



CDSS

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DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
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EDMUND G. BROWN JR.
GOVERNOR

March 16, 2015

ALL COUNTY LETTER NO. 15-34

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 COUNTY PROBATION OFFICERS
ALL TITLE IV-E AGREEMENT TRIBES
ALL COUNTY CHILD WELFARE DIRECTORS
ALL CHIEF PROBATION OFFICERS
ALL CHILD WELFARE SERVICES (CWS) PROGRAM MANAGERS

SUBJECT: IMPLEMENTATION OF CHILD WELFARE SERVICES CASE REVIEWS

REFERENCE: ALL COUNTY INFORMATION NOTICE (ACIN) NO. I-40-14
ALL COUNTY LETTER (ACL) NO. I-14-84
COUNTY FISCAL LETTER (CFL) NO. 14/15-37, CFL NO. 14/15-39

The purpose of this ACL is to disseminate information to counties about implementing a qualitative case review process for CWS by child welfare and probation agencies and outline fiscal year (FY) 2014-2015 activities. Additional information regarding specific procedures and requirements, including policies and procedures, will be made available closer to statewide implementation.

BACKGROUND

The ACIN I-40-14 outlined the benefits of developing qualitative case reviews for the purpose of examining practices and ensuring conformity with Title IV-E and Title IV-B requirements. Additionally, the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) encouraged the dedication of county staff to the case review process. The ACL I-14-84 provided additional details about the implementation of qualitative case reviews and the associated change to the FY 2014-15 Budget Act providing staff resources for this purpose. Both CFL 14/15-37 and CFL 14/15-39 informed counties of their FY 2014-15 allocations for the CWS qualitative case review and provided counties with claiming instructions for costs incurred as a result of the CWS qualitative case review process. Although child welfare agencies will be the recipients of the state allocation, local agencies will need to determine how best to use the resources to ensure that both child welfare

agencies and probation departments are represented in the case reviews. Both CWS and probation cases will be reviewed at the ratio that represents the entire caseload (i.e., if probation cases are 10 percent of the county caseload, 10 percent of selected cases will be probation).

The Children's Bureau (CB) of the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) issued Information Memorandum ACYF-CB-IM-12-07, with the goal of strengthening states' quality assurance processes through the model of continuous quality improvement (CQI). The ACF also issued Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) Technical Bulletin #7, providing instructions and guidance regarding the expectation that states conduct case file reviews as a part of their quality assurance process. The CFSR Technical Bulletin #8 issued the final federal regulations for the third round of CFSR calling for states to utilize information from their CQI and case review processes to track performance improvements and set the baseline for Round 3 Program Improvement Plans. Details regarding Round 3 of the CFSR will be addressed in a separate ACIN.

The CDSS actively understands and promotes the immense value qualitative case reviews add to state and county child welfare and probation CQI processes. Integration of qualitative case reviews with statistical outcome data analysis allows for a deeper, more specific understanding of county and statewide practices, policies, and procedures from the perspectives of various case participants, including case-carrying social workers and probation officers, parents, caregivers, and children and youth. For more information regarding the benefits of qualitative case reviews and the CQI process, counties are referred to ACIN I-40-14. As such, it is expected the CDSS and all 58 counties will implement the qualitative case reviews no later than August 31, 2015. By this date, counties will have hired staff, completed training and certification, and begun case reviews. Additionally, successful implementation of this statewide case review system will meet the case review requirements for the federal CFSR, as the state is scheduled to complete the federal Case Review and Statewide Assessment components of the CFSR in 2016.

IMPLEMENTATION

In early 2014, the CDSS convened a state/county workgroup including county child welfare and probation staff to discuss the new federal requirements and the state's future case review process. Additionally, six early implementing counties began piloting the case review in October 2014. It is expected that statewide implementation of case reviews will occur no later than August 31, 2015.

The number of cases to be reviewed will be based on the combined caseload size of the county probation agency and child welfare agency (including both in-home and out-of-home cases). The methodology for the number of cases to be reviewed, which is subject to adjustment, mirrors that of the FY 2014-15 allocations for the case reviews, in that:

- Counties with 100 cases or fewer will complete approximately 10 case reviews annually.
- Counties with 101 cases to 500 cases will complete approximately 50 case reviews annually.
- Counties with 500 cases or more will complete approximately 100 case reviews annually.

