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DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
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GOVERNOR

May 23, 2019

ALL COUNTY INFORMATION NOTICE (ACIN) NO. I-36-19

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS
ALL GROUP HOME PROVIDERS
ALL CHIEF PROBATION OFFICERS
COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION OF CALIFORNIA
ALL TITLE IV-E TRIBES
ALL COUNTY MENTAL HEALTH PLAN DIRECTORS

SUBJECT: **FIFTH GROUP HOME RATE EXTENSIONS; REQUIREMENTS FOR COUNTIES TO CONTINUE GROUP HOME PLACEMENTS AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR PLACEMENT FUNDING**

REFERENCE: [Assembly Bill \(AB\) 1811 \(Chapter 35, Statutes of 2018\)](#), [AB 404 \(Chapter 732, Statutes of 2017\)](#), [AB 403 \(Chapter 773, Statutes of 2015\)](#), [AB 1006 \(Chapter 714, Statutes of 2017\)](#), [Family Code Section 7911.1](#), [Health and Safety Code \(HSC\) Section 1502](#), [Welfare and Institutions Code \(WIC\) Section 11462.04](#), [WIC Section 11466.01](#), [WIC Section 11468.2](#), [ACL 16-28](#), [ACL 16-65](#), [ACL 18-42](#), [ACL 18-100](#), [ACIN I-37-18](#), [ACIN I-75-17](#), [ACIN I-79-18](#)

The purpose of this ACIN is to provide instructions to County Child Welfare, Behavioral Health, and Probation Departments regarding how to request a **fifth** group home (GH) rate extension using the County Capacity Plan Update and Attachment A template in order to maintain eligibility for GH placement of foster youth. Providers with complete Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Program (STRTP) applications accepted and under consideration by California Department of Social Services (CDSS) will be granted an automatic GH rate extension. Providers that do not have a STRTP application under review by CDSS must comply with the requirements in this letter to be considered for a GH rate extension beyond June 30, 2019. These requirements apply to Out of State GH providers as well.

The purpose of the Aid to Families with Dependent Children—Foster Care (AFDC-FC) program is to provide assistance for those children who are in need of substitute parenting and who have been placed in foster care. In order to remain eligible for foster care placements, GHs are required to transition to a STRTP or another AFDC-FC eligible facility type, or be granted a case-by-case rate extension pursuant to [WIC Section 11462.04](#) by CDSS.

[AB 1811](#) authorizes the CDSS to grant rate extensions to GHs, upon a county placing agency submitting a written request on behalf of a provider and providing documentation as specified in [WIC Section 11462.04\(d\)\(1\)\(B\)](#). The Phase Four rate extension requests submitted by a county to CDSS had an effective start date of **January 1, 2019 and will expire on June 30, 2019**. The CDSS may grant an additional rate extension in increments up to six months for a period not to exceed December 31, 2019, unless later legislation is enacted to extend this date.

In conjunction with the Phase Four GH rate extension requests provided in [ACIN I-79-18](#), counties submitted system level capacity assessments (County Capacity Plans) and child specific transition plans (Attachment A) in the 2018 calendar year. This documentation provided by the counties is intended to support county placing agencies and county behavioral health to jointly identify the county need and plan to develop needed STRTP and home-based services capacity and to jointly develop and implement child specific transition plans that address the barriers to home based placements using child and family team (CFT) meetings, home-based specialty mental health services, intensive family finding and engagement, and specialized permanency services, among other strategies.

The documentation provided by the counties indicated there is a continued need for GH rate extension in order to support continued capacity planning efforts and for continued development and implementation of child specific transition plans for children placed in GHs operating under an extension.

