

**KERN COUNTY
FOSTER PARENT
ASSOCIATION GAZETTE**

JUNE 2009

Goal: The goal of the Foster Parent Association is To provide a means to help foster parents help the foster children in their care. We, as an organization, are dedicated to, and will actively pursue the support, education and well-being of foster parents and foster children in Kern County. We are committed to establishing a support system concerning the laws and regulations regarding foster care and to enhancing the relationship between foster parents, social workers and supervisors in the Dept of Human Services.

Hello Caregivers:

This newsletter has some very important information regarding changes as to when civil penalties (CASH paid by foster parents for violations) can be assessed against a foster parent. Please read this newsletter immediately so that you can be up to date on the changes.

Also, please read the policy in this newsletter regarding **INVESTIGATING REFERRALS IN FOSTER FAMILY HOMES, LICENSED COUNTY HOMES, AND PLACEMENT DECISIONS WHEN ADVERSE LICENSING ACTION IS TAKEN**. It explains that social workers should not place children in your home while you are being investigated for CPS and licensing allegations. This includes relatives.

Please go to the following website <http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/ord/PG1914.htm> and read the proposed changes to Title 22. If you are not aware, there was a group formed to take a look at Title 22 to make changes so it will be easier to understand and comply with. There is a copy ready for you to view on-line. The words with the lines through them is the way Title 22 reads now. The words following are the proposed changes.

We just returned from the National Foster Parent Association in Reno, NV. As usual many horror stories were told. Relatives who took in family members prior to the children becoming dependants of the court, and being told they will receive reimbursement and later finding out they will not. Some are struggling financially to care for the children. Some complained about not receiving respite and burning out. There were some concerns regarding the reduction of foster parents nationwide. The stress of false allegations and the effect they have on foster parents and the entire family. The lack of studies on foster children causing mental health providers to not have information needed to assist foster children with their unique needs. The frustration foster parents have when it comes to understanding regulations regarding children in care. The fact that many children in care have multiple placements and sometimes it appears not to be addressed. These are nationwide concerns and foster/relative care providers made their voices heard during the conference. Hopefully, the National Foster Parent Association with the help of the state associations and all members will address these issues on the national level. All children in care deserve the best we can give them.

If you continue to struggle with Title 22 please call Gayla @ 631-6494 and get a list of the dates and times of future Title 22 trainings so you can attend and get your questions answered. PLEASE do not wait until you have allegations to find out what you can and can't do. Some of you have surveillance cameras in the common areas of your homes, some with audio. Please remember, Title 22 states under "Personal Rights" that foster children have the right to make and receive personal calls with privacy. Make sure that your cameras do not infringe on the children's rights. It is a violation!!

The foster parent meetings are the third Thursday of every month at the Kinship Center at 6:00pm. The food bank is the third Saturday of every month at 9:00am sharp.

Take Care, Sasha Biscoe, President

**PROCEDURAL GUIDE
400-003**

**INVESTIGATING REFERRALS IN FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY HOMES, LICENSED
COUNTY HOMES, AND PLACEMENT DECISIONS WHEN ADVERSE LICENSING
ACTION IS TAKEN**

WHAT CASES ARE AFFECTED

All cases where there is an investigation of abuse and/or neglect in a foster home.

Date Issued: 07/15/08

Effective Date: 07/15/08

New Policy Release

Revised

Revision(s) Made: Three different related policies merged into one; operational impact included and the policy was reformatted to conform to the new format.

Cancels: PL-1 issued 7/20/01, PL-2 issued 7/1/99, and PL-3 issued 07/01/99.

POLICY INTENT

To ensure the safety of children in foster homes.

OPERATIONAL IMPACT

This policy affects all Emergency Response (ER) social service workers (SSW) investigating referrals, Family Services and Licensing SSWs providing case management, and Licensing services.

PROCEDURES

When an Emergency Response referral is received alleging abuse or neglect by a foster parent licensed under the Foster Family Agency (FFA) license or a licensed county foster home, the ER SSW shall consult with the primary assigned SSW, if possible, prior to conducting the initial investigation. Coordination with primary SSW and Licensing SSW if applicable is necessary to promote the best interest of the child. Communication between the Licensing Unit, ER, and Placement staff must be timely and accurately so that appropriate placement decisions can be made if adverse action is taken after the conclusion of the investigation.

I. Investigation

A. ER Screener Responsibilities:

- Screener shall cross-report referral to Kern County Licensing or Community Care Licensing (CCL).
- Screener shall inform assigned SSW of referral.
- If referral is a split referral (multiple children in the home), screener shall notify all assigned DHS SSWs.

B. ER SSW Responsibilities:

- Consult with primary assigned DHS SSW.
- Investigate referral (primary assigned worker to accompany ER worker if appropriate).
- If child is placed in a licensed county foster home, inform Licensing investigating SSW and assigned Licensing SSW of investigation, and arrange for Licensing investigation SSW to accompany to the foster home if appropriate.

