

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

744 P Street, Sacramento, California 95814



September 23, 2003

ALL COUNTY INFORMATION NOTICE NO. I-62-03

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS
ALL PUBLIC ADOPTION AGENCIES
ALL CDSS ADOPTIONS DISTRICT OFFICES
ALL PRIVATE DOMESTIC ADOPTION AGENCIES

REASON FOR THIS TRANSMITTAL

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

SUBJECT: PERMANENCY PLANNING AND THE ADOPTION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The purpose of this All County Information Notice is to remind child welfare and licensed adoption agencies about:

- (1) statutory requirements to achieve permanency for a child, and
- (2) the intent of the Adoption Assistance Program (AAP).

PERMANENCY PLANNING

Effective case planning is essential to assure that a child in foster care has every opportunity for a permanent living arrangement with a safe and stable family. The county agency is responsible for reviewing a child's case and considering all permanency options for the child. A child's case plan must be reviewed in accordance with Welfare and Institutions Code (W&IC) Section 366.3. The W&IC Section 366.3(g) applies specifically to children who have remained in long-term foster care. Case plan reviews must be conducted at least every six months.

ADOPTION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

When seeking adoptive families as a permanency option for children, counties must follow AAP's intent. The AAP provides a financial incentive to prospective adoptive parents willing to adopt eligible children who would otherwise remain in long-term foster care. As noted in W&IC Section 16115.5, the legislative intent of AAP is "...to benefit children residing in foster homes by providing the stability and security of permanent homes, and in so doing, achieve a reduction in foster home care." To achieve this goal, AAP benefits may be provided to assist adoptive parents with the expense of rearing special needs children of all ages.

Safety and permanency are key goals of both the federal and state child welfare programs. To achieve these goals, county child welfare and licensed adoption agencies should take steps to ensure their staff is aware of the availability of AAP benefits for eligible children. Moreover, W&IC Section 16119(a) requires agencies to provide written information about

the availability of AAP benefits to prospective adoptive parents of a potentially eligible child both at the time of application and immediately prior to finalization of the adoption decree. The AAP information may be given also to foster parents or relative caregivers at the time of foster care licensing or placement approval. Additionally, an AAP eligibility determination may be made prior to freeing a child for adoption in order to facilitate timely completion of the adoption.

The requirement to provide written information about AAP can be met through the dissemination of the AAP brochure (PUB 152), which is available online at www.dss.cahwnet.gov/cdssweb/on-linefor_271.htm, or through the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Warehouse by calling (916) 371-1974. County child welfare agencies may also refer to the AAP training materials for additional resource tools that were distributed as part of the statewide AAP trainings conducted in May and June of 2001. Furthermore, CDSS will pursue additional training opportunities through regional training academies. Information related to future training will be provided at a later date.

Because of AAP, more children are moving from long-term foster care to permanent and stable adopted homes. Promoting awareness of this program not only helps to achieve permanency for children but also assists California to meet program improvements goals established in the state's Child and Family Services Review, Program Improvement Plan.

If you have questions regarding permanency or case planning, please contact the Permanency Policy Bureau at (916) 657-1858. Questions about AAP should be directed to the Funding and Transitional Youth Programs Bureau at (916) 657-1912.

Sincerely,

Original Document Signed by

SYLVIA PIZZINI
Deputy Director
Children and Family Services Division