County and MHP Requirement of a County Capacity Plan Update

For this fifth GH rate extension, county child welfare agencies and probation departments are only eligible to request a rate extension on behalf of a GH provider in order to maintain foster care placements in GHs if a County Capacity Plan Update has been completed and submitted to CCRPerformance@dss.ca.gov. Templates for the County Capacity Plan Update will be provided by CDSS individually to each county and shall be completed and **signed** by both the child welfare agency and the county mental health plan (MHP) provider **within 30 days of receipt of the County Capacity Plan template**. The purpose of the County Capacity Plan Update is to demonstrate that the county placing agency and the MHP have jointly identified the county's need, availability, capacity of STRTPs, other therapeutic placement options, and home-based specialty mental health services needed to support each child's specific transition plan. Together, the county placing agency and MHP shall provide an update on their efforts to address the county's capacity needs including jointly identifying the capacity of STRTP

providers and home-based Foster Family Agency (FFA) with which they have contracted or intend to contract.

The County Capacity Plan Update template will require the following information to be provided jointly by placing agencies and the MHP:

- Counties shall jointly identify STRTP and home-based FFA programs in need of additional technical assistance or support and describe the county efforts to support these identified programs in achieving STRTP licensure, Medi-Cal certification, and mental health program approval;
- County placing agencies, GH providers, and the county MHP shall provide a detailed timeline identifying what the provider, the child welfare agency/probation, and the MHP will each do to support each GH provider's transition to an STRTP, or if the provider is not transitioning to an STRTP, how each will support the facility closure or transition plan;
- Counties with a lack of prospective STRTP providers within their county shall jointly identify efforts being made to solicit or otherwise develop needed STRTP capacity;
- Counties shall include a joint plan to provide or make available ongoing intensive family finding and engagement services that are informed and supported by the CFT, available to all children remaining in GH placement operating under an extension;
- Counties shall include a joint plan to ensure that all children remaining in a GH placement operating under an extension have been properly referred and assessed for specialty mental health services, and county MHPs shall ensure that needed services are reflected in the child-specific transition plans and are being provided in support of a timely transition to home based placement.
- County MHPs shall include a plan to ensure all children identified by an Interagency Placement Committee (IPC) as requiring an STRTP level of care are receiving equivalent intensive mental health services while placed in a GH operating under an extension or a provisionally licensed STRTP lacking a direct specialty mental health services contract.

County Requirement for a Child-Specific Transition Plan (Attachment A)

The Child-Specific Transition Plan (Attachment A) shall be completed by the child welfare agency in collaboration with Behavioral Health, probation departments and the GH provider. Pursuant to [WIC section 11462.04 \(d\)\(1\)\(B\)\(iii\)](#), placement of a child in a GH operating under the rate extension is eligible for AFDC-FC payment only if a Child-Specific Transition Plan documenting the following has been provided to CDSS:

- Placement goal of the child/youth;
- Date of the child's/youth's IPC approval;
- The target date of transition for the child/youth;

- CFT driven case plan that identifies and respond to barriers to home-based placement;
- Documentation of the trauma-informed and permanency-competent specialty mental health services to be provided, including wraparound, collateral, intensive care coordination, intensive home-based services, or therapeutic behavioral services;
- For any child without an identified home-based caregiver, including those youth identified for transition to an STRTP, the county placing agency and MHP shall detail how they will collaborate with the GH provider to support a child's step-down to a home-based placement, including documentation on intensive family finding and engagement;
- Document efforts to expand or establish intensive services foster care, therapeutic foster care programs, and other home-based services that provide timely access to trauma informed care, in conjunction with the county behavioral health department;
- For any child identified as requiring regional center services, counties shall collaborate with regional centers and special education agencies that would aid the county child welfare agency in delivering appropriate services to foster youth.

Supports from CDSS

The CDSS will continue to provide intensive technical assistance to all counties and providers to support providers who are in the process of transitioning to an STRTP. Additionally, technical assistance webinars are accessible on the Continuum of Care Reform website <http://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/Continuum-of-Care-Reform/Short-Term-Residential-Therapeutic-Program> and will be updated and added to periodically to provide assistance to counties and GHs in the transitional stages to becoming an STRTP.

