

DSS Policy and Procedure Guide

Division 03: Child Welfare

Chapter 04: Ongoing Case Management/Practice

Item 016: Administration of Foster Care Payments

Suggested changes send to: [DSS PSOA](#) Mailbox

Issued: **November 14, 2014**

References: PPG 03-02-005, 03-04-008, 45-03-005;
ACL [06-48](#); W&I Code §10553, §10554, § 361.2,
§10850, and §16501.0; CWS/CMS Buddy Topic: (SOC
158A); [ACIN 1-31-11](#)

Revisions in Red

Replaces Issue: December 10, 2013

[Procedure for Intake/Initial Placement](#) / [Procedure for On-going Cases](#) / [Temporary Absences](#) /
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Preamble

Child Welfare Policy and Procedure Guides are meant to be used as tools to relay best practice and staff expectations. It is understood that specific case scenarios may not always align themselves with the stated practices and that at all times what is of paramount importance is the Safety and Well-being of the children we are charged to protect.

Policy

Foster care payments are made to providers of care for children in the care, custody and control of the Department of Social Services (DSS), and as such, the DSS is responsible for ensuring accurate reporting of changes in placement, regardless of nature, to Eligibility Staff who determine eligibility and disburse funds.

Purpose

Advise Child Welfare staff of notification procedures to Eligibility to ensure disbursement with accuracy and avoid overpayments and underpayments to providers of care.

Definitions

Payment of Foster Care Funds: Payment occurs for every child placed in out-of-home care by the DSS. The foster care budget is funded through a mixture of Federal, State and County funds. For a Federally Eligible Child, the funding ratio is approximately 50% Federal; 20% State and 30 % County funds and for State Eligible Children, the ratio is 40% State and 60% County Funds.

Overpayments and Underpayments: An overpayment occurs when a provider (Foster parent, Foster Family Agency, Group Home, Relative Home, or a Non-Related Extended Family Member) receives foster care funds to which they are not entitled. An overpayment occurs in the following ways:

- There is a computation error, e.g. number of days paid.

- The incorrect rate is paid (higher or lower).
- The Foster Family does not advise the DSS within 24 hours of a run-away or emergency placement move.
- The DSS Social Worker (SW) does not advise the Eligibility unit of a reported change in client placement status within 24 hours.

Collection: Collection occurs when Eligibility discovers payment was made in error to a provider after the payment has already been issued. This process requires collaboration between DSS Accounts Receivable and the Auditor-Controller's office to make a demand for payment directly from the provider. The Federal Government has zero tolerance for overpayments, and demands its share of funding to be paid back even if the county has not yet collected it. This process also requires additional administrative overhead costs to correct errors.

Foster Care Rates and Rate Letters: State authorized rates of payment to reimburse various levels of caregivers for provision of care.

Procedure at Intake/Initial Placement

For every child taken into care, an eligibility determination is conducted after the Emergency Response (ER) Staffing or Team Decision-Making (TDM) meeting.

The ER SW shall notify the Eligibility Worker (EW) of the staffing/TDM.

The SW will contact Eligibility at the conclusion of the Staffing/TDM in order for the EW to meet with the parents and complete the intake packet of paperwork. When parents are unavailable, the ER SW shall meet with the EW to provide the EW with the necessary information.

For every child placed into care, a SOC 158A, FC-2, SAWS1, MC250 and EA-1 are generated from CWS/CMS by the ER SW and provided to the Foster Care Intake Eligibility Unit at the conclusion of the staffing/TDM for processing and payment.

The Social Work Supervisor (SWS) shall be responsible for ensuring that these processes are completed or shall complete the processes as soon as they are aware it is necessary. A case can not be reassigned from ER to Family Reunification (FR) or to Permanency Planning (PP) without having submitted a complete foster care application to Eligibility.

If the intake EW does not receive the SOC 158A, FC-2, SAWS1, MC250 and EA-1 at the conclusion of the staffing/TDM, they will email a follow up request the following day to the ER SW and CC the SWS and the Eligibility SSPS. The intake EW will continue to request the SOC 158A, FC-2, SAWS1, MC250 and EA-1 by email every day until all requested forms are received. Emails sent subsequent to the first follow up email request will be sent to the ER SW with a CC to the ER SWS, Eligibility SSPS, Eligibility PM and the ER PM until the requested forms are received.

Procedure for On-going Cases

For every child in care, the SOC 158A is the payment communication to Eligibility. Its purpose is to start and stop payments and is used by Eligibility to determine the rate of pay.

The assigned SW is responsible for preventing overpayments by emailing the [ETA Foster Care Placement](#) mailbox within 24 hours of any placement change. Eligibility shall be notified each time an action occurs which alters, or changes the status of a child in care, or if a placement ends.

