

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

744 P Street, Sacramento, CA 95814



February 3, 2005

ALL COUNTY INFORMATION NOTICE NO. I-05-05

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DEPARTMENTS
ALL CHILD WELFARE SERVICES MANAGERS
ALL CHILD WELFARE SERVICES SUPERVISORS
ALL COUNTY PROBATION DEPARTMENTS
CHILDREN'S RESIDENTIAL PROGRAM OFFICE
ALL GROUP HOME LICENSEES
ALL FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY LICENSEES

SUBJECT: FAMILY CONNECTIONS

The purpose of this All County Information Notice (ACIN) is to emphasize existing requirements in Title 22 of the California Code of Regulations and in Division 31 of the Manual of Policies and Procedures regarding the maintenance of family connections for children in out-of-home care. In addition, this ACIN provides advance notice of the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) intent to amend the group home and foster family agency regulations in Title 22 to further clarify this important issue.

In the Final Report of the California Child and Family Services Review it was concluded from case reviews and stakeholder comments that diligent efforts were not always made to preserve the connection between children in out-of-home placements and their families. In response, CDSS intends to amend the California Code of Regulations to further the goal of enhanced collaboration between placement agencies and out-of-home care providers in order to ensure that connections between children in placement and their families are established and maintained. The Final Report can be reviewed at <http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/cfsr/res/pdf/011303/CFSRfinalreport.pdf> .

The California Code of Regulations currently requires group homes and foster family agencies to provide the services identified in the case plans developed by child welfare service agencies. The needs and services plans developed by group homes and foster family agencies must incorporate the family connection elements of those case plans. These requirements are intended, in part, to ensure that each needs and services plan addresses the issue of family connection and to ensure that group homes and foster family agencies, in collaboration with placement agencies, adhere to those plans.

Division 31 of the Manual of Policies and Procedures requires the social worker to arrange for visits between children and their parents, guardians and grandparents according to minimum specified schedules. Group homes and foster family agencies are encouraged to review their existing policies and procedures to eliminate barriers to the promotion of family connection for each child in placement.

The Family to Family model has been adopted by 22 counties in California and represents a widely accepted promising practice here and in other states. Emphasizing team decision-making and family involvement, Family to Family ensures that services and supports are provided to promote family connection. Under its core practices, out-of-home care providers are considered part of each child's care and services team. They partner with the child, birth parents, family, extended family, social workers and other involved service providers in a planned, collaborative effort to meet the child's needs, including establishing and maintaining connections with the child's immediate and extended family. Rather than temporary replacements for the parental authority within the child's family, they are reunification partners who support and maintain the child's family connections. For implementation and planning detail regarding Family to Family, please refer to <http://www.f2f.ca.gov/>.

In summary, under current and proposed regulations and the principles of Family to Family, maintenance of the connection between children in out-of-home care and their families is an important continuing requirement and a proven practice that promotes positive outcomes for children in out-of-home care.

If you have any questions regarding this notice, please contact Robert Markell, Chief of the Foster Care Support Services Bureau at (916) 651-7465.

Sincerely,

PATRICIA AGUIAR, Chief
Child and Youth Permanency Branch

CATHLEEN McCOY, Chief
Technical Assistance and Policy Branch