

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

744 P Street, Sacramento, California 95814



April 7, 2006

ALL COUNTY INFORMATION NOTICE I-25-06

REASON FOR THIS TRANSMITTAL

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

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS
ALL CHILD WELFARE SERVICES PROGRAM MANAGERS
ALL COUNTY CHIEF PROBATION OFFICERS

SUBJECT: FOSTER CARE PLACEMENT EPISODE

The enactment of Assembly Bill 636, Steinberg, Ch. 678, Statutes of 2001, placed increased importance on the need for accurate, timely, and complete Child Welfare Services (CWS) data. The Child Welfare Services Case Management System (CWS/CMS) is the primary source of information for the Quarterly County Data Reports for the California Child and Family Services Review (C-CFSR) for each child welfare agency. This All-County Information Notice (ACIN) is intended to assist counties in meeting critical CWS program documentation, data reporting, and program performance measurement requirements. This and future ACINs will provide information to assist counties in uniformly following program policy and data entry protocols to continuously improve data in CWS/CMS.

Outcome Measure Requiring Clarification:

Foster Care Re-Entry

This outcome measure reports children who reenter foster care to a new placement episode after being discharged from a previous episode. The validity of this outcome measure relies upon county staff to enter placement episode (PE) and out-of-home placement (OHP) information accurately into CWS/CMS. The data indicates there are a number of cases in which a child is discharged from and reenters foster care on the same day or the next day (e.g., within 24 hours)¹. An individual review of these cases indicated errors are made which artificially inflate the data measuring how often children re-enter foster care. To prevent invalid data, if a placement episode is closed in error, please correct the information rather than opening a new placement episode for the child.

¹ An analysis by the University of California, Berkeley found that 10.82% of the re-entries had a new placement episode start the same day that another placement episode ended.

To clarify, a PE should be closed only in the following circumstances:

- A child reunified (which includes leaving a PE to unite with a noncustodial parent who is assuming physical custody of the child).
- The child's dependency or delinquency was dismissed and the case is being closed.
- The child's adoption was finalized.
- The child died.

Unless one of those four conditions has been met, a PE should remain open regardless of a change in the legal authority for the placement, the agency responsible or the placement facility type. Similarly, the PE should remain open if the child has run away, been abducted or placed for adoption. If a child leaves an OHP due to incarceration or hospitalization, a non-foster care placement facility should be created within the same PE (For children adjudicated probation wards, this applies in Los Angeles County only).

The attached chart provides more detailed information about specific circumstances in which a PE should remain open even though the OHP is closed.

If you have questions or need further information, please contact your C-CFSR Consultant at (916) 651-8100 or send an e-mail to chldserv@dss.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

WESLEY A. BEERS, Chief
Operations and Evaluation Branch

c: California Welfare Directors Association

Attachment

Placement Episode (PE) Closure Instructions

Situation	Close PE	Close Placement ²	Open new Placement	Change:
Guardianship				
Caregiver becomes legal guardian, dependency/delinquency IS NOT dismissed				Create guardian home
Child exits foster care to Kin-Gap guardianship; case is closed; dependency IS dismissed	X	X		
Caregiver becomes a legal guardian; dependency/delinquency IS dismissed (non-KinGAP). Case remains open. ³				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal authority • Create guardian home
Adoption:				
Adoptive Placement Agreement is signed		X		Make adoptive placement
Child's adoption is finalized	X	X		
Child Leaves Placement:				
Child reunified, dependency IS dismissed	X	X		
Child reunified under FM	X	X		
Child goes home a trial visit for up to 6 months (court-ordered)		X		
Child is placed w/ noncustodial parent	X	X		
Child runs away from placement or is abducted; dependency/delinquency IS NOT dismissed		X		
Child is hospitalized or incarcerated ⁴		X	NFCP	Open non foster care placement
Child ages out of foster care; case is closed; dependency/delinquency IS dismissed	X	X		
Child Returns to Placement:				
Child returns from incarceration or hospitalization (Non foster care placement), runaway or abducted status; dependency/delinquency WAS NOT dismissed			X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End non foster care placement • Placement facility type
Misc:				
Child visits a 23-Hour Assessment Center per ACIN I-26-06			NFCP	Open Non foster care placement
Child switches between dependency and delinquency	X	X		
Child is transferred to another county (ICT)				Follow ICT protocols

² Any time an OHP or NFCP is closed, the correct OHP change reason should be selected.

³ The placement, the PE and the case remain open even though dependency/delinquency is dismissed. The legal authority for the placement is now "guardianship" and the placement facility type is "guardianship".

⁴ The child may stay in this status until returning to a foster care placement or until dependency/delinquency is dismissed. New OHP should be opened when child returns to foster care regardless of whether the child returns to a previous placement.