

March 13, 2020

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ALL COUNTY LETTER NO. 20-23

This ACL will provide the current requirements and resources to county child welfare social workers and juvenile probation officers regarding questions we have received about services to children and families during the evolving situation related to the Coronavirus (COVID-19).



KIM JOHNSON
DIRECTOR

STATE OF CALIFORNIA—HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
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GAVIN NEWSOM
GOVERNOR

March 13, 2020

ALL COUNTY LETTER NO. 20-23

TO: ALL COUNTY CHILD WELFARE DIRECTORS
ALL COUNTY PROBATION OFFICERS
ALL COUNTY CHIEF PROBATION OFFICERS
ALL CHILD WELFARE SERVICES PROGRAM MANAGERS
ALL IV-E AGREEMENT TRIBES
ALL IV-B AGREEMENT TRIBES
ALL FOSTER CARE MANAGERS

SUBJECT: CHILD WELFARE AND PROBATION VISITATION CONTACT,
NON-MINOR DEPENDENTS IN COLLEGE DORMS, RESOURCE
FAMILY APPROVAL AND DISASTER PLAN CHANGES DUE TO
THE STATEWIDE OUTBREAK OF CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

This ACL will provide the current requirements and resources to county child welfare social workers and juvenile probation officers regarding questions we have received about visitation with children and youth, youth who reside in dorms, Resource Family Approval and changes in disaster plans due to the evolving situation related to the Coronavirus (COVID-19).

PLANNING AND PREPAREDNESS

Child Welfare and Probation Departments should begin assessing their organizational needs and make any necessary changes to ensure readiness for any severe pandemic conditions that could arise. This requires that agencies assess their business processes and technology to ensure that systems are capable of functioning under those conditions. Additionally, counties should work within their agency and with county- and state-level pandemic planning authorities to update their relevant emergency response plans.

Counties must ensure the continuity of services during pandemic conditions or periods of social distancing consistent with applicable public health guidance. While agencies may also wish to or need to operate with reduced face-to-face contact in order to minimize virus transmission, counties must also continue to address the safety needs of children reported to be abused and those in foster care and children who remain at home receiving child welfare services.

The Governor and California Department of Public Health (CDPH) have released several critical pieces of guidance related to COVID-19. The [CDPH website \(https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Guidance.aspx\)](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Guidance.aspx) is regularly updated with the most recent guidance as the situation evolves.

Mitigation Strategies

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) has also shared the following guidance on efforts to mitigate COVID-19 transmission among communities across the country:

- [Implementation of Mitigation Strategies for Communities for Local COVID-19 Transmission](#) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which identifies readily available nonpharmaceutical interventions to help slow the transmission of the virus.
- [Guidance for Preparing Workplaces](#) from the Department of Labor, which provides information to workers and employers on COVID-19.
- [Interim Guidance for Homeless Shelters](#) from the CDC to help plan, prepare and respond to COVID-19.
- [General Preparation Information](#) from the White House Coronavirus Task Force.

MONTHLY VISITATION WITH YOUTH

Current requirements regarding monthly in-person visitation have not changed at this time. CDSS contacted the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) regarding the potential for flexibility related to this requirement. However, ACF indicated that there are no exceptions or deviations permitted to the state plan requirement for at least monthly visits to children in foster care (Section 422(b)(17) of the Social Security Act). Given that this situation is fluid, we will continue to check with ACF in case of changes to this requirement.

Additionally, in accordance with existing regulations in [Section 31-505 Out-of-County Placements](#), counties may wish to re-assess the need to request support from their peers to assist with placements of youth in other counties. When assessing these support needs, counties should ensure they are also coordinating efforts with their tribal partners. In all situations, counties should ensure that they are working with an Indian child's tribal representative regarding changes impacting tribal children. Attached to this ACL is CWDA's current Child Welfare Services (CWS) Courtesy Supervision for Foster Children County Information List.

YOUTH PLACED OUT OF STATE

Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) Liaisons and probation officers are advised to reach out to the Out of State Placement Unit at CDSS if there are difficulties related to travel restrictions. CDSS will work with the states in which youth are placed (for both group homes and Non-Minor Dependent/foster care placements) to ask for their assistance with face-to-face visits. Counties are reminded to be similarly flexible with other states who ask for assistance with children placed here in California. If youth covered by the ICPC have further challenges regarding placement, medical care, travel, etc., please contact the Out of State Placement Unit at CDSS for assistance. If additional information becomes available from the ICPC National office, it will be shared with the county liaisons.

YOUTH IN COLLEGE

A number of colleges are closing due to COVID-19. However, many are continuing or starting on-line classes. The University of California and California State Universities have confirmed that they are keeping some dorms open. However, this may change quickly, and counties are reminded of the need to support Non-Minor Dependent youth. It will be important for counties to reach out to these youth to ensure they have the resources needed to remain supported while they are out of school and to assist with ensuring that they are able to return to their campuses if they need to leave. Below is a resource for these and other foster youth ages 13 and older regarding access to technology which will allow them to remain connected and to participate in on-line classes wherever they are located.

TECHNOLOGY RESOURCES FOR YOUTH

[iFoster](#) is currently offering technology access to foster youth ages 13-24, which include: free, unlimited high-speed data hotspots, headsets, and laptops to assist in taking online classes. For additional information on the resources that they have, call or email iFoster at: 1-855-936-7837 or phone@ifoster.org.

The Flyer, *Online Classes Tech Access Flyer*, has been attached to this ACIN.

RESOURCE FAMILY APPROVAL (RFA)

Due to the evolving needs of children and families, counties and providers contracted by the county may find that they are having difficulty meeting the 90-day timeline for RFA

completion. If this is the case, counties must document this information on the monthly Emergency Caregiver funding report. If the delay to approval is related to COVID-19 or the associated public health response, it may be considered as a reason for good cause and emergency caregiver funding should continue beyond 120 days.

If a Resource Parent, other family members, or children or youth in the home are sick or have contracted COVID-19, the county should follow the guidance of their Public Health Department regarding contact with the family.

COUNTY DISASTER PLANS

As counties are developing plans to address the virus in their communities and workplaces, there may be ways in which county plans impact clients. Consistent with standard disaster plan protocols, CDSS requests that any plan at the county level that has a significant impact on clients, or on the continued operations of the child welfare program, be shared with CDSS. This includes local directives regarding staff conducting field work and availability to complete necessary functions (e.g., Hotline or immediate response investigations).

This situation remains fluid and as we receive additional direction or information, we will update you. If you have questions or need additional guidance regarding the information in this letter, please direct your correspondence as follows:

- For questions related to your disaster plan, please contact CWSDisasterResponsePlans@dss.ca.gov.
- If you have any questions regarding RFA, please email; RFA@dss.ca.gov;
- If you have any questions regarding child contact visits, please email; Conccurentplanningpolicyunit@dss.ca.gov;
- If you have questions regarding youth in college, please email; TAYPolicy@dss.ca.gov;
- If you need assistance related to youth out of state please contact Christina Libre, Deputy Compact Administrator-ICPC at 916-651-8121.

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Sincerely,

Original Document Signed By

GREGORY E. ROSE
Deputy Director
Children and Family Services Division

Attachments