

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

744 P Street, Sacramento, California 95814



November 9, 2006

ALL COUNTY LETTER NO. 06-50

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS

SUBJECT: PROMOTING SAFE AND STABLE FAMILIES

REFERENCE: COUNTY FISCAL LETTER (CFL) NO. 05/06-55; CFL NO. 04/05-07;
CFL NO. 03/04-11; CFL NO. 02/03-25; and ALL COUNTY LETTER
NO. 02-32

The purpose of this All County Letter (ACL) is to provide information about federal spending requirements for Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) program. In accordance with the federal requirements, counties must spend a minimum of twenty percent of PSSF funds on each of the four program components: Family Preservation Services; Family Support Services; Adoption Promotion and Support Services; and Time-Limited Family Reunification Services.

DEFINITIONS

According to United States Code, Title 42, Chapter 7, Subchapter IV, Part B, subpart 2, section 629a, the four components are defined as:

Family Preservation Services

The term "family preservation services" means services for children and families designed to help families (including adoptive and extended families) at risk or in crisis, including:

- service programs designed to help children--
 - where safe and appropriate, return to families from which they have been removed; or
 - be placed for adoption, with a legal guardian, or, if adoption or legal guardianship is determined not to be safe and appropriate for a child, in some other planned, permanent living arrangement;

REASON FOR THIS TRANSMITTAL

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

- preplacement preventive services programs, such as intensive family preservation programs, designed to help children at risk of foster care placement remain safely with their families;
- service programs designed to provide follow up care to families to whom a child has been returned after a foster care placement;
- respite care of children to provide temporary relief for parents and other caregivers (including foster parents);
- services designed to improve parenting skills (by reinforcing parents' confidence in their strengths, and helping them to identify where improvement is needed and to obtain assistance in improving those skills) with respect to matters such as child development, family budgeting, coping with stress, health, and nutrition; and
- infant safe haven programs to provide a way for a parent to safely relinquish a newborn infant at a safe haven designated pursuant to a State law. (42 U.S.C. 629a.)

Family Support Services

The term "family support services" means community-based services to promote the safety and well-being of children and families designed to increase the strength and stability of families (including adoptive, foster, and extended families), to increase parents' confidence and competence in their parenting abilities, to afford children a safe, stable, and supportive family environment, to strengthen parental relationships and promote healthy marriages, and otherwise to enhance child development. (42 U.S.C. 629a.)

Adoption Promotion and Support Services

The term "adoption promotion and support services" means services and activities designed to encourage more adoptions out of the foster care system, when adoptions promote the best interests of children, including such activities as pre- and post-adoptive services and activities designed to expedite the adoption process and support adoptive families. (42 U.S.C. 629a.)

Time-Limited Family Reunification Services

The term "time-limited family reunification services" means the services and activities described below that are provided to a child that is removed from the child's home and placed in a foster family home or a child care institution. The services and activities are also provided to the parents or primary caregiver of such a child in order to facilitate the reunification of the child, but only during the 15-month period that begins on the date that the child, pursuant to code section 475(5)(F), is considered to have entered foster care.

The services and activities described for time-limited family reunification include the following:

- o Individual, group, and family counseling.
- o Inpatient, residential, or outpatient substance abuse treatment services.
- o Mental health services.
- o Assistance to address domestic violence.
- o Services designed to provide temporary child care and therapeutic services for families, including crisis nurseries.
- o Transportation to or from any of the services and activities described in this subparagraph. (42 U.S.C. 629a.)

FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

These requirements went into effect in 1999, and the federal government requires the State to move towards the specified spending minimum of twenty percent of PSSF funds on each of these four components. Accordingly, the State has been advised that if these minimums are not met, the federal government may withhold funds.

We recognize that some of the difficulties experienced by counties in the twenty percent categorical spending requirement are due to the fact that there are few funding sources for up-front services such as Family Preservation Services and Family Support Services, whereas there are more funding sources to fund Adoption Promotion and Support Services. Counties who had built prevention and early intervention programs around the use of the funds under the original Family Preservation and Family Support programs were required to seek other funding sources when funds had to be allocated to one of the other categories. In addition, in many cases counties had existing multi-year contracts with providers that needed to expire, be renegotiated and may even have necessitated finding new providers. Through county efforts, we have made progress towards the goals of twenty percent in each category over the past few years. However, the expenditures are still not to the minimum percentages required and the federal government has requested that we increase our efforts.

Finally, there are some expenditure's that may have been claimed under the categories of Family Preservation Services and Family Support Services that will also meet the definitions of the other PSSF components as defined above. Therefore, we request that you review the services provided and the program codes to which those services are claimed. If you find services that may have either been claimed inaccurately or that can properly be claimed under the Adoption Promotion and Support Services or the Time-Limited Family Reunification Services categories, we ask that you make adjustments as necessary.

Once twenty percent of PSSF funds have been expended in each of the four categories, the remainder may be spent in the category or categories of each county's choice. Through working with both county program and fiscal staff, we are confident that we will meet the twenty percent expenditure goals and continue to receive federal PSSF funds.

The appropriate program codes to claim the expenditures for the PSSF program are Family Preservation Services - Program Code 515, Family Support Services - Program Code 516, Adoption Promotion and Support Services - Program Code 675, and Time Limited Family Reunification Services - Program Code 676, respectively.

The PSSF program is currently set to expire on September 30, 2006. Federal legislation is being passed to reauthorize the program. Once reauthorization information has been provided to the State, a county letter will be issued.

If you have questions or need assistance, please contact me at (916) 657-2614 or you can contact Greg Rose, Chief, Office of Child Abuse Prevention at (916) 651-6960.

Sincerely,



MARY L. AULT
Deputy Director
Children and Family Services Division

c: County Welfare Directors Association