



Quarterly Update

WINTER 2016/2017

CHILDREN'S RESIDENTIAL UPDATE

Children's Residential Licensing Program Mission:

The Children's Residential Licensing Program licenses and monitors Adoption Agencies, Foster Family Agencies and Certified Family Homes, Group Homes, Foster Family Homes, Crisis Nurseries, Runaway Youth Shelters, Small Family Homes, and Transitional Housing Placement Programs in an effort to ensure that they provide a safe and healthy environment for children who are in residential care.

A Note from Pamela Dickfoss, Deputy Director

As we enter winter, a few thoughts come to mind—the holidays, family, the beginning of a new year, and reflecting on the accomplishments of the Community Care Licensing Division in 2016. I am pleased that there are many accomplishments to report.

The Statewide Children's Residential Program saw an overall reduction in pending complaints in the aggregate. In 2016, our staff has worked hard to reduce the number of pending complaints which has shown significant improvement. Our staff has also worked diligently with group homes, foster family agencies, stakeholders and counties in providing technical assistance regarding the Continuum of Care Reform efforts, which was evident in the statewide regional meetings facilitated by the regional offices. This increased communication with the provider community, counties and stakeholders will be beneficial as we implement the Continuum of Care Reform effort in 2017. I also want to commend our staff for their work in partnering with our provider community to verify that safety standards related to psychotropic medication are implemented consistent with the provisions of Senate Bill 484 for children placed in our licensed facilities.

I am also pleased to report that the Children's Residential Policy Unit has successfully promulgated two regulation packages, and greatly assisted in the development of the Foster Family Agency and Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Program Interim Licensing Standards and Resource Family Approval written directives. The Division's County Liaison Program continues its licensing responsibilities with the 38 contracted counties

INSIDE THIS ISSUE	
<u>Changes to Management</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>New System Progress</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>Continuum of Care Reform Implementation Highlights</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>Facilitating Family Visits</u>	<u>5</u>
<u>Holiday Activities Planning</u>	<u>6</u>
<u>Winter Fire-Safety Tips</u>	<u>6</u>
<u>Preventing Identity Theft</u>	<u>7</u>
<u>Active Shooter Preparedness</u>	<u>8</u>
<u>AB 388 Reporting Reminder</u>	<u>8</u>

while diligently assisting 13 counties in the early implementation of the Resource Family Approval program. The Children's Residential Program Office Systems and Training Unit have done an awesome job providing the regional offices with relevant information that assists with keeping the processes moving. The Out of State Certification Unit continues to monitor facilities that care for California children in that they are accorded the same health and safety standards as those children placed in out-of-home care in California. The Centralized Complaint and Information Bureau staff has embraced the ability to navigate

internal databases as well as regulations and statutes to answer the tens of thousands of calls they received in 2016.

As we work towards promoting effective communication between the program and licensees, our Policy Branch implemented the Provider Information Notification (PIN) as a systematic means of communicating to licensed providers and our external stakeholders. To the Children's Residential Program staff and the provider community, I send a heartfelt thank you and wishes for Happy Holidays to you and your families!

Changes to the Children's Residential Program Management Personnel

We extend our warmest welcome to two individuals who have recently come onboard our Children's Residential Program management team. Ms. Ia Lo (pronounced Ee-yo) is the new Regional Manager at the Sacramento Children's Residential Regional Office, succeeding Mr. Thomas Stahl, who retired in June. Mr. Daniel Allmon is the new Licensing Program Manager at the Chico Children's Residential Unit Office, taking over for Ms. Dona Watters, who retired in July.



Ms. Lo comes to CCL from Child Protective Services (CPS) of San Joaquin County's Human Services Agency, where she has devoted over 10 years of her career, both as a social worker and supervisor. Her other professional

experiences include working with the pregnant and parenting teen program, Cal-Learn/Adolescent Family Life Program (AFLP), in the capacity of supervisor, and also with a local school district as a social worker in their Early Childhood Education Program. Drawing from her rich experience in working with children and youth in the dependency court system, Ms. Lo has shared her excitement in becoming a part of CCL.

Mr. Daniel Allmon recently spent four years at the Department of State Hospitals Forensic Services Division as the manager over the Administration and Policy Units. Prior to that, he spent seven years at the Butte County Department of Employment and Social Services. He holds a Master of Public Administration degree from the University of Southern California (Fight On).

