



CDSS

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STATE OF CALIFORNIA—HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY  
**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

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ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER  
GOVERNOR

April 22, 2009

ALL COUNTY INFORMATION NOTICE NO.: I-31-09

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS  
ALL COUNTY LICENSED ADOPTION AGENCIES  
ALL COUNTY CHIEF PROBATION OFFICERS

SUBJECT: INVITATION FOR COUNTY PARTICIPATION IN THE RESOURCE  
FAMILY APPROVAL (RFA) PILOT PROGRAM

REFERENCE: ASSEMBLY BILL (AB) 340 (Chapter 464, Statutes of 2007)

The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) is pleased to announce that Governor Schwarzenegger signed into law Assembly Bill 340 (Chapter 464, Statutes of 2007) authorizing CDSS, in consultation with county welfare agencies, stakeholders and interested parties, to implement a three-year pilot program to establish a unified, family-friendly and child-centered resource family approval process in up to five counties.

**PROVISIONS OF ASSEMBLY BILL (AB) 340**

Provisions of AB 340, which took effect January 1, 2008, will pilot a process to replace the existing multiple processes for licensing foster family homes and assessing/approving relative caregivers, non-relative extended family members (NREFM), adoptive applicants and prospective guardians with a single unified process for approving resource families in up to five counties.

Safety, permanency, and well-being are crucial for the California children who have been victims of child abuse and neglect, and are paramount to achieving both federal and state child welfare system improvement goals. Children in foster care (court dependents and probation wards) need safe homes with permanent connections to family or other caring adults. The current licensing and approval systems, which screen families to care for these children, needs to be enhanced if California is to make substantive improvements to these outcomes. Provisions of AB 340 are intended to be improvements to the licensing, approval and adoptive processes.

REASON FOR THIS TRANSMITTAL

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

This bill builds on existing foster care licensing and relative/NREFM, legal guardianship and adoption standards. Additionally, it would allow CDSS to waive some existing requirements for the pilot counties, and authorizes CDSS to administer the pilot via written directives that would have the same force and effect as regulations for participating counties.

For relevant provisions of AB 340, see Attachment A (Welfare and Institutions Code 16519 and 16519.5).

### **RESOURCE FAMILY APPROVAL (RFA) PILOT PROGRAM**

The AB 340 created the Resource Family Approval (RFA) Pilot Program and allows up to five counties to participate in the program. This is a voluntary pilot program designed to improve the safety, permanency and well-being of children in the child welfare and probation system, consistent with state and federal child welfare outcome goals. It will enhance current foster care licensing and relative/NREFM, legal guardianship, and adoption approval standards. It also aims to reduce system redundancies by establishing a single process to approve foster parents, relative/NREFM caregivers, prospective guardians, and adoptive parents.

The CDSS is issuing a request for program Concept Papers/Statement of Qualifications (CP/SOQ) from county welfare agencies wishing to participate on a voluntary basis in this pilot program. **Implementation of this pilot is contingent upon sufficient interest from the counties.** Based on the CP/SOQ, up to five counties will be selected to participate and to subsequently propose a Comprehensive Implementation Plan (CIP). In selecting the pilot counties, CDSS shall promote diversity among the participating counties in terms of size of their foster care population and geographic location.

***Note:** This pilot pertains only to new resource family applicants associated with the selected pilot counties. Existing licensed foster family homes will remain under the purview of the state or county licensing agency. Similarly, county relative/NREFM, legal guardianship, and adoption approvals begun prior to the pilot program official implementation date will proceed under the purview of the county's existing approval procedures.*

### **ELIGIBILITY**

Eligible applicants are limited to California county child welfare agencies able to meet RFA pilot program county responsibilities while implementing the pilot county-wide during the allotted three-year time period. These agencies must also meet minimum staff qualifications. It is up to the discretion of the county to determine how to structure their respective organizations to meet the requirements of the pilot. County welfare

agencies who contract with a CDSS Adoption District Office (DO) or the Community Care Licensing Division (CCLD) must inform the DO and/or CCLD, in writing, of their intent to apply for participation in the pilot program. See Attachment B for county responsibilities, Attachment C for minimum staff qualifications and Attachment D for the Notice of Intent to Apply.

### **FUNDING**

The Governor's proposed 2009-10 Budget appropriated a total of \$1,768,000 per year for implementation of the pilot in the five counties. This includes a total of \$337,000 of county funding. The funding will be distributed proportionately and can cover start up costs such as training, new costs for grievance reviews, and enable counties to continue to administer licensing and approval functions for existing providers while implementing the new process for incoming resource families.

