaint allegations.</u></a>		
12	<a href="#"><u>A list and copy of any county created RFA related forms.</u></a>		
13	<a href="#"><u>Any additional information related to the county's RFA Program.</u></a>		

## **1. Program statement and vision.**

**[\(Back to Table of Contents\)](#)**

## **2. Program goals, objectives, and intended outcomes.**

[\(Back to Table of Contents\)](#)

**3. The county's organizational structure, including child welfare agency and probation department staff roles and responsibilities. Include number of positions assigned to RFA.**

**[\(Back to Table of Contents\)](#)**

**4. Description of how the county will maintain separation between the operation of the RFA program and its placement, adoption, and social work responsibilities.**

**[\(Back to Table of Contents\)](#)**

**5. The county's requirements for onboarding, ongoing training and maintaining program expertise for your RFA staff, etc.**

**[\(Back to Table of Contents\)](#)**

**6. Description of training plan for Resource Families/Applicants including for families that may speak other languages other than English or may be illiterate.**

[\(Back to Table of Contents\)](#)

**7. If applicable, identification of the role of any contracted agency such as Foster Family Agencies or the CDSS that will be involved with the operation of the program.**

**Family Evaluation**

- ☐ **Foster Family Agency**
- ☐ **California Department of Social Services**

**Home Health and Safety Assessment**

- ☐ **Foster Family Agency**
- ☐ **California Department of Social Services**
- ☐ **Community Based Organization**

**Complaint Investigations**

- ☐ **California Department of Social Services**

**Legal Services**

- ☐ **California Department of Social Services**

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**8. Description of the county's RFA Program Plan for tribal outreach, when applicable, should include how to engage with local Tribes on how Indian Community Standards will be incorporated as set forth by each Tribe in the RFA process.**

**[\(Back to Table of Contents\)](#)**

**9. Description of the county plan to ensure Resource Families understand and can support all components of the Foster Youth Bill of Rights.**

**[\(Back to Table of Contents\)](#)**

## **10. Procedures for the monitoring of Resource Families.**

[\(Back to Table of Contents\)](#)

**11. Description of county policies and procedures for response to complaint allegations.**

[\(Back to Table of Contents\)](#)

**12. Please list RFA related county-created forms and attach a copy of each form.**

**[\(Back to Table of Contents\)](#)**

**13. Any additional information related to the county's RFA Program.**

**[\(Back to Table of Contents\)](#)**

## THE RFA COUNTY BIENNIAL REVIEWS FOR YEARS 2026 AND 2027

**Biennial Review 2026**

- Alpine
- Amador
- Calaveras
- Colusa
- Contra Costa
- Glenn
- Kings
- Lake
- Marin
- Mariposa
- Mendocino
- Mono
- Monterey
- Orange
- Placer
- Plumas
- Riverside
- Sacramento
- San Benito
- San Diego
- San Mateo
- Santa Barbara
- Santa Cruz
- Solano
- Sutter
- Tehama
- Trinity
- Yuba

**Biennial Review 2027**

- Alameda
- Butte
- Del Norte
- El Dorado
- Fresno
- Humboldt
- Imperial
- Inyo
- Kern
- Lassen
- Los Angeles
- Madera
- Merced
- Modoc
- Napa
- Nevada
- San Bernardino
- San Francisco
- San Joaquin
- San Luis Obispo
- Santa Clara
- Shasta
- Sierra
- Siskiyou
- Sonoma
- Stanislaus
- Tulare
- Tuolumne
- Ventura
- Yolo