New System News: The Launch!

On December 15, 2016, all of Community Care Licensing Division's Regional Managers, and many Bureau Chiefs, were on-hand to "Kick Off" the design and development of a new information system for the Children's Residential Program (CRP) that ultimately will replace FAS and LIS. The Certification,

Approval, and Licensing Services (CALs) of Child Welfare Services-New System (CWS-NS) will be an integrated, statewide resource family home approval system for Counties, and a facility licensing system for the CRP. (The code developed for CRP and facility licensing will also be made available to the Adult and

Senior Care Program and the Child Care Program following implementation for CRP).

The “Kick Off” meeting, which will be available as a recording for anyone unable to attend, was led by Child Welfare Digital Services (CWDS) team members, including Phoebe DeMund, the CALS Digital Service Manager and Ken Bennett-Gibson, manager from the CALS Team. It included a general description of the process for CALS development; what to expect in terms of what CRP will get, and when; and how CWS-NS is being developed in a way that is a first for the State of California, and why that matters.

The most important difference from how other large Information Technology (IT) projects have been developed is that it will focus on delivering solutions for users’ most pressing needs in incremental pieces. In other words, rather than waiting until an entirely new system is complete, CWDS will focus on delivering a series of new tools that over time add up to a whole new system. Each of these tools will be designed on the basis of ongoing research into what users want and need of that tool, and only implemented when users have tested it and agree that they’d rather use it than what they have now.

As an example, it could be that the first tool that CALS will develop/deliver is a way to conduct/document fieldwork that is less typing intensive, easier, and that produces more easily searched reports. Regional Offices won’t be asked to use it until CALS team has research that confirms that Licensing Program Analysts and Managers generally agree it is a preferable way to conduct/document fieldwork.

The way CWDS is developing CALS makes it possible to deliver a new and much more modern IT system than if the entire system had to be developed before it was offered for use.

Starting in January, the CALS team will hit the ground running. We expect the announcement of the software design and development team that will be working with us. We will also begin showing up in the regional offices and counties to watch work as it is done and gain insights into ways to make it easier. The CALS team will work heavily with three CCLD personnel to coordinate user research and testing. If you are approached by Stephen Kim from Monterey Park, Brandon Galbraith from Culver City, or Joel Segura from San Jose to participate in user research or testing, we hope you will jump at the chance. They will be helping to ensure your voices are heard in the development of the CALS licensing features and tools. They will also be able to share updates on the project’s progress and be open to your feedback or concerns at any point.

All of the CWDS CALS Team can be reached directly at CWDSCALS@osi.ca.gov Please do not hesitate to send your questions or share your insights about what you need in a new facility licensing system.

In other broader CWDS news: On September 29, the first CWS-NS Quarterly Stakeholder Forum was held wherein the project’s principal vision, core strategies, and status of progress were discussed. Much more information on the project’s core strategies of “agile methodology” for software development and the related concept of “modular procurement,” will ensure CWS-NS’ adaptability to evolving needs, ease of accessibility, and the uniformity of operating tools for the benefit of some 25,000 estimated users statewide. The second Quarterly Stakeholder Forum will be held on January 10, 2017, and include a project status report, and breakout sessions, one of which will be for the discussion of CALS. Please watch the CWDS.CA.GOV website for information about materials to review, or ways to call in or participate, if you are interested.



Child Welfare Digital Services

Continuum of Care Reform Implementation Highlights

Implementation efforts for the [Continuum of Care Reform \(CCR\)](#) will occur in stages between now and the year 2021 in Child Welfare Services (non-probation), and in succeeding years for probation foster care.

The goal of CCR is to improve the child welfare system in California by: (1) reducing the use of congregate care settings and increasing the use of home-based family care; and (2) decreasing the length of time in providing children (inclusive of youth and non-minor dependents) stable, nurturing, permanent family homes.

This goal flows from the understanding that children who live apart from their birth parents have a better chance of a successful transition into young adulthood when cared for in committed nurturing family homes and who experience minimal to no placement disruptions.