Implementation of the pilot program is contingent upon the continued availability of federal funds under IV-E of the Social Security Act for costs associated with placement of children with resource families assessed and approved under this program. A resource family shall be eligible for Aid to Families with Dependent Children in Foster Care (AFDC-FC) payments provided the child is placed with them. A resource family will be paid an AFDC-FC rate pursuant to Welfare and Institutions Code (W&I) Sections 11460 and 11461. Sharing ratios for non-federal expenditures for all costs associated with activities related to the approval of relatives and NREFM will be in accordance with Welfare and Institutions Code (W&I) Section 10101.

### **APPLICATION PROCESS**

Any eligible California county child welfare agency may apply to participate in the RFA program.

**Notice of Intent to Apply:** Counties planning to apply should fax the enclosed form, entitled "Notice of Intent to Apply for Participation in the Resource Family Approval Pilot Program" to the CDSS by **May 15, 2009**. If counties are contracted with either the DO or CCLD, this form should also be faxed directly to them. See Attachment D for form and details.

**Concept Paper/Statement of Qualifications (CP/SOQ):** The CDSS is requesting that all interested counties submit a narrative self-assessment of the county's past, present, and projected performance relative to providing effective family-focused and child-centered services to children and families involved in the child welfare system. It should reflect the county's vision and ability to improve the approval process for families interested in providing a safe home for children in the child welfare system. It should be aligned with the county's System Implementation Plan (SIP) goals and objectives.

This CP/SOQ must follow CDSS' prescribed format as well as clearly address the required elements of the pilot and the county's ability to meet the selection criteria. See Attachment E for selection criteria and scoring information and Attachment F for CP/SOQ instructions.

Please note that submissions must be postmarked by **July 6, 2009**. The CDSS will not accept faxed or e-mailed submissions.

### **REVIEW/ SELECTION PROCESS**

Assembly Bill 340 authorized the CDSS to select up to five counties to participate in this pilot. All CP/SOQ's will be reviewed and scored on a 100 point scale. The five counties with the highest scores will be selected by CDSS. See Attachment E for scoring and selection criteria. In the event that more than five counties have the highest scores, the counties will be selected considering the size of their foster care population and geographical diversity of potential counties. See Attachment F for a timeline for county selection and program implementation.

**Notification of county selection:** It is anticipated that notification will occur no later than **August 31, 2009**.

### **COMPREHENSIVE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN (CIP) GUIDELINES**

The five counties selected based on their CP/SOQ, will be asked to submit a CIP. Counties are expected to review W&IC Sections 16519 and 16519.5 in its entirety and apply these statutes to their proposed resource family home approval and permanency assessment pilot program plan. More detailed instructions will be provided to selected counties. The CIP will include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Detailed program goals, objectives, and outcomes
- The organizational structure including roles and responsibilities
- Timeline for implementation
- Strategies for county's compliance with this program's minimum staff skill and expertise requirements
- Quality Assurance including:
  - Resource family approval process
  - Ongoing maintenance of standards
  - Complaint investigation and resolution
  - Grievance review

Counties participating in the pilot program shall be responsible for administering the program requirements. See Attachment B, County Responsibilities. Once chosen to

participate in the pilot, a county will be required to enter into terms and conditions with the CDSS that would require compliance with the written directives that have the same force and effect as regulations.

If you have any questions regarding this All County Information Notice, please contact the Permanency Policy Bureau at (916) 657-1858.

Sincerely,

***Original Document Signed By:***

KAREN B. GUNDERSON, Chief  
Child and Youth Permanency Branch  
Children and Family Services Division

Attachments

**RELEVANT PROVISIONS OF ASSEMBLY BILL 340**

**SECTION 2.** Section 16519 is added to the Welfare and Institutions Code to read:

**16519.** The Legislature finds and declares the following:

(a) Safety, permanency, and well-being are crucial for the more than 82,000 California children in foster care, and are paramount to achieving both federal and state child welfare system improvement goals. Foster children need safe homes with permanent connections to family or other caring adults. The current licensing and approval system, which screens families to care for foster children, fails to support these outcomes.

