

DSS Policy and Procedure Guide

Division 03: Child Welfare

Chapter 05: Placement

Item 013: Initial Out of Home Placement and Placement Changes

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

Issued: **August 30, 2016**

References: Family Code [7950](#) and [7952](#); Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC) [308\(b\)](#), [399](#), [16516.5](#) and [16516.6](#)

Revisions in Red

Replaces Issue: August 2, 2013

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Preamble

Child Welfare Policy and Procedure Guides (PPG) 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

Providing the child with a smooth transition to placement is a key component of maintaining placement stability which leads to timely permanency.

Purpose

To inform Child Welfare staff of the issues surrounding placement changes, and the procedure for when a child must move from one placement to another.

Introduction

There are times when it is necessary for a child's protection to remove that child from the home of **their** custodial parent or guardian. This decision shall be made only after all reasonable efforts have been made to prevent out-of-home placement. Children who are removed from the care and supervision of their parents and placed in out-of-home care are in need of reassurance regarding their futures. Children have the right to age-appropriate counseling to better understand the reasons for Departmental intervention. It may be appropriate for the Social Worker (SW) to link the parents(s) or child(ren) to ongoing counseling services. Child safety is always a primary concern when removing a child from the home. Some situations may require a child be immediately removed from the home.

When moving a child from their home to an out-of-home care provider or to another placement the tasks to be accomplished during a placement visit will differ with children of varying ages, because of their cognitive abilities.

The specifics of a placement change will differ depending upon developmental age. Children need the consistent contact to make the gradual transition. As placement steps proceed, the SW shall prepare all parties for the possibilities of separation and loss feelings and behavior before each visit as well as debrief the child, current caregiver and prospective caregiver.

The SW shall be sensitive to how the caregiver/foster family and child are responding to each other and alert to any signs of anxiety or distress on the part of the child. The SW shall consult with their supervisor in order to maintain objectivity and progress at a pace that is in the best interests of the child. It may be necessary to discontinue placement change if the placement does not appear to be in the best interests of the child. The SW shall consult with their supervisor to maintain objectivity and not progress too hastily.

It is appropriate to leave the child when **they are** reasonably comfortable with the caregiver(s) and the environment. In addition, the child needs an opportunity to begin the grieving process with the current caregiver or parent.

The SW must gather information directly from the child, current foster caregiver, prospective caregiver and custodial parent or guardian to assess the child's reactions in both settings. Moving the child too quickly or too slowly can cause great anxiety.

A key to placement step is conducting a Team Decision Making (**TDM**) meeting prior to the placement. At this meeting a sharing of information can take place with all involved parties including the prospective caregiver. It makes a placement decision the responsibility of a larger group within the agency and the community at large. By including the family, extended family, community supports and child welfare staff in the most important decisions regarding the placement of the child.

Each family is unique in its strengths and weakness; actual case situations may demand different strategies. The following procedures are not all-inclusive. The empathy, genuineness and skill of the SW may be called upon beyond a degree which written directions can encompass.

Procedure

SW Responsibilities Prior To Placing or Moving a Child

If the child is at risk of being removed, the TDM should occur before a child is removed when possible. If the child has already been removed, the TDM will occur within 24 hours prior to the detention hearing.

For a placement change, request a TDM within 7 days upon notification of the caregiver's request for removal.

If this is an initial placement:

- Explain to the child that people (such as doctors, teachers, and police) often work together to provide safety for children.

- Include the parent(s) in interviews with the child, if appropriate, **regarding the best placement for the child. This is different than an investigative interview, where the child should be interviewed alone.**
- Explain to the child the reason for placement or change in placement, in terms appropriate to **their** age and level of understanding.
- Acknowledge the expression of feelings and provide comfort through your tone of voice and demeanor.
- Obtain as much information as possible on the history and current functioning of the child to be placed.
- **Ensure the following forms are completed and sent to Eligibility via the ETA Foster Care Placement mailbox:**
 - Foster Care Intake (located in the green section of CWS/CMS, Fresno County specific forms).
 - EA1 Eligibility Application (located in the green section of CWS/CMS, Fresno County specific forms).
 - SAWS1 (located in the blue section of CWS/CMS, second icon from the right).
 - FC2 (located in the blue section of CWS/CMS, third icon from the right).
 - MC250 Medi-Cal Application (located in the blue section of CWS/CMS, fourth icon from the right).
 - SOC158A (located in the red section of CWS/CMS).