Cases will be reviewed by counties on a continuous, quarterly basis. For example, if 100 cases are to be reviewed annually, a one-fourth of the cases will be reviewed each quarter. The entire continuum of child welfare, from investigation through adoption, including differential/alternative response, is subject to review. A sample of randomly selected cases, to proportionally reflect the number of in-home and out-of-home cases within a given county, will be provided to counties on a quarterly basis by the CDSS beginning immediately after a county has certified staff. In addition to Child Welfare Services Case Management System and hard case file reviews, case information will be obtained via interviews with key case participants, including case-carrying social workers and probation officers, parents, caregivers, and children and youth.

If a county believes that a given case should be excluded, a formal request must be made to CDSS to exclude. General exclusion criteria are included in Appendix A. Requests must contain sufficient information in order for CDSS to make a final determination regarding exclusion.

Information from the pilot counties indicates that reviews take between six and 30 hours to complete based on case specific complexity. In-home cases take substantially less time than more complex out-of-home cases. This range includes the time needed to complete logistics, conduct file reviews, interviews, quality assurance (QA), etc.

STAFFING AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

Cases will be reviewed by designated county staff reviewers. The CDSS encourages counties to use staff occupying job classifications at least equal to first line supervisory level. Based on pilot county results, the most successful reviewers are those with more extensive experience in child welfare that is typically found in such a classification. Such designated staff reviewers should not be responsible for case-/referral-related services or decision-making. Counties will conduct QA of their case reviews to maintain the integrity of the process. Designated county staff reviewers may not QA their own case reviews. However, other designated county staff reviewers may QA the case reviews conducted by other designated reviewers. Additionally, CDSS staff will conduct quality assurance reviews on a select subset of cases review in each county.

At this time, CDSS is requiring counties to use county staff in the review of the cases. Recognizing that some counties may find difficulties in finding qualified personnel to

designate as reviewers, CDSS will work with counties if they choose to establish a contract or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to have another county's certified staff conduct reviews. Counties interested in pursuing this avenue should contact CDSS for assistance in the evaluation and execution of these agreements to ensure all case review elements are accounted for in the document.

Counties will be expected to prepare for the implementation of the case review process through development of administrative structures including the hiring of case review staff and training. As such, CDSS requests that each county submit implementation information as soon as possible to cwscasereviews@dss.ca.gov, including:

- Names and position classifications of all county staff designated to conduct case reviews who have completed the case review training and received certification, or who plan to attend one of the future case review trainings.
- An organizational chart describing the case review positions in relation to other staff within the respective child welfare and probation agencies. Positions dedicated to the case review process must be equivalent to a first-line supervisor classification and must not be responsible for case/referral-related services or decision-making.
- For those counties without identified staff, a brief hiring plan including a timeline and description as to when and how staff will be hired for the purposes of conducting the case reviews.

Appendix B provides a template for county use, if desired. Other formats of the information will be accepted by CDSS at the address listed above.

REPORTING AND DATA REQUIREMENTS

Responses and information collected from the case reviews will be entered by the designated county reviewer into the federal CFSR Online Monitoring System (OMS), a web-based online application consisting of the OSRI, the Stakeholder Interview Guide, and various reporting tools. The OMS was developed based on the OSRI document finalized in July 2014, and contains the same items, ratings, and instructions. The OMS is accessible through the federal CFSR portal. Log-in information will be facilitated by the CDSS for individuals who have received case review certification by successfully completing the case review training, as described below.

The OMS is a comprehensive system that allows for the determination of case outcomes automatically. In addition, the OMS provides many reporting functions including aggregate reports of "Strengths" and "Areas Needing Improvement" at both the outcome- and the individual item-level. Finally, the OMS offers reporting of successful completion of reviews and other workflow data to assist in managing case review progress and workload.

TRAINING

The four-day case review training explores the items, questions, definitions, and instructions in the ORSI, as well as the purpose and role of the reviewer, the various case review documents and guides, information synthesis and analysis from multiple sources, and engagement skills when conducting case participant interviews. Participants will complete an entire case review based on a mock case and will be scored. Participants must receive a satisfactory score to be certified to conduct case reviews. Follow-up coaching sessions will be required for those who do not receive a satisfactory score on the mock case review. The designated, supervisory-level staff, as mentioned above, must successfully complete this training or subsequent coaching sessions and obtain certification in order to conduct the case reviews.