(b) Children in foster care live in a variety of out-of-home care settings: licensed foster family homes, approved relative and non-relative extended family member homes, foster family agencies, and group homes. All of these placement types, considered facilities under current law, are required to meet the respective health and safety standards in order to be licensed or approved. This has produced administrative inefficiencies and confusion among stakeholders, and has contributed to difficulty in recruiting suitable foster family homes for children in out-of-home care. Increasing the number of available suitable homes will improve the likelihood that the best home will be initially identified to meet a child's particular needs.

(c) Child safety and well-being are not achieved solely by ensuring that the home the child is placed in is free from physical hazards and that adults living in the home do not have disqualifying criminal convictions or past reports of child abuse. Child safety and well-being are also dependent upon consideration of the resource family's psychosocial history that includes physical health, mental health, alcohol and substance abuse, family violence or abuse, and experience caring for children.

(d) Research shows that children in out-of-home care placed with relatives and non-relative extended family members are more stable, more likely to be placed with siblings, and more likely to stay connected to their community and extended family. California statutory and regulatory provisions should maximize the likelihood that a child will initially be placed in the care of a safe relative or non-relative extended family member who is willing to provide permanent care if reunification cannot be achieved.

(e) Families living in the same neighborhood as a family from which a child has been removed are often best suited to provide for the immediate placement needs of that child.

(f) Families who provide care to children in out-of-home placement are a valuable resource to the people of this state and to the children for whom they provide care.

**SECTION 3.** Section 16519.5 is added to the Welfare and Institutions Code to read:

**16519.5.** (a) The State Department of Social Services, in consultation with county child welfare agencies, foster parent associations, and other interested community parties, shall implement a pilot program to establish a unified, family friendly, and child-centered

resource family approval process to replace the existing multiple processes for licensing foster family homes, approving relatives and non-relative extended family members as foster care providers, and approving adoptive families.

(b) Up to five counties shall be selected to participate on a voluntary basis in the pilot program, according to criteria developed by the department in consultation with the County Welfare Directors Association. In selecting the pilot counties, the department shall promote diversity among the participating counties in terms of size and geographic location.

(c) (1) For the purposes of this section, "resource family" means an individual or couple that a participating county determines to have successfully met both the home approval standards and the permanency assessment criteria adopted pursuant to subdivision (d) necessary for providing care for a related or unrelated child who is under the jurisdiction of the juvenile court, or otherwise in the care of a county child welfare agency or probation department. A resource family shall demonstrate all of the following:

(A) An understanding of the safety, permanence, and well-being needs of children who have been victims of child abuse and neglect, and the capacity and willingness to meet those needs, including the need for protection, and the willingness to make use of support resources offered by the agency, or a support structure in place, or both.

(B) An understanding of children's needs and development, effective parenting skills or knowledge about parenting, and the capacity to act as a reasonable, prudent parent in day-to-day decision making.

(C) An understanding of his or her role as a resource family and the capacity to work cooperatively with the agency and other service providers in implementing the child's case plan.

(D) The financial ability within the household to ensure the stability and financial security of the family.

(E) An ability and willingness to maintain the least restrictive and most family like environment that serves the needs of the child.

(2) Subsequent to meeting the criteria set forth in this subdivision and designation as a resource family, a resource family shall be considered eligible to provide foster care for related and unrelated children in out-of-home placement, shall be considered approved for adoption or guardianship, and shall not have to undergo any additional approval or licensure as long as the family lives in a county participating in the pilot program.

(3) Resource family assessment and approval means that the applicant meets the standard for home approval, and has successfully completed a permanency assessment. This approval is in lieu of the existing foster care license, relative or non-relative extended family member approval, and the adoption home study approval.

(4) Approval of a resource family does not guarantee an initial or continued placement of a child with a resource family.

(d) Prior to implementation of this pilot program, the department shall adopt standards pertaining to home approval and permanency assessment of a resource family.

(1) Resource family home approval standards shall include, but not be limited to, all of the following:

## Attachment A

(A) (i) Criminal records clearance of all adults residing in the home, pursuant to Section 8712 of the Family Code, utilizing a check of the Child Abuse Central Index (CACI), a check of the Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS), receipt of a fingerprint-based state criminal offender record information search response, and submission of a fingerprint-based federal criminal offender record information search.

(ii) Consideration of any prior allegations of child abuse or neglect against either the applicant or any other adult residing in the home. An approval may not be granted to applicants whose criminal record indicates a conviction for any of the offenses specified in clause (i) of subparagraph (A) of paragraph (1) of subdivision (g) of Section 1522 of the Health and Safety Code.

