

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

744 P Street, Sacramento, California 95814



December 30, 2004

ALL COUNTY INFORMATION NOTICE I-83-04

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS
CHIEF PROBATION OFFICERS

SUBJECT: DOCUMENTATION OF THE MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS OF CHILDREN
RECEIVING IN-HOME SERVICES AND CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

REASON FOR THIS TRANSMITTAL

- State Law Change
- Federal Law or Regulation Change
- Court Order
- Clarification Requested by one or more Counties
- Initiated by CDSS

The purpose of this All County Information Notice (ACIN) is to emphasize the importance for social workers, probation officers or other responsible personnel to document in the case file or Child welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS) when the mental health needs of children and youth receiving in-home services are assessed, and to document what services were provided to meet mental health needs.

The federal Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) require that the State comply with the federal Well Being Outcomes for children. Federal Well Being Outcome 3, Item 23 states that: "Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs." The key issue identified in the final report for California's review was that the State had not made "concerted efforts" to address the mental health needs of children. This was particularly noted for children and youth receiving in-home services.

For each area in which California was found to be in non-conformity, the development of an action step to address the area was required. The action steps for these areas are contained in California's Program Improvement Plan, which was negotiated with the federal government and approved in June 2003. Consistent with California's Program Improvement Plan, the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) is issuing this letter encouraging counties to ensure that, as part of the assessment of all children, if it is determined there is a mental health need, to document how the identified mental health needs were addressed. This would include any referrals made to county mental health or other service providers, and any services, planned or delivered.

While it is recognized that in many cases services and supports are being provided to meet the mental health needs of children receiving in-home services as well as to children placed in out-of home care, documentation of this is not being made consistently for children receiving services in-home. By documenting the information, it assists workers in identifying which services have been requested, utilized and successful; records service type and duration; demonstrates to the Court that reasonable services have been provided to children; and will also assist the state and counties in future performance in federal reviews.

A county letter is being developed in consultation with counties on data entry issues so that educational, mental health and other well being outcomes can be tracked and measured. The letter will contain instructions pertaining to the documentation of referrals and service provision in CWS/CMS. The well being outcome indicators are being generated as part of the new California Child Welfare Outcomes and Accountability System. Information regarding the Child Welfare Outcomes and Accountability System can be found at <http://www.childsworld.ca.gov/>. This web site contains information regarding the Outcomes and Accountability System report, the work plan, and the All County Letters and All County Information Notices released regarding this new quality assurance system.

If you have questions related to the documentation of services and supports provided to meet the mental health needs of children, please contact Teresa Contreras, Chief, Child Welfare Policy and Program Development Bureau at (916) 651-6160.

Sincerely,

Original Document Signed By

SUSAN NISENBAUM, Chief
Child Protection and Family Support Branch