The assigned SW is responsible for ensuring that a SOC 158A is created or updated with the correct codes and dates, and issued to the EW from CWS/CMS within 48 hours of a placement change, whenever the following occurs:

- A relative placement is made
- A child is reunified with the parent and returns home
- A child emancipates or reaches the age of majority
- A child dies while in care
- A child is hospitalized
- A child runs away or is reported missing
- A child is incarcerated
- The Substitute Care Provider (SCP) moves to another home.

Note: When a child is returned to their parent on an extended visit or Court ordered Family Maintenance, the SW shall complete CalWORKs form [2302](#), *CalWORKs Intake Application Request*, and email it to the [ETA FC-CalWORKs Referrals](#) email box.

A SOC 158A is required for all child placement changes such as:

- A move from foster care to a relative, or non-relative extended family member (NREFM)
- A move from one relative to another relative or NREFM
- A move from the home of a parent while on Court ordered Family Maintenance to a foster care placement
- A move from a foster home to a Foster Family Agency (FFA) home
- A move from a FFA home to another home, even within that same agency
- A move from one FFA home to another FFA home
- A move from a FFA home to a group home
- A move from a foster home to a group home
- A move from a group home to another group home
- When Wraparound (WRAP) services begin.
- When WRAP services end.
- A change in jurisdiction such as dismissing dependency, reinstating dependency or an inter-county transfer.
 - To ensure a child's federal foster care eligibility is not interrupted when the child transitions from dependency status to delinquency status the "Removed from Home

Date” and associated hearing dates on the SOC 158A must be manually adjusted to reflect the original removal information as a dependent in order to identify the continuation of the original out-of-home episode. The sections are Section D5 of the SOC 158A, “Removed from Home Date,” and Sections E1-3, “Petition Date, Detention Order Date, and Disposition Order Date”.

- This also applies when the case transfers from dependency to delinquency status, and back to dependency.

The assigned SWS shall maintain responsibility for ensuring that these processes are completed by the assigned SW or shall complete these processes as soon as they are aware it is necessary. The assigned SWS shall also discuss placement changes of children during conferences with the SWs in their unit.

If an ongoing EW does not receive the SOC 158A within five working days they shall email the assigned SW to request it. The ongoing EW will continue to request the SOC 158A by email every five days until received. The first email will be sent to the assigned SW only. The second email will include the assigned SW and the assigned SWS. The third email will include the assigned SW, SWS and the Division **Program Manager (PM)**.

Temporary Absences

The State may provide a full month’s title IV-E foster care maintenance payment to a licensed provider if the brief absence does not exceed 14 days and the child’s placement continues with the same provider. Accordingly, for purposes of federal and state AFDC-Foster Care funding, the temporary absence must not exceed 14 days in a calendar month, whether those days are sequential or not.

It is the **SW**’s responsibility to ensure that no child has a temporary absence exceeding 14 days in a calendar month. The **SW** must consult with their supervisor when creating a plan to implement liberal visitation to ensure the child is not absent from the foster care facility more than 14 days in a calendar month. The **SW** must then document the outcome of their meeting with their supervisor in the child’s case plan.

For runaways, a bed can be held up to five days for non Wraparound youth. (For Wraparound youth, payments cannot be made to the trust fund through the end of the month when a minor runs away unless there are 14 days or less until the end of the month.)

The assigned SW is responsible for ensuring that a SOC 158A is created or updated with the correct codes and dates, and issued to the EW from CWS/CMS for Temporary Absences as well.

Procedure for Stand-by

Stand-by staff shall email the [CWS FPR](#) and the [ETA Foster Care Placement](#) mailbox, when making placement moves after hours.

Stand-by staff shall also email the assigned SW to notify them of any placement change and clearly document the information in CWS/CMS.

Documentation of Placement

Child Welfare placement changes are uniquely tied to outcomes and well being for children. For this reason, every placement change must be documented thoroughly for the cause of the placement change, how the child was transitioned into the next placement, and is required to contain disclosure information and critical medical and educational information regarding the child to the caregivers, pursuant to W&I Code §10553, §10554, § 361.2, §10850, and §16501.0. Documentation is required to create a permanent and accurate placement history for the child and to ensure clear records of placements.

- A contact narrative in CWS/CMS is required for every placement including the date and time of placement, who the placement is with and whether or not it meets the child's medical and educational needs, and whether the child is placed within his or her own community or with a relative. This documentation should not include the address of the care provider.
- A justification of the placement choice shall be documented.
- The contact narrative shall include the information that an email has been submitted to the [ETA Foster Care Placement](#) mailbox and that a SOC 158A was completed by either the assigned SW or the Foster Parent Resource (FPR) **SW**.
- When plans are being made to move a child from one home to another, such as a relative or a step-down situation, the plan shall be clearly documented in CWS/CMS so the case record is clear about who is being paid.