Case review trainings and coaching sessions will be offered by the Northern California Training Academy, beginning in March 2015, in the various regions around the state, after which each regional training academy will provide the training for its designated region. The dates and location of the case review trainings are:

March 17-20, 2015 – In the Northern Region
April 13-17, 2015 – In the Central Region
May 11-15, 2015 – In the Southern Region
June 22-26, 2015 – In the Bay Area Region

Ongoing trainings will be conducted every quarter and will rotate through the different regions. In addition, CDSS will accept an online certification process as a temporary solution to initial training for up to six months. Any individual certified through the online process will be dropped from the OMS if successful completion of the in-person training is not completed in a timely manner. Appendix C provides additional details about the online training.

Questions regarding qualitative case reviews should be directed to the Outcomes and Accountability Bureau at cwscasereviews@dss.ca.gov or (916) 651-8099.

Sincerely,

Original Document Signed By:

GREGORY E. ROSE
Deputy Director
Children and Family Services Division

APPENDIX A

Case Elimination Criteria

Cases may be excluded in limited circumstances as follows:

- In-home services case open for fewer than 45 consecutive days during the period under review.
- In-home services case in which any child in the family was in foster care for more than 24 hours during the period under review.
- A foster care case that was discharged or closed according to agency policy before the sample period.
- A case open for subsidized adoption payment only and not open to other services.
- A case in which the target child reached the age of 18 before the period under review.
- A case in which the selected child is or was an “incoming” Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) case where the responsibility for that child lies in another state.
- A case appearing multiple times in the sample, such as a case that involved siblings in foster care in separate cases or an in-home services case that was opened more than one time during the sampling period.
- A foster care case in which the child’s adoption or guardianship was finalized before the period under review and the child is no longer under the care of the child welfare or probation agency.
- A case in which the child was placed for the entire period under review in a locked juvenile facility or other placement that does not meet the federal definition of foster care.

Because the state is responsible for the selection of cases, it should be rare that local reviewers encounter these situations. On occasion, reviewers may not be able to arrange key participant interviews. When this occurs, the local reviewer must contact the state for a decision on whether to eliminate the case. Local reviewers do not have the final authority to exclude cases. Under any circumstance where a case is excluded from review, the appropriate tracking document will be completed and submitted to the state in a timely manner.

Appendix B

Template for Implementation Information

The following is the plan for _____ County to begin the Qualitative Case Reviews before August 31, 2015. In addition, a proposed organization chart is included showing the reporting relationships of the case reviews.

County staff names and email addresses for designated case reviewers and their role in the county case review (each staff may have more than one role) are listed below. Only those who have completed training and certification will access the Online Management System.

Name	Email	Reviewer	Initial QA Staff	Second Level QA Staff/Site Supervisor
Jane Doe	janed@countydomain.org		X	X
John Smith	John.smith@co.county.ca.us	X	X	X

Submitted by: _____ Title: _____

Appendix C Online Training Information

Beginning July 1, 2015, the CDSS will accept the following as a temporary certification to begin case reviews. This should be used sparingly as a way to address issues with staff turnover or other rarely occurring events.

Potential case reviewer should complete the Continuing Education Unit (CEU) certification (even if CEUs are not desired) as this includes a testing component.

The CEU certification for individuals, to apply to their professional licensure requirements, who complete all **three** modules, pass a quiz with a minimum score of 80 percent, and complete the course evaluation. Individuals will earn 14.5 (Social Work) continuing education contact hours approved by the National Association of Social Workers.

To earn CEUs, you must be logged in to the portal at <http://www.cfsrportal.org>. Once logged in, click the E-Training Platform tab to access the three core modules:

- ? Module 1: The Onsite Review Instrument (OSRI)
- ? Module 2: Foster Care Mock Case
- ? Module 3: In-Home Services Mock Case

To earn CEUs, you must complete and check off all of the steps within all three of the core modules. When you have completed and checked off all of the steps, a new box titled *Next Steps* will automatically appear in the right-hand column. Click on the link in this section to access the CEU Certification Quiz, and follow the instructions provided. As noted above, you must pass this 80-question quiz with a score of 80 percent or better to be eligible for CEUs. Upon successful completion of the quiz, you will be directed to an online evaluation form. Once you complete this, the vendor will receive automatic notification of your eligibility for CEU certification and, upon confirmation, will deliver your certificate to you via e-mail. Because this certification is completed by a third party, CDSS will require a copy of the certification prior to commencing case reviews.