



CDSS

WILL LIGHTBOURNE
DIRECTOR

STATE OF CALIFORNIA—HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

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July 11, 2016

ALL COUNTY LETTER (ACL) NO. 16-58

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS
ALL COUNTY FISCAL OFFICERS
ALL COUNTY AUDITOR CONTROLLERS
ALL CHIEF PROBATION OFFICERS
COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION OF CALIFORNIA
ALL CDSS ADOPTION REGIONAL AND FIELD OFFICES
ALL TITLE IV-E AGREEMENT TRIBES
ALL CDSS COMMUNITY CARE LICENSING DIVISION (CCLD)
LICENSING PROGRAM MANAGERS
ALL CDSS COMMUNITY CARE LICENSING DIVISION (CCLD)
COUNTY LIAISONS

SUBJECT: RESOURCE FAMILY APPROVAL (RFA) PROGRAM - CLARIFYING
INSTRUCTIONS FOR STATEWIDE IMPLEMENTATION

REFERENCE: [WELFARE AND INSTITUTIONS CODE \(W&IC\) SECTION 16519.5](#)
[ASSEMBLY BILL \(AB\) 403 \(CHAPTER 773, STATUTES OF 2015\);](#)
[ACL NO. 16-10](#)

The purpose of this ACL is to provide county child welfare and probation departments and other interested stakeholders with information on the RFA Program in preparation for the mandated statewide implementation on January 1, 2017. This ACL provides information on various program areas of the RFA Program that are necessary for implementation, including a fiscal year (FY) 2016-17 planning RFA fund distribution. The RFA Program areas covered in this ACL are:

- Submission of RFA Implementation Plans
- Conversion of Licensed Foster Family Homes, Approved Relative and Nonrelative Extended Family Member (NREFM) Homes
- RFA Staff Competencies
- Staff Training
- Department of Justice (DOJ) Background Check Information

REASON FOR THIS TRANSMITTAL

- State Law Change
- Federal Law or Regulation Change
- Court Order
- Clarification Requested by One or More Counties
- Initiated by CDSS

- Child Welfare Services Case Management System (CWS/CMS) Instructions
- RFA Forms
- Legal Administrative Action Records System (LAARS) and Licensing Information System (LIS) checks
- Funding for RFA Implementation

Submission of RFA Implementation Plans

Pursuant to W&IC section [16519.5\(g\)\(1\)](#), counties are required to submit RFA implementation plans to the California Department of Social Services (CDSS). These implementation plans are critical to organizing each county's development and implementation of RFA. The plan should be prepared in collaboration with both the child welfare and probation departments. The CDSS will provide feedback and guidance regarding the implementation plans to ensure successful RFA implementation.

Implementation and operation of the RFA Program is ultimately a county responsibility. If a county is unable to complete some components of the program, such as complaint investigations or legal representation in administrative actions, the county may request those components be completed by CDSS on the county's behalf. For those activities performed by CDSS on behalf of the counties, counties will need to reimburse CDSS based on CDSS actual cost. When submitting the required implementation plan, please indicate what, if any, activities the county is unable to perform. The CDSS will provide information on the reimbursement process once the implementation plans are reviewed.

The implementation plan template and readiness assessment tool can be found at <http://www.childsworld.ca.gov/PG3416.htm>. Please send the implementation plan to RFA@dss.ca.gov on or before September 1, 2016. Upon receipt of an implementation plan, a final allocation will be released through a County Fiscal Letter for counties to begin claiming cost, effective October 1, 2016. If implementation plans are not submitted by September 1, 2016 for review, the county will not be able to claim funding for reimbursement of RFA activities.

Conversion of Licensed Foster Family Homes, Approved Relative and NREFM Homes

Assembly Bill 403 requires that all currently licensed foster family homes, approved relative caregivers, and NREFMs must convert to RFA no later than December 31, 2019. State law also requires that these caregivers receive notification from counties of these requirements. County agencies are required to take the following steps:

1. No later than July 1, 2017, the county shall provide the following information to all licensed foster family homes and approved relatives and NREFMs residing within the county:
 - A detailed description of the RFA Program.
 - Notification that in order to continue to care for a foster child, a Resource Family Approval is required by December 31, 2019.
 - Notification that a foster family home license and approval of a relative or NREFM shall be forfeited by operation of law on December 31, 2019.
2. For the above families who have an approved adoption home study prior to January 1, 2018, those families will be deemed to be an approved Resource Family. No additional requirements of the family will need to be completed to be deemed a Resource Family.
3. For all other families who do not have an approved adoption home study, but have a child placed in the home at any time between January 1, 2017 and December 31, 2017, the county will need to complete a psychosocial assessment of the family and document the results of the assessment. Upon successful completion of the psychosocial assessment, the family may be approved as a Resource Family.