(iii) Exemptions from the criminal records clearance requirements set forth in this section may be granted by the director or the pilot county, if that county has been granted permission by the director to issue criminal records exemptions pursuant to Section 316.4, using the exemption criteria currently used for foster care licensing as specified in subdivision (g) of Section 1522 of the Health and Safety Code.

(B) Buildings and grounds, outdoor activity space, and storage requirements set forth in Sections 89387, 89387.1, and 89387.2 of Title 22 of the California Code of Regulations.

(C) In addition to the foregoing requirements, the resource family home approval standards shall also require the following:

(i) That the applicant demonstrates an understanding about the rights of children in care and his or her responsibility to safeguard those rights.

(ii) That the total number of children residing in the home of a resource family shall be no more than the total number of children the resource family can properly care for, regardless of status, and shall not exceed six children, unless exceptional circumstances that are documented in the foster child's case file exist to permit a resource family to care for more children, including, but not limited to, the need to place siblings together.

(iii) That the applicant understands his or her responsibilities with respect to acting as a reasonable and prudent parent, and maintaining the least restrictive and most family-like environment that serves the needs of the child.

(D) The results of a caregiver risk assessment are consistent with the factors listed in subparagraphs (A) to (D), inclusive, of paragraph (1) of subdivision (c). A caregiver risk assessment shall include, but not be limited to, physical and mental health, alcohol and other substance use and abuse, and family and domestic violence.

(2) The resource family permanency assessment standards shall include, but not be limited to, all of the following:

(A) The applicant shall complete caregiver training.

(B) The applicant shall complete a psychosocial evaluation.

(C) The applicant shall complete any other activities that relate to a resource family's ability to achieve permanency with the child.

(e) (1) A child may be placed with a resource family that has received home approval prior to completion of a permanency assessment only if a compelling reason for the placement exists based on the needs of the child.

## Attachment A

(2) The permanency assessment shall be completed within 90 days of the child's placement in the approved home, unless good cause exists based upon the needs of the child.

(3) If additional time is needed to complete the permanency assessment, the county shall document the extenuating circumstances for the delay and generate a timeframe for the completion of the permanency assessment.

(4) The county shall report to the department on a quarterly basis the number of families with a child in an approved home whose permanency assessment goes beyond 90 days and summarize the reasons for these delays.

(5) A child may be placed with a relative, as defined in Section 319, or non-relative extended family member, as defined in Section 362.7, prior to home approval and completion of the permanency assessment only on an emergency basis if all of the following requirements are met:

(A) Consideration of the results of a criminal records check conducted pursuant to Section 16504.5 of the relative or non-relative extended family member and of every other adult in the home.

(B) Consideration of the results of the Child Abuse Central Index (CACI) consistent with Section 1522.1 of the Health and Safety Code of the relative or non-relative extended family member, and of every other adult in the home.

(C) The home and grounds are free of conditions that pose undue risk to the health and safety of the child.

(D) For any placement made pursuant to this paragraph, the county shall initiate the home approval process no later than five business days after the placement, which shall include a face-to-face interview with the resource family applicant and child.

(E) For any placement made pursuant to this paragraph, AFDC-FC funding shall not be available until the home has been approved.

(F) Any child placed under this section shall be afforded all the rights set forth in Section 16001.9.

(f) The State Department of Social Services shall be responsible for all of the following:

(1) Selecting pilot counties, based on criteria established by the department in consultation with the County Welfare Directors Association.

(2) Establishing timeframes for participating counties to submit an implementation plan, enter into terms and conditions for participation in the pilot program, train appropriate staff, and accept applications from resource families.

(3) Entering into terms and conditions for participation in the pilot program by counties.

(4) Administering the pilot program through the issuance of written directives that shall have the same force and effect as regulations. Any directive affecting Article 1 (commencing with Section 700) of Chapter 7 of Division 1 of Title 11 of the California Code of Regulations shall be approved by the Department of Justice. The directives shall be exempt from the rulemaking provisions of the Administrative Procedure Act (Chapter 3.5 (commencing with Section 11340)) of Part 1 of Division 3 of Title 2 of the Government Code.

(5) Approving and requiring the use of a single standard for resource family home approval and permanency assessment.

## Attachment A

(6) Adopting and requiring the use of standardized documentation for the home approval and permanency assessment of resource families.

(7) Requiring counties to monitor resource families including, but not limited to, all of the following:

(A) Investigating complaints of resource families.

(B) Developing and monitoring resource family corrective action plans to correct identified deficiencies and to rescind resource family approval if compliance with corrective action plans is not achieved.

