

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

744 P Street, Sacramento, California 95814



December 17, 2004

ALL COUNTY INFORMATION NOTICE I-75-04

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS
ALL CHIEF PROBATION OFFICERS

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: FAIRNESS AND EQUITY ISSUES WITHIN CHILD WELFARE SERVICES

The purpose of this All County Information Notice (ACIN) is to provide information to assist county Child Welfare Services (CWS) agencies with developing strategies and methodologies to ensure that all children and families involved in the CWS system are treated with fairness and equity.

As stated in the CWS Stakeholders Group's final report, CWS Redesign: The Future of California's Child Welfare Services, the core values and principles of fairness and equity are critical aspects of CWS Practice. These core values and principles are represented by the following activities:

- Examine policies, regulations, and practices continuously to avoid creating barriers for children and families to achieve positive outcomes;
- Seek to remove systemic or institutional factors that interfere with promoting the best interests of children and families;
- Respect the humanity of all clientele, even when their behaviors are difficult to respect;
- Honor children and families with the belief that they have the capacity, moral courage, fortitude, and other qualities, which lead to success;
- Infuse hope in individuals;
- Build benchmarks and celebrate success; and
- Encourage inclusion of families in decision-making about their own lives.

The importance of fairness and equity in CWS practice was highlighted in the following two California Department of Social Services (CDSS) communications:

1. The Program Improvement Plan (PIP), approved by the federal government, states that CDSS will work with counties to ensure issues of fairness and equity towards racial or ethnic groups are integrated into all CWS system decisions. This process will include ongoing technical assistance to the counties on issues such as cultural competence, intake processes, services designed to prevent entry into foster care, and foster parent recruitment.

The PIP glossary defines “Fairness and Equity” in the CWS system as being characterized by:

- Treating families whose children enter foster care the same regardless of race or ethnicity;
 - Not relating children’s lengths of stay in foster care to their race or ethnicity;
 - Ensuring that rates of reunification with birth families are the same regardless of race or ethnicity; and
 - Ensuring that services provided are culturally competent and available in the languages of the families served.
2. ACIN I-66-03 states that the Statewide Training and Education Committee will assist CDSS in integrating, among other topics, fairness and equity into the Standardized Training Program. The intent of this program is to provide a common core curriculum for caseworker staff and their supervisors.

The CDSS supports the fairness and equity recommendations contained in the CWS Stakeholders Group’s final report and encourages all counties to evaluate their existing programs in the context of these values and principles.

If you have any questions regarding this notice, please contact Alan Solomon of my staff at (916) 657-1730.

I thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

SUSAN NISENBAUM, Branch Chief
Child Protection and Family Support Branch