It is through this basic framework that the relationship between Resource Family Homes (RFH) and Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Programs (STRTPs) can be understood. With the key objective being to provide children permanency in capable, caring family homes, existing group homes must either transition to STRTPs (a new group home category created under [Assembly Bill \(AB\) 403](#)) or receive an approval to extend their operation from the host county and the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) (via form [FC 30](#)), effective January 1, 2017. Extensions may be granted when it is the only viable placement option, but only up to December 31, 2018.

Only children who have an urgent need for a therapeutic level of care and who require a higher degree of supervision (intensive 24-hour supervision and treatment) that cannot be adequately provided in a home-based family care setting will be admitted into STRTPs.

Facilities seeking licensure as STRTPs will need to meet higher standards of care, be accredited, and be able to deliver or arrange for a set of core services including the mental health services that children need.

As the category title suggests, Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Programs are meant to be just that—short-term.

With efforts spearheaded by the [Child and Family Team \(CFT\)](#), consisting of individuals charged with coordinating cross-agency network of services and supports for each placed child, the goal remains to quickly transition the child back to his or her family home or to a permanent, caring Resource Family Home in the event family reunification is not a viable option.

Resource families are caregivers (either related or not related to the child) who receive appropriate training and cross-agency support services that equip them to provide a stable, nurturing, and permanent home environment specific to meeting the particular needs of the child placed.

The Resource Family Approval (RFA) process is one which is streamlined and simplified. It also combines the best elements of prior processes—only now, under one new approval standard. RFA replaces the separate processes particular to the licensing of foster family homes, the certifying of homes by licensed foster family agencies (FFAs), and the approval of homes operated by relative caregivers and non-related extended family members (NREFMs).

In effect, RFA creates a single, “one-stop-shop” framework for all families, inclusive of relatives and NREFMs—irrespective of the child’s case plan—such that RFH caregivers receive the same quality and depth of information, training, and support needed. Resource families will all be required to have training. This training is, by design, child-

centered, trauma-informed, evidence-based, culturally sensitive, and age and developmentally appropriate.

Once approved, a resource family will not need to undergo any additional/duplicate approval or licensure process should they elect to adopt or enter into legal guardianship with the child placed in their care.

Effective January 1, 2017, all counties and foster family agencies will be required to implement RFA.

Certified family home applications will no longer be accepted from this date. Both FFA-certified and licensed foster family homes and approved relative caregiver and non-related extended family member (NREFM) homes are required to convert to RFHs by December 31, 2019, at which time automatic forfeiture of their pre-RFA license or approval will take effect by operation of law.

Interim Licensing Standards (ILS) are written policies, procedures, and rules developed in collaboration by the Continuum of Care Branch (of the Children and Family Services Division

of CDSS) and the Community Care Licensing Division, in consultation with stakeholders.

[AB 403](#), which enacted the major components of CCR, authorizes CDSS to implement CCR through the Interim Licensing Standards specific to [FFAs](#) and [STRTPs](#) until such time regulations are adopted for these licensed provider categories. County-implemented RFA programs, however, are governed by [RFA Written Directives](#) and not ILS.

Both Interim Licensing Standards and RFA Written Directives have the same force and effect as regulations.

Existing regulations specific to current caregiver types remain in effect prior to their conversion or forfeiture of operating license. For this reason, FFAs in the process of transitioning their certified family homes into RFHs will, in effect, be navigating two sets of rules—the regulations now in place and ILS.

For more information on RFA and STRTP, please visit: CCR@dss.ca.gov or RFA@dss.ca.gov.

Facilitating Birth Family Visitations During the Holidays

It is the duty of the caregiver to make reasonable accommodations to allow for children in placement to visit with members of their birth family, as it is also a personal right recognized under [Welfare and Institutions Code \(WIC\) Section 16001.9\(a\)](#) and enforced under Title 22 Regulations specific to facility type, barring any court order in full force and effect prohibiting such contacts or visits.

Caregivers should exercise sensitivity to the experience of loss and separation that are likely to run deep in children, particularly during the holidays. Their caring assistance can make a big impact in helping make court-authorized visits with family members both a safe and positive experience for all concerned.

Yet, as not all family visits may turn out to be helpful to the child—sometimes due to factors independent of the conduct of any one party—caregivers are well advised to stay engaged in the course of providing appropriate care and supervision.