(8) Ongoing oversight and monitoring of county systems and operations including all of the following:

(A) Reviewing the county's implementation of the pilot program.

(B) Reviewing an adequate number of approved resource families in each participating county to ensure that approval standards are being properly applied. The review shall include case file documentation, and may include onsite inspection of individual resource families. The review shall occur on an annual basis, and more frequently if the department becomes aware that a participating county is experiencing a disproportionate number of complaints against individual resource family homes.

(C) Reviewing county reports of serious complaints and incidents involving approved resource families, as determined necessary by the department. The department may conduct an independent review of the complaint or incident and change the findings depending on the results of its investigation.

(D) Investigating unresolved complaints against participating counties.

(E) Requiring corrective action of counties that are not in full compliance with the terms and conditions of the pilot program.

(9) Terminating the participation of any county that fails to make corrective action or who otherwise violates the terms and conditions of participation in the pilot program.

(10) Preparing or having prepared within 180 days after the conclusion of the pilot program, and submitting to the Legislature, a report on the results of the pilot program. The report shall include all of the following:

(A) An analysis, utilizing available data, of state and federal data indicators related to the length of time to permanency including reunification, guardianship and adoption, child safety factors, and placement stability.

(B) An analysis of resource family recruitment and retention elements, including resource family satisfaction with approval processes and changes regarding the population of available resource families.

(C) An analysis of cost, utilizing available data, including funding sources.

(D) An analysis of regulatory or statutory barriers to implementing the pilot program on a statewide basis.

(g) Counties participating in the pilot program shall be responsible for all of the following:

(1) Submitting an implementation plan, entering into terms and conditions for participation in the pilot program, consulting with the county probation department in the development of the implementation plan, training appropriate staff, and accepting

## Attachment A

applications from resource families within the timeframes established by the department.

(2) Complying with the written directives pursuant to paragraph (4) of subdivision (f).

(3) Implementing the requirements for resource family home approval and permanency assessment and utilizing standardized documentation established by the department.

(4) Ensuring staff have the education and experience necessary to complete the home approval and permanency assessment competently.

(5) Approving and denying resource family applications, including all of the following:

(A) Rescinding home approvals and resource family approvals where appropriate, consistent with the established standard.

(B) Providing disapproved resource families requesting review of that decision due process by conducting county grievance reviews pursuant to the department's regulations.

(C) Notifying the department of any decisions denying a resource family's application or rescinding the approval of a resource family.

(6) Updating resource family approval annually.

(7) Monitoring resource families through all of the following:

(A) Ensuring that social workers who identify a condition in the home that may not meet the approval standards set forth in subdivision (d) while in the course of a routine visit to children placed with a resource family take appropriate action as needed.

(B) Requiring resource families to comply with corrective action plans as necessary to correct identified deficiencies. If corrective action is not completed as specified in the plan, the county may rescind the resource family approval.

(C) Requiring resource families to report to the county child welfare agency any incidents consistent with the reporting requirements for licensed foster family homes.

(8) Investigating all complaints against a resource family and taking action as necessary. This shall include investigating any incidents reported about a resource family indicating that the approval standard is not being maintained.

(A) The child's social worker shall not conduct the formal investigation into the complaint received concerning a family providing services under the standards required by subdivision (d). To the extent that adequate resources are available, complaints shall be investigated by a worker who did not initially perform the home approval or permanency assessment.

(B) Upon conclusion of the complaint investigation, the final disposition shall be reviewed and approved by a supervising staff member.

(C) The department shall be notified of any serious incidents or serious complaints or any incident that falls within the definition of Section 11165.5 of the Penal Code. If those incidents or complaints result in an investigation, the department shall also be notified as to the status and disposition of that investigation.

(9) Performing corrective action as required by the department.

(10) Assessing county performance in related areas of the California Child and Family Services Review System, and remedying problems identified.

(11) Submitting information and data that the department determines is necessary to study, monitor, and prepare the report specified in paragraph (10) of subdivision (f).

(h) Approved relatives and nonrelated extended family members, licensed foster family homes, or approved adoptive homes that have completed the license or approval process prior to full implementation of the pilot program shall not be considered part of the pilot program. The otherwise applicable assessment and oversight processes shall continue to be administered for families and facilities not included in the pilot program.

(i) Upon completion of the pilot program, the status of the resource family's approval shall continue in full force and effect, and the resource family shall be deemed approved for licensing, relative and nonrelated extended family member approval, guardianship, and adoption purposes.