Prepare the child for placement by:

- Explaining to the child that a safe place will be found for **them** to stay.
- Exploring with the child **their** placement preferences. Interview any child who is verbal, regardless of age, regarding placement preferences

NOTE: All children being considered for placement have a right to make a brief statement regarding their feelings about placement and placement preferences. Briefly describe the court process to the child, if appropriate. Document the statement in the **narratives and** appropriate court report.

- Tell the child that **their** parent(s) may be told where **they are** staying, if appropriate and safe to do so.
- If a sibling group is being separated, inform each child that **they** will know where their siblings are placed as soon as possible, if appropriate and safe to do so.
- Share appropriate information about why the child is being placed with the prospective caregiver and what the child has been told about being placed. **Refer to [PPG 03-01-018: Sharing Information with Caregivers, for further information.](#)**
- Provide the care provider with the completed and signed LIC 625 (Appraisal/Needs and Services Plan) <http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/cdssweb/entres/forms/English/LIC625.PDF>. This form shall be completed with at the initial placement, placement changes, changes in the child (behavior/physical condition), and/or with each newly assigned **SW**.
- Ask the care provider what other support they may need to help provide care and support of the child(ren) placed in their home and provide the requested support or referrals for support.

- Establish an appropriate plan for phone contact (i.e., as many phone contacts as necessary to determine the child’s adjustment level) and monthly (or more) face-to-face contacts in the home during the initial adjustment to placement.

NOTE: Pursuant to Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC) section [308\(b\)](#): “Immediately after being taken to a place of confinement pursuant to this article and, except where physically impossible, no later than one hour after he or she has been taken into custody, a minor 10 years of age or older shall be advised that he or she has the right to make at least two telephone calls from the place where he or she is being held, one call completed to his or her parent, guardian, or a responsible relative, and another call completed to an attorney.”

- Explain that parents are usually permitted to visit and that visitation will be arranged (if appropriate and safe to do so). If the contacts by parents will be monitored or prohibited, tell the child this in terms that **they** will understand.
- Document all contacts and actions taken in the CWS/CMS Contact Notebook.

SW Responsibilities During/After Placement or Change of Placement of a Child

SWs are to maintain an appropriate schedule for face-to-face contact (i.e., no fewer than as required by state regulations and DSS policy and as many as necessary to ensure that the child is safe and doing as well as can be expected, especially during the early adjustment phase of the placement).

Pursuant to WIC [16516.5](#) and [16516.6](#), the SW shall have periodic monthly visits with the children in foster placement. The discussion between the child and the **SW** during these visits shall be private and the content of the discussion kept confidential.

Narration in CWS/CMS shall be completed within the timeframes specified in [PPG 03-01-001: Mandatory Face-to-Face Contacts/Documentation Timeframes](#).

Observe the comfort level between out of-home caregiver and placed child.

Instruct the caregiver(s) to report any problems the child might be experiencing and/or any changes in the child’s demeanor or behavior, etc.

Establish and maintain an appropriate schedule for face-to-face contacts (no fewer than required by state regulations and existing policy, and as many as necessary to ensure the child is safe and doing as well as can be expected during the adjustment phase of the placement as well as thereafter). Contact should be done in the home and where the child sleeps shall be viewed as well as the condition of the home.

At the time of initial placement or placement change, the SW will tour the placement with the child and see his or her sleeping area. The SW shall introduce the child to all residents of the home, if possible.

The SW shall observe and then document the child’s living conditions and sleeping arrangements in CWS/CMS.

The SW shall complete a Needs and Service Plan for each child placed in out of home care. The plan must include any special needs the child may have. The SW shall discuss the Needs and Service Plan with the care provider and document the discussion and plan in CWS/CMS.

Reassure the child about the current placement and tell **them** that **they** may call the **SW** with any questions or problems. Provide the care provider and child if age appropriate with the **SW's** business card and cell phone number.

For all placement changes, the child's attorney will be notified by the assigned SW.

SW shall send an email to the ETA Foster Care Placement mailbox to report a change in placement status within one business day of the placement change.

SW shall submit the SOC158A to the Foster Care (FC) Eligibility Worker (EW) within two business days of the placement change.

For additional guidance on notifying the EW via the ETA Foster Care Placement mailbox when a change in placement status has occurred or submitting a SOC158A to the EW for placement changes, please see [PPG 03-04-016](#): Administration of Foster Care Payments and [PPG 03-02-005](#): Overpayment Prevention for Runaways.