Additional information on conversion of families will be released in a forthcoming ACL.

Forfeiture of License or Approval

All licensed foster family homes that do not have a child in placement at any time between January 1, 2017 and December 31, 2017, shall forfeit their license by operation of law on January 1, 2018. If the family is interested in providing care again for a child or youth in Foster Care, they will need to apply to be a Resource Family.

Any licensed foster family home, approved relative and NREFM home not converted or deemed a Resource Family by December 31, 2019, will forfeit their licensure or approval by operation of law on December 31, 2019.

For conversion of families to Resource Families, new family files will need to be created. More information will be provided in a forthcoming ACL.

RFA Staff Competencies

The CDSS has developed RFA staff competencies for county staff performing RFA duties. The competencies were developed after engagement and discussions with the County Welfare Directors Association (CWDA), Chief Probation Officers of California, the Alliance of Children and Families, and other stakeholders. These competencies are intended to be representative of the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to complete the RFA approval process. The RFA county staff competencies will be included in Version Three of the Written Directives, which the Department anticipates releasing on or near July 2016 but also are included as Attachment A in this ACL.

Staff Training

The RFA staff training has been developed for counties in conjunction with the California Social Work Education Center and CDSS. This training is currently being offered to early implementing counties, with an anticipated release for statewide attendance in September 2016. The Regional Training Academies, along with county liaisons from the CCLD, are hosting the four day regional trainings. The training curriculum focuses on staff achieving competency on the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to complete the RFA approval process.

DOJ Background Check Information

Prior to statewide implementation, CDSS will notify the DOJ that counties are authorized to use the RFA applicant type "RESRCE FAM PER 16519.5 WI." for all required RFA fingerprint clearances effective January 1, 2017. The DOJ will also notify the ad-hoc fingerprinting service locations of this change. If a county has been previously authorized by the DOJ to perform background checks, the county does not need to submit another DOJ packet when the RFA Program goes statewide in January 2017.

CWS/CMS Instructions

Early implementing counties have been provided CWS/CMS instructions on how to enter Resource Family homes into the system. Prior to statewide implementation, new

instructions will be issued to all counties when further modifications to CWS/CMS are made.

RFA Forms

The CDSS is in the process of creating and modifying existing forms that will be applicable to RFA. Counties may access the CDSS RFA webpage at <http://www.childsworld.ca.gov/PG3416.htm>. Additional forms for counties will be posted on the CDSS forms website by January 1, 2017.

LIS and LAARS Checks

The LIS and the LAARS checks are integral components of the RFA Background Checks Assessment. Counties will conduct the required LIS and LAARS checks with the existing established procedures with CCLD. As statewide implementation approaches (January 1, 2017), CDSS will provide updated LIS and LAARS procedures to counties.

Funding for RFA Implementation

General Fund for RFA was initially provided in FY 2015-16 in preparation for the implementation of the Continuum of Care Reform (CCR). The 2016-17 total non-federal cost for the RFA component of CCR is approximately \$14.3 million which represents six months of funding. As certain activities related to RFA were already subsumed within 2011 Realignment base funding, the total cost was offset by approximately \$6.3 million. As such, only \$8 million General Fund is additionally provided in FY 2016-17 for this component. Detailed information on those activities and funding can be found in the CDSS 2016 May Revision binder website: <http://www.cdss.ca.gov/cdssweb/PG4985.htm>, under Estimates Methodology, page 113.

Attachment B provides a county specific planning distribution that can be taken into consideration, as counties are writing their implementation plans.