(j) The department may waive regulations that pose a barrier to implementation and operation of this pilot program. The waiver of any regulations by the department pursuant to this section shall apply to only those counties participating in the pilot program and only for the duration of the pilot program.

(k) Resource families approved under this pilot program, who move within a participating county or who move to another pilot program county, shall retain their resource family status if the new building and grounds, outdoor activity areas, and storage areas meet home approval standards. The State Department of Social Services or pilot county may allow a pilot program-affiliated individual to transfer his or her subsequent arrest notification if the individual moves from one pilot county to another pilot county, as specified in subdivision (h) of Section 1522 of the Health and Safety Code.

(l) (1) A resource family approved under this pilot program that moves to a nonparticipating pilot program county shall lose its status as a resource family. The new county of residence shall deem the family approved for licensing, relative and nonrelated extended family member approval, guardianship, and adoption purposes, under the following conditions:

(A) The new building and grounds, outdoor activity areas, and storage areas meet applicable standards, unless the family is subject to a corrective action plan.

(B) There has been a criminal records clearance of all adults residing in the home and exemptions granted, using the exemption criteria currently used for foster care licensing, as specified in subdivision (g) of Section 1522 of the Health and Safety Code.

(2) A program-affiliated individual who moves to a non-pilot county may not transfer his or her subsequent arrest notification from a pilot county to the non-pilot county.

(m) Implementation of the pilot program shall be contingent upon the continued availability of federal Social Security Act Title IV-E (42 U.S.C. Sec. 670) funds for costs associated with placement of children with resource families assessed and approved under the program.

(n) Notwithstanding Section 11402, a child placed with a resource family shall be eligible for AFDC-FC payments. A resource family shall be paid an AFDC-FC rate pursuant to Sections 11460 and 11461. Sharing ratios for nonfederal expenditures for all costs associated with activities related to the approval of relatives and nonrelated extended family members shall be in accordance with Section 10101.

## Attachment A

(o) The Department of Justice shall charge fees sufficient to cover the cost of initial or subsequent criminal offender record information and Child Abuse Central Index searches, processing, or responses, as specified in this section.

(p) Approved resource families under this pilot program shall be exempt from all of the following:

(1) Licensure requirements set forth under the Community Care Facilities Act, commencing with Section 1500 of the Health and Safety Code and all regulations promulgated thereto.

(2) Relative and non-relative extended family member approval requirements set forth under Sections 309, 361.4, and 362.7, and all regulations promulgated thereto.

(3) Adoptions approval and reporting requirements set forth under Section 8712 of the Family Code, and all regulations promulgated thereto.

(q) The pilot program shall be authorized to continue through the end of the 2010-11 fiscal year, or through the end of the third full fiscal year following the date that funds are made available for its implementation, whichever of these dates is later.

**RFA PILOT PROGRAM COUNTY RESPONSIBILITIES**

**Pursuant to AB 340 (Chapter 464, Statutes of 2007), counties participating in the pilot program shall be responsible for all of the following:**

1. Submitting an implementation plan, entering into terms and conditions for participation in the pilot program, consulting with the county probation department in the development of the implementation plan, training appropriate staff, and accepting applications from resource families within the timeframes established by the California Department of Social Services (CDSS).
2. Complying with the written directives for the pilot program that have the same force and effect as regulations pursuant to paragraph (4) of subdivision (f) of Welfare & Institutions Code (W&IC) 16519.5.
3. Implementing the requirements for resource family home approval and permanency assessment and utilizing standardized documentation established by the CDSS.
4. Ensuring staff have the education, experience and training necessary to complete the home approval and permanency assessment competently.
5. Approving and denying resource family applications, including all of the following:
  - a. Rescinding home approvals and resource family approvals where appropriate, consistent with the established standard.
  - b. Providing disapproved resource families requesting review of that decision with due process by conducting county grievance reviews pursuant to the CDSS' regulations.
  - c. Notifying the CDSS of any decisions denying a resource family's application or rescinding the approval of a resource family.
6. Updating resource family approval annually.
7. Monitoring resource families through all of the following:
  - a. Ensuring that social workers who identify a condition in the home that may not meet the approval standards set forth in subdivision (d) while in the course of a routine visit to a resource family home take action to ensure immediate compliance and child safety.