Although there are no particular guarantees of success, caregivers can nevertheless take basic steps to help emotionally prepare a child for the visits and also provide emotional support afterwards—listening proactively, making careful (and non-judgmental) observations, and assessing for any concerning signs such as fear, discomfort, or re-traumatization. Hopefully, there are signs of

healthy reconnecting with the birth family. Noting the child's affect both before and after each visit may be helpful to this end.

Just as important is the caregiver's ability and willingness to help process difficult feelings and provide support when visits do not turn out well or when the birth family abruptly cancels a visit or no-shows. Yet, irrespective of the particular interpersonal issues that may come into play, professional clinical assistance should be sought when the visits start taking a toll on the child social functioning—examples of which may be: behavioral challenges, the onset of depressive symptoms, disordered eating

habits, irregular sleeping patterns, or a general loss of interest in regular daily activities.

There are no foolproof ways to guarantee that visits between children and their birth parents will be successful. However, knowing about behaviors you might see and taking a few steps to prepare a child and facilitate the visit should help.

For further discussion on this subject, please consult:

<http://fosteringperspectives.org/fpv15n1/understanding.htm>

Planning Holiday Activities for Children in Foster Care

The holidays can be a joyous time for children in foster care, but they can also invite strong feelings of loss, betrayal, personal guilt, and even conflicting loyalties—that is, the tension from experiencing both an attachment to the new caregivers as well as to the birth parents.

In planning holiday activities, caregivers are advised to carefully weigh the emotional needs of the foster child. As there is no set template or “one-size-fits-all” solution on how exactly to go about this—in part owing to the uniqueness of the issues at play—caregivers may prudently elect to either engage the child on the subject (where appropriate) or observe for any particular sensitivities the child exhibits.

It should not be assumed that every child would want to be saturated with fun activities or

spending large chunks of time in the company of visitors, contemporaries, or large crowds at the mall. Although a case can be made that the theme of loss and separation mark the common thread for all children entering into foster care, each child processes it uniquely.

The heart of the solution does not so much reside in trying to concretely replicate some of the festive customs and practices understood to be familiar to the child but in being completely available to the child to render support and reassurance.

For more information, please visit:

<http://fosteringperspectives.org/fpv15n1/holidays.htm>

Winter Fire-Safety Tips

Home fires occur more in winter than in any other season. Home heating equipment is involved in [1 out of every 6 home fires, and in 1 out of every 5 home fire deaths](#). The use of dangerous heating equipment or unsafe home heating practices may have correlations to the steady rise in energy costs and resultant trends in seeking heating solutions—even at the

expense of compromising fire-safety. According to the [National Fire Protection Association \(NFPA\)](#), home heating is the second leading cause of home fires after cooking.

Between the years 2010 and 2012, an average of 45,200 home heating fires occurred in the United States each year, accounting for an

annual average of approximately 155 deaths, 625 injuries, and \$351 million in property loss. Home fires have been found to be the most prevalent during the months of December, January, and February and generally the winter holiday season due to the confluence of increased cooking activities, home heating, and the decorative use of candles and [electrical](#) lights.



The following are some important safety tips provided by the [California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection](#) to help ensure a warm but safe winter:

- Never use flammable liquids or excessive amounts of paper to start or accelerate a fire.
- Keep flammables away from heat sources.
- The use of kerosene heaters inside the home is prohibited in California (Sec. 19881, Health and Safety Code).
- Keep children away from heat sources.
- Never leave a fire unattended.
- Wood stoves should be UL ([Underwriters Laboratories](#)) approved.

Preventing Identity Theft During the Holidays

Children in community care are particularly vulnerable to identity theft, given the potential for their personal information being more widely circulated for the purposes of obtaining necessary services and the heightened risk of such information falling into the wrong hands.

Though certainly a year-round concern, the busy holiday shopping season marks an opportune time for caregivers to reassess their efforts in ensuring that the personal information of the children entrusted to their care is adequately protected.



- Never attempt to heat a structure with a device that was designed for outdoor use, such as a camp stove.
- Charcoal gives off lethal amounts of carbon monoxide. Do not burn it indoors.
- Have a professional inspect and clean your chimney, stovepipe and/or furnace annually.
- Do not attempt repairs yourself.
- Keep a metal or glass screen in front of the fireplace opening. Make sure the damper is open before lighting.
- Check furnace control and emergency shut-offs to be sure they are working properly.

