

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

744 P Street, Sacramento, California 95814



September 18, 2001

ALL-COUNTY INFORMATION NOTICE NO. I-79-01

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS
ALL COUNTY FOSTER CARE SUPERVISORS
CALIFORNIA STATE FOSTER PARENT ASSOCIATION
CALIFORNIA STATE CARE PROVIDERS ASSOCIATION
CALIFORNIA PROBATION OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

SUBJECT: PERMISSION FOR FOSTER YOUTH TO PARTICIPATE IN SCHOOL SPONSORED ACTIVITIES

REASON FOR THIS TRANSMITTAL

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

The purpose of this notice is to clarify the position of the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) regarding the authority of foster parents to permit foster youth to participate in school sponsored activities. Foster youth have informed CDSS that they are often unable to participate in school field trips and athletics because foster parents do not believe they are authorized to sign school permission forms.

The CDSS considers school sponsored activities to be an important part of every youth's educational and social development. This is no less true for youth in care. Foster parents should encourage the foster youth in their care to participate in school sponsored activities whenever possible. The CDSS recommendations consistent with this policy are provided below.

According to information provided to CDSS, some counties permit social workers or foster parents to authorize foster youth participation in school sponsored activities without court approval. Other counties require a court order authorizing the social worker or foster parent to give consent. If the county considers a court order to be necessary, that order should be secured as expeditiously as possible. Accordingly, CDSS recommends that counties seek standing orders rather than individual orders that authorize social workers or foster parents to give consent for foster youth to participate in school sponsored activities. Standing orders give persons closely connected with a foster youth's case the flexibility to give consent in these instances. In this way, standing orders maximize foster youths' participation in school sponsored field trips and athletics. Once the order is in place, counties should make every effort to ensure that the youth's social worker and foster parent know that the order exists. Any other provisions contained in the order, such as permission to travel for school related activities, should also be conveyed to the social worker or foster parent.

Regardless of how counties choose to address this issue, the underlying policy is the same. Foster youth should be given every opportunity to participate in school sponsored activities whenever possible. The CDSS urges counties to review their existing policies and practices for consistency with this policy. Any changes in county procedures that result from this notice should be made in accordance with existing risk management policies. The CDSS is currently conducting outreach efforts to discuss this issue with the Judicial Council, child welfare services personnel, county counsel, and care providers.

If you have any questions regarding this all-county information notice, please contact Sylvia Spencer, Chief, Foster Care Services Bureau at (916) 445-7001.

Sincerely,

***Original Document
Signed By***

SYLVIA PIZZINI
Deputy Director
Children and Family Services Division