In consultation with CWDA, the distribution of the \$14.3 million is based on the budgeted assumption for FFA conversion, New RFAs, Due Process, Complaints and Annual RFA Updates. The \$6.3 million adjustment for subsumed activities is based on each county's funding amounts provided as part of the 2011 Realignment; those activities are: Annual and Multiple-Relative Home Approvals, Adoptions Approvals, and Adoptions Background Check. To ensure there is adequate level of funding to support

new implementation activities required under RFA for very small, small and medium size counties, the planning distribution includes the following minimum floors:

- Very small counties = \$3,000
- Small counties = \$13,000
- Medium counties = \$23,000

A final RFA allocation will be provided once all the implementation plans are submitted. As previously stated, implementation plans received by September 1, 2016, will allow counties to begin claiming costs effective October 1, 2016. As a reminder, claims will not be processed without submittal of an implementation plan.

If you have any questions, please email the RFA Program Unit at RFA@dss.ca.gov. Questions regarding the funding should be sent to Fiscal.Systems@dss.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Original Document Signed By:

GREGORY E. ROSE
Deputy Director
Children and Family Services Division

Attachments

Attachment A

Staff Requirements

A County shall ensure that program staff have the education and experience necessary to competently participate in the assessment and evaluation of an applicant or Resource Family.

A county shall require social work personnel to meet the minimum qualification requirements for social worker or probation officer positions according to the county's requirements.

A county may wish to consider requiring Resource Family Approval workers to have at least a Bachelor of Social Work degree or an equivalent or graduate degree in a program that includes a significant focus on family-based behavioral observations and interventions. This minimum educational background may be necessary in a hearing setting in order for a worker to qualify as an expert witness, which allows an Administrative Law Judge to accept the worker's findings and conclusions that are based on facts gathered during the psychosocial assessment.

Examples of an equivalent or graduate degree may include the following:

- I. Master of Social Work
- II. Marriage, Family, and Child Counseling
- III. Child/Counseling/Social/Clinical Psychology
- IV. Child Development

Counties shall ensure staff is trained to perform assigned tasks and that staff participating in the assessment and evaluation of an applicant or resource family meet core competency requirements, including having necessary knowledge and skills.

Knowledge includes an understanding of the following:

- Child Welfare principles consistent with the California Continuum of Care Reform.
- The Resource Family Approval assessment and approval process.
- The contents of the Written Directives.
- The personal rights of children in foster care and how to ensure those rights are afforded to children.
- Child and family confidentiality principles.
- Techniques for interviewing children, nonminor dependents, and adults.
- Developmental stages of childhood and effects of trauma on development, as well as the impact of poverty on the lives of families and children.
- The priorities of safety, permanency, and well-being for children in foster care.
- The impact of trauma, grief, and loss on a child involved in the child welfare system and its impact on placement and permanency goals.
- The impact of mental health and substance abuse on children and families.
- Permanency timelines and the role caregivers play in supporting timely permanency.
- That teaming or collaboration assists in developing "solutions" that are individualized to the family and their culture, community and tribes.

Attachment A

- The practice of cultural humility and how this approach improves family engagement, shows respect for families, and ensures assessments incorporate a family's unique culture.
- Ongoing training and services prepare caregivers to meet the needs of children and nonminor dependents and assists families with forming lifelong relationships.
- Resource Family Approval prepares families to better meet the needs of vulnerable children in the foster care system and assists with a seamless transition to permanency.
- The impact of personal biases when working with children and families.

Skills include the ability to do the following:

- Explain the Resource Family Approval requirements to applicants.
- Correctly apply the Written Directives and applicable laws.
- Conduct a home environment assessment psychosocial assessment, and prepare a written report.
- Incorporate an assessment of an applicant's mental health and substance abuse into the risk assessment.
- Interview children, nonminor dependents, and adults using a variety of interviewing techniques.
- Conduct visits for assessment purposes in a way that engages Resource Families to build rapport and establish trust.
- Assess a variety of information including, but not limited to, historical, social, and economic factors pertaining to individuals.
- Summarize, evaluate, and make a final determination of an applicant in the written report.
- Investigate complaints, and prepare, conduct, and report findings of complaint investigations.
- Utilize teaming or collaborative strategies to engage Resource Families.
- Ability to assess and identify children who have been abused, neglected, or maltreated.
- Recognize how personal beliefs, values, norms, and world views can affect the dynamics of case planning and outcomes.
- Present self in a manner that is respectful, culturally humble, professional, and adapts well to meet both community and cultural needs of children and families.
- Collaborates with families to achieve mutual goals, build upon family strengths, and ensure quality comprehensive written reports are developed.