For more winter fire-safety information, please visit:

http://www.fire.ca.gov/communications/communications_firesafety_homeheating

<https://www.usfa.fema.gov/prevention/outreach/heating.html>

<http://www.nfpa.org/public-education/campaigns/put-a-freeze-on-winter-fires>

Implementing reasonable security measures is no guarantee against identity theft itself, but it does serve to minimize the chances that unauthorized use of a child's identifying information will occur.

Clear warning signs that a child's identity has been compromised may include:

- Denial of government benefits/services due to their being utilized by another individual with the same social security number
- A notice from the IRS stating that the child did not pay income taxes

- Collection calls or bills for products or services not received (nor requested)

The following are steps that can help reduce the chances of identity theft:

- Keep vital records in a secure place.
- Pay attention to all forms requesting the child’s personal information.
- Ask the school how it is protecting the child’s personal information.
- Have a credit report requested for the child when he or she reaches [age 14](#) so

that there is enough time to correct any errors prior to his or her turning 18.

The Federal Trade Commission has put together a step-by-step action guide for reporting and recovering from identity theft, accessed at: <https://www.identitytheft.gov/>

For more information, also visit:

<https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0040-child-identity-theft>

Active Shooter/Attacker Preparedness

The following are some basic physical safety tips to keep in mind this holiday season, especially when planning family or group outings to popular shopping destinations or recreational points of interest. This is in light of recent events that have involved individuals targeting members of the public at random with the use of firearms or other weapons.

- Be aware of your surroundings and assess for any potential risks to your personal safety and of those accompanying you.
- Take note of the two nearest exits in any facility you visit or a viable area in which to seek shelter in case of an emergency.

- If you happen to be in an office during an active shooter/attacker incident, stay there and secure the door.
- If you are out in a hallway during such an occurrence, get into a room and secure the door.
- Call 911 when it is safe to do so.

For more information, please consult:

[*Active Shooter Event: Quick Reference Guide*](#)

<https://search.dhs.gov/search?query=active+shooter+preparedness+pamphlet&op=Search&affiliate=dhs>

Reminder to Report Incidents Involving Law Enforcement Contact

This is a reminder to all congregate care providers that [Assembly Bill \(AB\) 388 \(Chesbro\), Chapter 760](#), enforced under [Health and Safety Code \(HSC\) Section 1538.7](#), requires all group homes, community treatment facilities, transitional housing placement providers, and runaway and homeless youth shelters to report all incidents to CCLD involving law enforcement contact.



All such reports are required regardless of their type or degree of seriousness, and whether law enforcement actually responded. The requirement to report is established when the facility first contacts law enforcement regarding an incident—even if there is no response. A report must also be made if the law enforcement contact results from a call made by other children in the facility or by a third party, or if the law enforcement contact occurs offsite. This

includes calls that are made to comply with state or local requirements or to satisfy the facility's own policies approved by CCLD.

Form [LIC 624-LE Law Enforcement Contact Report](#) has been specifically developed to assist care providers report incidents involving

contact with law enforcement. If a facility chooses to create its own form, the report that the facility elects to submit must include the required information fields to properly complete it. The benefit to using the LIC 624-LE is that it takes the guesswork out of properly reporting law enforcement contact incidents.

IMPORTANT INFO AND PHONE NUMBERS	
Centralized Complaint Information Bureau (CCIB)	1-844-538-8766
Foster Care Rates	916-651-9152
Caregiver Background Check Bureau (CBCB)	1-888-422-5669
Foster Care Ombudsman	1-877-846-1602
CCL Public Inquiry and Response	916-651-8848
Technical Support Program	916-654-1541

Notes and Credits

The Community Care Licensing Division (CCLD) publishes the Children's Residential Program Quarterly Update for the benefit of Licensees, Parents, Clients, Residents, and Stakeholders.

Pamela Dickfoss, CCLD Deputy Director
Angela Valdez, Children's Residential Program Administrator

This Issue's Editor
Alison Newkirk

Assistant Editors
Stephen Kim and Alison Harris

Additional Contributors
Phoebe DeMund, Child Welfare Division