- b. Requiring resource families to comply with corrective action plans as necessary to correct identified deficiencies. If corrective action is not completed as specified in the plan, the county may rescind the resource family approval.
  - c. Requiring resource families to report to the county child welfare agency any incidents consistent with the reporting requirements for licensed foster family homes in the California Code of Regulations (CCR) Title 22, Division 6, Chapter 9.5, Foster Family Homes (FFH), section 89361 Reporting Requirements.
- 8. Investigating all complaints against a resource family and taking action as necessary. This shall include investigating any incidents reported about a resource family indicating that the approval standard is not being maintained.
  - a. The Resource Family Approval Worker shall not conduct the formal investigation into the complaint received concerning a family providing services under the standards required by subdivision (d) of W&IC 16519.5. To the extent that adequate resources are available, complaints shall be investigated by a worker who did not initially perform the home approval or permanency assessment.
  - b. Upon conclusion of the complaint investigation, the final disposition shall be reviewed and approved by a supervising staff member.
  - c. The CDSS shall be notified of any serious incidents or serious complaints or any incident that falls within the definition of Section 11165.5 of the Penal Code. If those incidents or complaints result in an investigation, the Department shall also be notified as to the status and disposition of that investigation.
- 9. Performing corrective action as required by the CDSS.
- 10. Assessing county performance in related areas of the California Child and Family Services Review System, and remedying problems identified.
- 11. Submitting information and data that the CDSS determines is necessary to study, monitor, and prepare the report specified in paragraph (10) of subdivision (f) of W&IC 16519.5.
- 12. Report to the CDSS on a quarterly basis the number of families with a child in an approved home whose permanency assessment goes beyond 90 days and summarize the reasons for these delays.

## **RFA PILOT PROGRAM MINIMUM STAFF QUALIFICATIONS**

### Resource Family Approval Worker

Knowledge of:

- Individual and group behavior with emphasis on normal growth, development, and family relationships
- Social casework objectives, principles, and methods
- Socioeconomic and cultural factors which promote stable family life, and understanding of the factors that affect family security; physical and mental illnesses and their impact on personality
- Laws, rules, and regulations governing the operation of public social services agencies, Foster Family Homes (FFH), and adoptions

Ability to:

- Establish rapport with applicants
- Control personal bias and maintain personal and professional boundaries with applicants
- Apply the principles of general and/or child psychology and family relationships
- Assess for risk factors to a child's safety and well being (i.e., physical and mental health, alcohol and substance use and abuse, family violence or abuse, and experience caring for children)
- Evaluate the psychological, physical, social, and emotional factors present in applicants and the environmental factors in the applicant's home
- Effectively apply casework knowledge and skills

### Supervising Resource Family Approval Worker

In addition to being responsible for the performance of assigned staff, each Supervisory RFA Worker shall be responsible for the final approval or denial of resource families. Their minimum qualifications for education, experience, knowledge and ability should exceed that of the RFA Worker.

**NOTICE OF INTENT TO APPLY FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE RESOURCE FAMILY APPROVAL (RFA) PILOT PROGRAM**

This form will notify the California Department of Social Services of intention to apply for participation in the RFA pilot program. Please provide the following information:

County:	
Contact person:	
Title:	
Address:	
Telephone:	
Fax:	
Email:	
<p>Please fax this notice to CDSS by <b>May 15, 2009</b></p> <p>TO: California Department of Social Services Permanency Policy Bureau Attn: Nicole Larkins <b>FAX (916) 657-3791</b> Phone (916) 657-1858</p>	
Contracted with the DO? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Contracted with CCLD? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
If yes, this form was also faxed directly to: Adoption Services Bureau Attn: Ann Mizoguchi <b>FAX (916) 651-8143</b>	If yes, this form was also faxed directly to: Children's Residential Program Attn: Mei Yuk Kung <b>FAX (916) 323-8352</b>
Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

**RFA PILOT PROGRAM CP/SOQ SCORING AND SELECTION CRITERIA  
(100 POINTS POSSIBLE)**

**CRITERIA 1: PROGRAM VISION**

**10 Points Possible**

*This section should explain the county's understanding of the pilot program. Additionally, it should illustrate the county's overall vision for this pilot program including how this vision reflects the county's System Improvement Plan (SIP) goals and objectives. Include the rationale for this pilot to be implemented in the county. Also include how this pilot will impact the families served by the county.*

**CRITERIA 2: EXPECTED PROGRAM OUTCOMES**

**10 Points Possible**

*Based on the county's current productivity (i.e., relative approvals, adoption home study approvals and licensed foster families), this section should describe the county's expected pilot program outcomes. These outcomes should include the projected number of resource families approved, timeliness of resource family approval, the number of children placed with approved resource families and timeliness of the placement of children with resource families.*