Counties shall provide staff with a copy of the Written Directives for the Resource Family Approval Program. A County shall designate a Resource Family Approval Project Manager to be responsible for the day-to-day administration of the Resource Family Approval Program and to serve as point of contact to the Department.

COUNTY	TOTAL RFA COST ACTIVITIES	SUBSUMED ACTIVITIES*	NET GENERAL FUND PLANNING ALLOCATION
Alameda	\$257,590	\$224,845	\$32,745
Alpine	\$3,440	\$440	\$3,000
Amador	\$15,056	\$2,056	\$13,000
Butte	\$158,372	\$52,223	\$106,149
Calaveras	\$23,560	\$10,560	\$13,000
Colusa	\$15,512	\$2,512	\$13,000
Contra Costa	\$215,747	\$113,295	\$102,452
Del Norte	\$36,488	\$5,350	\$31,138
El Dorado	\$51,569	\$28,569	\$23,000
Fresno	\$249,824	\$185,515	\$64,309
Glenn	\$21,407	\$8,407	\$13,000
Humboldt	\$133,841	\$48,970	\$84,871
Imperial	\$38,509	\$15,509	\$23,000
Inyo	\$6,835	\$2,512	\$4,323
Kern	\$280,177	\$178,623	\$101,554
Kings	\$252,408	\$26,697	\$225,711
Lake	\$22,942	\$9,942	\$13,000
Lassen	\$17,111	\$4,111	\$13,000
Los Angeles	\$5,615,046	\$2,170,683	\$3,444,363
Madera	\$140,423	\$19,934	\$120,489
Marin	\$26,424	\$13,424	\$13,000
Mariposa	\$6,868	\$3,868	\$3,000
Mendocino	\$42,016	\$18,869	\$23,147
Merced	\$78,671	\$55,671	\$23,000
Modoc	\$5,013	\$1,783	\$3,230
Mono	\$4,143	\$1,143	\$3,000
Monterey	\$162,343	\$38,218	\$124,125
Napa	\$33,262	\$20,262	\$13,000
Nevada	\$22,015	\$9,015	\$13,000
Orange	\$772,614	\$428,656	\$343,958
Placer	\$56,165	\$33,165	\$23,000
Plumas	\$18,974	\$5,974	\$13,000
Riverside	\$587,653	\$382,479	\$205,174
Sacramento	\$323,543	\$241,936	\$81,607
San Benito	\$20,765	\$7,765	\$13,000
San Bernardino	\$999,793	\$374,797	\$624,996
San Diego	\$655,191	\$451,021	\$204,170
San Francisco	\$215,638	\$149,677	\$65,961
San Joaquin	\$368,210	\$92,869	\$275,341
San Luis Obispo	\$210,832	\$70,419	\$140,413
San Mateo	\$73,775	\$50,775	\$23,000
Santa Barbara	\$119,621	\$49,379	\$70,242
Santa Clara	\$464,752	\$158,366	\$306,386
Santa Cruz	\$71,650	\$43,556	\$28,094
Shasta	\$103,065	\$46,666	\$56,399
Sierra	\$3,452	\$452	\$3,000
Siskiyou	\$39,496	\$11,604	\$27,892
Solano	\$55,160	\$32,160	\$23,000
Sonoma	\$93,016	\$70,016	\$23,000
Stanislaus	\$160,399	\$62,358	\$98,041
Sutter	\$21,839	\$8,839	\$13,000
Tehama	\$49,733	\$25,344	\$24,389
Trinity	\$16,612	\$3,612	\$13,000
Tulare	\$262,304	\$60,510	\$201,794
Tuolumne	\$36,098	\$17,979	\$18,119
Ventura	\$425,184	\$71,231	\$353,953
Yolo	\$102,864	\$25,265	\$77,599
Yuba	\$25,990	\$11,124	\$14,866
TOTAL	\$14,291,000	\$6,261,000	\$8,030,000

*Subsumed activities represent the RFA funding included in the 2011 Realignment Base Calculation.