

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
744 P Street, Sacramento, CA 95826



February 9, 1982

ALL-COUNTY LETTER NO. 82-12

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

REFERENCE: ACL 81-56, Foster Care Information System (June 3, 1981)
ACL 81-95, Foster Care Information System Development and Implementa-
tion Update (August 31, 1981)
ACL 81-104, Foster Care Information System - Phase I (October 2, 1981)

This letter updates information contained in the referenced All-County Letters regarding development and implementation of the Foster Care Information System (FCIS). As you know, the design stage of the FCIS development was extended to allow more time for county welfare department involvement through the establishment of a County Welfare Directors Association (CWDA) Ad-Hoc committee. Additionally, the implementation of the system was separated into two phases and is proceeding as planned. Also unchanged is the foster child population as described in ACL 81-95 and ACL 81-104.

SYSTEM CHANGES:

Based on subsequent evaluation of the design, several significant changes have evolved since the last ACL. Non-welfare agencies are now included as an integral part of the reporting process. The data collection documents and procedures have been revised to reflect a significant reduction in the number of data elements. And, a case history summary report will be provided to the local agency to assist in case reassessment.

After careful analysis, it was decided in mid-November that county welfare departments would not be responsible for ensuring Phase II data reporting from non-welfare agencies. The Department's premise was that direct reporting by the agency with primary case management responsibility would produce the most current and accurate information on a foster child. An agency is considered to

have primary case management responsibility for a child who is in out-of-home placement if the agency has been assigned legal jurisdiction by the court, has entered into a placement agreement with the child, parents or guardians, or has custody and control of a child freed from parental control. For example, a child receiving both foster care services and payments will be reported by the county welfare department unless the non-welfare agency providing services has primary case management responsibility. Non-welfare agency inclusion in the data reporting process necessitates their establishment of: individual caseworker I.D. numbers, batch control points, agency liaisons, and case contacts.

With the assistance of the CWDA Ad-Hoc committee, the Department of Social Services pared down the number of data elements required in the original FCIS effort. Phase II will collect data necessary to comply with existing federal and state statutes (P.L. 96-272, AB 3070, AB 8, AB 2749) and only minimal data elements necessary for state program management needs. It does not include those data elements required by the National Child Welfare Reporting Project (WESTAT) proposal which go beyond the statutory language of P.L. 96-272. This decrease in the reporting requirements has resulted in improved input and turnaround documents which are less complex than those initially designed.

Furthermore, Phase II creates the least amount of additional workload for local agency staff while providing reports to assist them in case management. A case specific Foster Child's Data Record Summary Report will be produced for the case worker one month prior to six-month case review. This case history report is a composite of all activity that has been reported to Phase II since services case opening. It is designed to assist the case worker in reassessing the child's progress toward achieving permanency planning goals.

FUTURE ACTIVITIES:

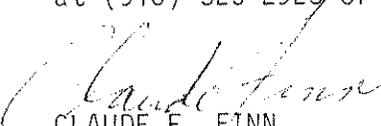
Despite these changes in the development of the system, the implementation of FCIS has proceeded as scheduled. As of mid-January, approximately 94% of the state's Phase I caseload had been submitted via magnetic tape and manually completed documents. Updating of the Phase I data base will continue until April 1, 1982. At that time, a six-month transition period will begin and Phase I data will be augmented by that collected during Phase II. Several output reports will be routinely produced on either paper or microfiche after June, 1982. The full complement of output reports will be available in late October, once the statewide inventory has been implemented and the centralized, case specific foster care information system has been established.

Training workshops for local agency administrators and staff development personnel are scheduled for March 2-17, 1982. A separate letter will be released providing details on the workshops, suggested participants, dates, and locations. The FCIS Instructions Manual and the data collection documents will be available at the workshops.

The Instructions Manual is being prepared to assist the case worker in completing the Phase II documents. It specifies which agency submits the necessary documents, defines each of the data elements, describes how to complete each entry and includes the procedures for ensuring document batch control and correction of errors. It also contains copies of the documents used for data collection.

The Foster Care Information System was delayed and separated into two phases to secure county welfare department involvement and to ensure that useful management information would be derived while also complying with federal and state mandates. Several major changes occurred which affected the design and development of the FCIS, most significant of which is the reduction in reporting requirements. Phase I is now implemented and will be absorbed by Phase II beginning April 1, 1982. At that time a centralized, case specific management information system will be in operation. Both county welfare departments and non-welfare agencies will need to actively participate in the reporting of data to DSS to assure the success of the FCIS.

If you have additional questions or concerns, please contact Beth Hardesty Fife at (916) 323-2923/or ATSS 473-2923.


CLAUDE E. FINN
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