**CRITERIA 3: CAPACITY FOR CHANGE**

**30 Points Possible**

*This section should demonstrate the county's ability and commitment to successfully implement timely systemic changes. Provide no more than three (3) examples of the county's implementation of past child welfare improvement initiatives that have been achieved in a timely and effective manner, and how that experience would support implementation of this pilot program. Counties should also demonstrate the degree to which they have completed their SIP goals and objectives. Additionally, counties should describe the county's responsiveness to caregivers' needs and the resources made available by the county to address these needs.*

**CRITERIA 4: CAPACITY FOR TIMELY IMPLEMENTATION**

**20 Points Possible**

*This section should advise of the county's current level of staff with the necessary skills and expertise to implement this pilot (i.e., family assessment, monitoring, and criminal record review). This section should also demonstrate the county's extent of compliance with current regulations for and integration of foster care licensing, relative/NREFM approvals and adoption home studies, and prevalence of non-relative placements in Foster Family Homes (FFH) vs. Foster Family Agencies (FFA).*

**CRITERIA 5: DEGREE OF LOCAL STAKEHOLDER SUPPORT**

**10 Points Possible**

*This section should demonstrate how the county will work with community partners and stakeholders to implement this pilot. Counties should include letters from the Court, unions, foster care and/or relative caregiver associations, and any other key partners that would impact this program.*

**CRITERIA 6: BARRIERS TO IMPLEMENTATION**

**20 Points Possible**

*This section should describe barriers that currently exist in the county (i.e., agency culture, organizational structures, inadequate range of services, and union concerns) that would limit implementation of the pilot program. Provide strategies and/or resources that may assist the county in overcoming these barriers.*

*If the county is contracted with the State, explain how contracting out services, with either the Adoption District Offices (DO) or Community Care Licensing Division (CCLD), will impact the county's implementation of this pilot. This explanation should include the extent to which the counties will work with that DO and/or CCLD to maintain a continued quality of care for the families to be served during the pilot.*

## RFA PILOT PROGRAM CP/SOQ INSTRUCTIONS AND TIMELINE

### Prescribed Format:

- Not to exceed eight pages (This does not include cover letter and attachments). Please number pages “1 of 8,” “2 of 8,” etc.
- It must be single-spaced, using a standard Arial 11-point font with 1-inch margins.
- The submission must include a cover letter signed by the county child welfare agency’s director indicating the agency is interested in participating in the pilot.
- Cover letter must include:
  - County Name
  - Address
  - Program Director/Contact Person
    - Telephone
    - Fax number
    - Email address
  - Agency Director’s Name and Signature (dated)

### Timeline for Application Requirements

Here are the steps for the application process:

1. **May 15, 2009** (on or before) - Fax Attachment D, “Notice of Intent to Apply for Participation in the Resource Family Approval (RFA) Pilot Program” to:

California Department of Social Services (CDSS)  
Permanency Policy Bureau  
Attn: Nicolle Larkins  
**FAX (916) 657-3791**

**Counties contracted with CDSS District Offices** must also fax Attachment D to:

Adoption Services Bureau  
Policy and Support Unit  
Attn: Ann Mizoguchi  
**FAX (916) 651-8143**

**Counties contracted with CDSS Community Care Licensing Division** must also fax Attachment D to:

Community Care Licensing Division  
Children’s Residential Program  
Attn: Mei Yuk Kung  
**FAX (916) 323-8352**

2. **July 6, 2009** (on or before) – Mail five (5) copies of the CP/SOQ on standard consecutively numbered white pages, signed by the Director of Human Services or other designated authority to the following address:

California Department of Social Services  
Attn: Permanency Policy Bureau  
744 P Street, MS 8-13-66  
Sacramento, CA 95814

3. **August 31, 2009** – CDSS sends notice of selection letters to counties
4. **September 1- November 13, 2009** – Selected counties develop CIP
5. **November 16, 2009** – Last day for selected counties to submit CIP to CDSS for review
6. **December 18, 2009** – CDSS sends notification to counties of participation in pilot
7. **January 4, 2010** - Process begins for counties to enter into Terms & Conditions with the CDSS
8. **January 11-15, 2010**- Orientation for counties participating in pilot
9. **January 19, 2010** – Estimated date of RFA Pilot Program implementation in selected counties