

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

744 P Street, Sacramento, CA 95814



August 31, 1981

ALL-COUNTY LETTER NO. 81-95

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS
ALL COUNTY WELFARE STAFF DEVELOPMENT OFFICERS
ALL COUNTY PROBATION OFFICERS
ALL COUNTY PROBATION STAFF DEVELOPMENT OFFICERS
ALL PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ADOPTION AGENCY DIRECTORS
ALL PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ADOPTION AGENCY STAFF DEVELOPMENT OFFICERS
ALL REGIONAL CENTERS' DIRECTORS
ALL REGIONAL CENTERS' STAFF DEVELOPMENT OFFICERS
ALL COUNTY MENTAL HEALTH DIRECTORS

SUBJECT: FOSTER CARE INFORMATION SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE

This letter updates information provided in All-County Letter (ACL) No. 81-56, dated June 3, 1981, regarding development and implementation of the Foster Care Information System (FCIS). The State Department of Social Services (DSS) has revised the timelines for FCIS project development and implementation in order to provide more time for county welfare department participation in the system design.

The project will be modified and implemented in two phases. Phase I will establish a foster care tracking component with minimum data elements, to be implemented immediately in order to establish a child locator and tracking system.

Phase II will establish the full management information system, containing case management and program management components. It will be fully implemented by October 1, 1982. The priority in this phase is the development of data collection forms which are as beneficial to county welfare department line-workers as possible.

A special subcommittee of the County Welfare Directors' Association (CWDA) has been established to work with DSS staff to assist in designing the data collection forms and procedures so that the management information system is useful to the county welfare departments.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the FCIS outlined in ACL No. 81-56 will be retained with increased emphasis on the utilization of input documents and output reports to benefit the counties as well as the state. The following purposes are summarized from ACL No. 81-56. The FCIS will provide:

1. compliance with federal and state statutory requirements (P.L. 96-272 and AB 3070);

2. improved program evaluation and policy formulation at the state level;
3. improved case management at the county level;
4. improved program evaluation and policy formulation at the county level;
5. improved ability at the state level to respond to inquiries from the Legislature, the press and others, regarding the location of children in foster care; and
6. improved ability, at both the county and state level, to track each child's progress through the foster care system to reduce "foster care drift."

POPULATION

The population to be included in the Foster Care Information System Phase I and Phase II is:

- A. All children in out-of-home placement receiving AFDC-FC aid payments, regardless of placement or supervising agency.

AND

- B. All children in out-of-home placement not receiving AFDC-FC aid payments (but could be receiving other aid to pay for board and care) and receiving from the county welfare department foster care services funded under Title XX or Title IV-B. Foster care services are distinguished from other services by the presence of at least one of the following:
 1. an active placement agreement with the county welfare department;
 2. an open county welfare department foster care services case; or
 3. a court order granting care, custody and control of a minor to the county welfare department.

Children receiving AAC are assumed to be receiving adoptions services, and are not included in the population.

County welfare departments will be responsible for submission of required information for both Phase I and Phase II. Information will be submitted on all of the foster care population defined here, regardless of supervising agency. When cases are supervised by agencies other than county welfare departments (such as county probation departments, regional centers, mental health departments, and private adoption agencies), county welfare departments will be responsible for and assure that all necessary data is collected and submitted to DSS. Similarly, county welfare departments will need to coordinate internally to ensure that services and payments data is reported fully in Phase II.

Phase I

The scope of Phase I, scheduled for implementation in November, 1981, is limited to the collection and updating of information essential to the identification and location of all children in the foster care population. Phase I will establish the foundation for Phase II, the on-going management information system. The CWDA FCIS ad hoc subcommittee participated with DSS staff in defining Phase I outputs, inputs, and data elements on August 11, 1981.

Both phases of the Foster Care Information System will be automated data systems. Phase I will utilize both batch (manual) and computer tape input and updates from county welfare departments. Manual input will be accomplished by submission of a one page transaction document. Automated and partially automated counties may submit data by tape, and/or, for cases not included in the automated system, by the transaction document.

Verification reports (which verify the individual case computer file contents) and error reports (which indicate errors in data submitted) will be computer generated in Phase I. Changes in the form of corrections or updates will be submitted by the counties on transaction documents or by computer tape. One type of transaction document will be used for initial input and for all subsequent changes.

A separate All-County Letter is being released outlining technical aspects for preparation and submittal of Phase I automated data. It requests county welfare departments to indicate their preference for tape and/or manual Phase I data reporting.

Initial data collection and reporting, covering all open cases, is scheduled for completion during November, 1981. Phase I updates, including case changes, openings, closures, and reopenings, will continue until implementation of Phase II.

An All-County Letter providing detailed instructions and data collection forms for manual reporting will be issued early in October. Local agencies will be asked to conduct their own staff training based upon instructions provided in that All-County Letter.

Phase II

Phase II, scheduled for implementation in April, 1982, will involve more extensive initial data gathering on the population included in Phase I, together with updates showing case changes, closures, openings, reopenings, and other information required to meet FCIS purposes. Input forms in Phase II will be designed to ensure workload tradeoffs for county welfare department line staff. The output reports, input forms, specific data elements and procedures for Phase II will be defined by DSS staff with assistance from the CWDA FCIS ad hoc subcommittee. This committee reconvened August 19 and 20, 1981, to begin addressing Phase II issues.

It is planned that Phase II will utilize batch (manual) input and updates. However, the feasibility of computer tape input and update is being examined. Pre-printed turnaround documents will be computer generated for verification and submission of changes. As outlined in ACL No. 81-56, it is proposed that counties will

receive routine computer generated reports and may make inquiries by mail or phone. DSS expects to have on-line access to the computer file.

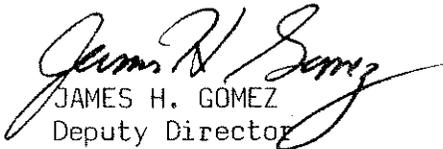
Prior to data collection, the Department of Social Services will provide training to appropriate local agency staff. All-County Letters will provide updates on the development of Phase II.

County welfare department reimbursement for data collection and reporting activities under both Phase I and II will be addressed in a separate All-County Letter.

In summary, the implementation of the Foster Care Information System has been delayed and separated into two phases in order to ensure that the system provides both workload tradeoffs to county line staff and management information useful to county welfare departments and DSS, as well as compliance with federal and state statutory requirements. A CWDA FCIS ad hoc subcommittee has begun working with DSS staff to determine the type of output reports, data items, input forms, and procedures needed to best meet these multiple objectives. The ad hoc subcommittee has already addressed the details of Phase I and has commenced work on Phase II. Their continued efforts are essential to the successful implementation of FCIS and are greatly appreciated.

Future All-County Letters will provide further information. If you have any questions at this time, please contact Beth Hardesty Fife of my staff at (916) 322-6333 or ATSS (8) 492-6333.

Sincerely,


 JAMES H. GOMEZ
 Deputy Director

cc: CWDA
 California Probation Officers' Association
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