C. Placement SSW Responsibilities (Family Services/Permanent Placement):

- Consult with assigned ER SSW.
- Accompany ER SSW to the foster home if necessary.
- If change of placement is necessary, follow protocol outlined in Policy 400-028.
- If referral is on FFA home, inform FFA SSW of referral after completion of investigation.

D. Licensing SSW Responsibilities:

- Consult with assigned ER SSW and Placement SSW prior to conducting initial investigation.
- Investigate referral within 10 days of receiving report of allegation of abuse/neglect to a foster child. Licensing supervisor will determine whether a same day response is needed. ER SSW can and may be asked to assist.
- Inform placement SSW via e-mail that investigation is pending and there is a hold on the foster home.
- Inform assigned placement worker via email that investigation is completed. Inform via All Kern email that investigation is completed.

II. Placement Decisions:

ER SSW Responsibilities:

- If child is in imminent danger, ER SSW shall remove child from the home.
- Case staffing with immediate Social Service Supervisor (SSS), if removal of child from the home is needed.
- Notify all placement workers involved if child was removed from the home.

Placement SSW Responsibilities:

- If child is not in imminent danger, the placement worker shall assess for potential change of placement and complete the change of placement if appropriate.
- Note when **Administrative Actions** by Licensing are communicated about a foster home by reviewing listings and/or CWS/CMS communications. Check in the **Comments** section to check for any comments that pertain to the foster home.
- When a foster home has been identified as subject to Administrative Action or other problem, placing staff shall NOT utilize the home until there is a communication that the license status is cleared.
- Shall immediately communicate to Emergency Response and Licensing per child abuse reporting procedure, including completion of the "Suspected Child Abuse Report" (SCAR) form if there is suspicion of abuse or neglect to foster children placed in the foster home.
- If SSW has reason to believe that a foster parent lacks the necessary knowledge, skill, or commitment to the care of children, the SSW shall notify of concerns to their supervisor and the Licensing supervisor/social worker via email or memorandum.

Licensing SSW Responsibilities:

- If a foster home is in violation of licensing regulations or if there is a change of capacity in a foster home, the Licensing SSW will fill out a KCDHS 419-Add/Change Foster Care Data and submit it to the Licensing clerk. The Licensing Clerk will then update the internal Licensing Excel list of actions on foster homes.
- Immediately update CWS/CMS to reflect violations of licensing regulations. This is important so that any updates/changes are reflected when the Foster Home Openings List is run and emailed via Outlook to staff.

APPROVAL LEVELS

Section	Level	Approval
A.	SW	None
B-C	SSS	Supervisor's approval if placement change
D	SW	None

OVERVIEW OF STATUTES/REGULATIONS

CDSS All County Letter 05-09 and 05-09E
Manual of Policies and Procedures Division 31-115 et. seq.
Senate Bill 1641 Chapter 388, Statues of 2006
Welfare and Institutions Code Section 11400 and 16001.9

PREVENTING ALLEGATIONS

1. Find out as much information as possible before deciding whether or not to take in a child, including whether the child has a history of making allegations of abuse against prior foster parents.
2. Do not take any child you do not feel confident you can adequately parent.
3. Work with the child welfare agency to ensure that the child's needs are being met while in foster care.
4. Understand and follow all laws and regulations on caring for foster children.
5. Develop family rules and expectations in consultation with the child welfare agency and ensure that all family members follow them.
6. Do not leave a child who has been sexually abused alone with any one of the same gender as the abuser.
7. Keep a daily log and record any unusual events, behaviors, comments, reactions before and after visits with family members, school issues, medical, dental therapy appointments and all discussions with other professionals about the child's progress and needs [including social workers, court appointed special advocates (CASA's), attorneys, mental health professionals, etc.] Promptly report any unusual incident or injury to the child's social worker.
8. Maintain a cordial and professional working relationship with the child's biological parents and other members of the child welfare team.
9. Participate in training for foster and adoptive parents on caring for children who have been abused or neglected.

Practical Steps to Protect Yourself and Your Family

- O Maintain a professional attitude.
- O Stay focused on understanding and following the procedures in place to resolve the maltreatment report.
- O Maintain or start a log of every conversation or activity related to the investigation. Keep the log by the phone to note calls made and received and the main points of the conversation. The log should be a bound notebook with pages that cannot be removed or added.
- O Ask for all documents you are entitled to receive.
- O Read all documents carefully.
- O Ask questions about anything you don't understand.
- O Adhere to all time lines for the investigation and for challenging the finding if you don't agree with it.
- O Provide information and documentation to the agency about the event that caused the report to be made.
- O Reach out to your local foster/adoptive parent association and ask for support and assistance.
- O Maintain your own family routine and do not isolate yourself from your friends and family.
- O Consider contacting an attorney experienced in child abuse and neglect proceedings to find out your legal rights in your state.
- O Try to put the allegation in perspective. Understand that allegations are sometimes made against foster parents and be prepared to move on when it is over.