The CDSS has contracted with nationally recognized consultant and child welfare professional, Dr. Denise Goodman, to provide counties with technical assistance (TA) around recruitment, retention, and support of resource families. The available TA includes coaching, training and/or consultation services for the purpose of increasing capacity and supports of home-based family care. The focus of the TA can be centered around recruitment of specialized populations or other related issues. In addition, Dr. Goodman is providing statewide regional trainings that are designed to provide participants with the knowledge and skills to transition youth from higher levels of care to a family. Participants will be provided strategies on how to recruit and find families for individual children or youth, techniques on how to engage youth and prospective family during the process and participate in developing a transition plan for an actual youth in care. For more information about TA or trainings, please contact Marjana.Jackson@dss.ca.gov.

The CDSS, in partnership with County Welfare Directors Association and The County Behavioral Health Directors, will continue to provide TA to counties who are unable to identify an appropriate STRTP placement due to repeated non-admissions or

unplanned discharges when prior efforts for county leadership to engage providers have been unsuccessful. For more information, contact CCR@dss.ca.gov. The CDSS will announce information on additional resources that will be made available in forthcoming communications.

Automatic Extensions for Providers with Completed STRTP Application

GH Providers with complete STRTP applications accepted and under consideration by CDSS by **June 15, 2019**, will be granted an automatic rate extension until a determination on the STRTP application has been made by CDSS.

The automatic GH rate extension allows the GH to continue receiving placements at their existing rate classification level (RCL) rate but does not guarantee approval of an application to become a STRTP. When a GH receives provisional licensure as a STRTP, the STRTP provisional rate will be effective as of the date of licensure and is subject to the terms and conditions set forth in [WIC section 11466.01](#).

Providers Without a STRTP Application and Providers with a Denied STRTP Application

To qualify for a rate extension, a provider which is not applying for STRTP licensure or has received a denial of STRTP application, and is **intending to close its GH facilities**, must contact CCRPerformance@dss.ca.gov to request a Facility Closure Plan template. The primary purpose of this template is to avoid sudden facility closures leading to abrupt placement disruptions and to ensure placing counties and the facility have a common understanding about the timeline for transition of children placed in the facility, potential fiscal circumstances impacting the closure timeline, and to ensure that barriers to home based or STRTP placement are being actively addressed for each child.

To qualify for a rate extension, a GH provider which is not applying for STRTP licensure or has received a denial of STRTP application and is **planning to remain a licensed GH accepting only private placements**, must submit information to CCRPerformance@dss.ca.gov that describes their plan to change to become a private GH in the 6th box of the Facility Closure Plan Template **by June 15, 2019** and provide specific transition plans for each foster child.

To qualify for a rate extension, a GH provider **planning to change to another licensure category or program model** (such as an FFA, Wraparound provider, vendorized GH, or Transitional Housing Program) must submit information to CCRPerformance@dss.ca.gov that describes their plan to change to another licensure, and the status of their application for another licensing category or program model, in the 6th box of the Facility Closure Plan template **by June 15, 2019** and provide specific transition plans for each foster child.

GH providers/facilities without a STRTP application or with a denied STRTP application should **not expect** any new placements of foster youth, as a GH rate extension is being granted only to allow the transition of youth to a more appropriate placement setting.

Extensions are not guaranteed and will be provided at CDSS' discretion. Should a rate extension not be granted to a GH provider, that GH shall not be an eligible foster care placement and the cost of the GH placement will be borne solely by the placing county using local funds.

A GH provider that does not receive a rate extension, and therefore has its rate terminated by operation of law under [WIC Section 11462.04\(c\)](#), shall have a right to protest the rate termination as provided under [WIC Section 11468.2](#). The rate protest and appeal procedures applicable to GHs as set forth in [WIC Section 11468](#) et seq. and the [CDSS Manual of Policies and Procedures section 11-430](#) et seq. shall apply.

In order for youth placed in GH facilities to receive a RCL group home rate, CDSS must receive from the county a completed County Capacity Plan Update **AND** the child-specific transition plan Attachment A template **within 30 days of receipt**, at CCRPerformance@dss.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Original Document Signed By:

CHERYL TREADWELL, Chief
Foster Care Audits and Rates Branch
Children and Family Services Division

SARA E. ROGERS, Chief
Continuum of Care Reform Branch
Children and Family Services Division

c: Child Welfare Directors Association