

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

14 P Street, Sacramento, CA 95814



August 24, 1995

ALL-COUNTY LETTER NO. 95-46

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS
ALL CHIEF PROBATION OFFICERS
ALL PUBLIC/PRIVATE ADOPTION AGENCIES
ALL FCIS LIAISONS

REASON FOR THIS TRANSMITTAL

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

SUBJECT: FOSTER CARE INFORMATION SYSTEM (FCIS) DATA AND REPORTING

The purpose of this All County Letter is to advise counties of the need to improve the accuracy and reliability of data reported to and contained in FCIS.

BACKGROUND

The federal Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980 (PL 96-272) required states to establish a permanent, ongoing, statewide foster care information system to qualify for enhanced federal funding. Welfare and Institutions Code section 397 mandates that county welfare and probation departments and public and private adoption agencies report information to the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) for the establishment of a statewide foster care information system. Accordingly, FCIS is the automated data base by which CDSS obtains information on the case plan, placement status, authority for placement, and other characteristics of foster children in out-of-home care. Case specific information on each child in the report population is submitted by counties to CDSS.

The accuracy and reliability of the information collected and reported to CDSS is essential. The FCIS is the primary source of data for program evaluation, planning and formulating allocations. In addition, FCIS data is used to transmit crucial information to county income maintenance staff who determine the child's AFDC-FC eligibility and payment amount.

CURRENT STATUS

Recent state experience has focused attention on key discrepancies in FCIS data. For example, the Information Services Bureau (ISB) has confirmed through examination of FCIS data that up to 20 percent of all FCIS cases identified as family reunification cases exceeded the 18 month time period allowed under this classification. Counties have been notified separately by ISB regarding the specific cases that need correction and the ramifications of corrections not completed within certain time frames. Also, the Foster Care Policy Bureau (FCPB) found in an FCIS sample of out-of-county and out-of-state placements that numerous cases had incorrect or missing data when checked against actual case files.

In addition, conversion of FCIS data to the Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS) will provide the foundation of much of the data used to satisfy the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) requirements. The AFCARS mandates significantly expand federal reporting requirements and became effective in this federal fiscal year (FFY). This semi-annual required submission of data to the Administration for Children and Families began in June 1995. Failure to meet these new reporting requirements will partially jeopardize Title IV-E administrative cost reimbursement beginning in FFY 1997. Specific AFCARS reporting requirements are listed in the 1994 edition of 45 CFR 1355, under the appendix section.

Therefore, FCIS data must be reviewed in partnership with counties to ensure that the data collected correctly reflects the foster care population in California.

CORRECTIVE ACTIONS

The CDSS is requiring that counties review their internal procedures to ensure that the data they provide to FCIS accurately meets all reporting requirements. Additionally, counties must review their existing FCIS data to validate accuracy and ensure all cases are updated and correct by January 1, 1996. To the extent possible, program reviews conducted after January 1996 will include a check of FCIS information on all cases sampled with corrective action required for all errors cited. These actions are necessary for on-going state and local program planning and evaluation and implementation of AFCARS as required by the federal Department of Health and Human Services.

The ISB will also be undertaking expanded quality control duties to ensure that data is received timely and accurately. As part of this process ISB may be adding some additional edits to those currently in place. The ISB will be providing additional information in subsequent county letters. These new edits may include but not be limited to the following:

- o Install edit related to child's date of birth.
- o Install edit regarding child age of 18. The ISB will generate a list identifying the children who have reached age 18 according to FCIS records and instruct counties to either determine if case should be closed or identify child as still eligible in accordance with Eligibility and Assistance Standards Regulations.
- o Install edit related to a child's CWS status after 18 months.

FCIS ENHANCEMENTS

The CDSS, in consultation with counties and the CWS/CMS Project, will also review the need for enhancements to FCIS. The impact of FCIS enhancements on the CWS/CMS will be examined prior to the implementation of such enhancements to assure the smooth transition of that data to the CWS/CMS during conversion. Areas under consideration include:

CDSS REGULATIONS:

Draft CDSS regulations transmitted in ACL 93-21 contained pertinent DHS regulation sections as handbook within CDSS regulations. Because of changes in wording of DHS regulations required by last minute legislative changes and the need to adopt emergency regulations immediately, CDSS deleted the handbook sections from its regulations which have been filed. CDSS intends to restore the pertinent sections as soon as administratively feasible to assist counties in administering the PCSP program.

CONTACT PERSON:

Any questions about this letter or PCSP implementation should be directed to Mr. Robert A. Barton at (916) 657-2143.


FRED MILLER
Deputy Director
Adult Services Division

Attachments (CDSS and DHS regs)