

DSS Policy and Procedure Guide

Division 03: Child Welfare

Chapter 05: Placement

Item 035: Placement Change Requirements

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

Issued: **May 30, 2023**

References: [All County Letter \(ACL\) 19-26](#); [ACL 22-100](#); [Assembly Bill \(AB\) 2247](#) ; [AB 1061](#); [WIC 16010.7](#)

Replaces issue dated August 16, 2019

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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

The Department of Social Services (DSS) will, as directed in Assembly Bill (AB) 2247, develop, implement, and document a placement preservation strategy in consultation with the Child and Family Team (CFT) for most dependent foster youth placement changes. DSS will provide written notice of any placement change 14 days prior to the change of placement. In addition, no placement changes can occur between the hours of 9 p.m. and 7 a.m.

Procedure

DSS is to ensure that foster children and youth are placed in safe, loving, and stable homes while in out of home care. Children and youth experience significant trauma at the time of removal from their family of origin. This trauma is further compounded when a child experiences multiple placement moves and instability, which may lead to emotional, developmental, and educational setbacks. The goal is to minimize placement disruptions however, when a placement move is required that the decision is thoughtful and well planned.

Placement Preservation Strategy

Child Welfare Social Workers (SW) must develop, implement, and document in the Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS) of the foster child's case, a placement preservation strategy to preserve the child's placement **prior** to making a placement change. In order to accomplish this, a CFT or Teaming meeting will be convened to identify and implement best

practice strategies to support the existing placement. The SW is required to consult with the child's CFT for the purpose of maintaining the current placement. Upon receiving notice that the placement may be in jeopardy, the SW will schedule a CFT/Teaming meeting within three business days.

Placement preservation strategies may include, but are not limited to:

- Convene a CFT/Teaming meeting to collaboratively develop and implement an individual plan designed to meet the child and family's needs.
- Address conflicts and concerns and discuss solutions.
- Review the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) assessment tool to discuss strengths and any unmet needs.
- Review prior CFT notes to identify delays or barriers in implementing prior recommendation
- Engage and recruit CFT members such as family members, community support, educational providers, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), and any other person identified by the child or family.
- Ensure timely provision of support services, as deemed appropriate by the CFT. Some examples of services to support placement stability may include respite and/or Intensive Home Based Services such as Therapeutic Behavioral Services (TBS) or Wraparound.
- Ensuring the youth and Resource Family has information to access Family Urgent Response System (FURS) for additional support.
 - Please see attached for the FURS Flyer for Adult ([linked here](#)) and Youth ([linked here](#)).

The SW, in consultation with their supervisor, should include the following DSS staff and other service providers (as applicable) in the development of the placement preservation strategies:

- Resource Family Support (RFS)
- Wraparound services
- Mental Health service providers
- Child Welfare Mental Health team
- Intensive Services Foster Care (ISFC) liaison
- Independent Living Program (ILP)
- Commercially Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC) team

Placement Change Requirements

If, after implementing the placement preservation strategy, a placement change is still required the SW will submit the Foster Care Placement Request (6252) to RFS and provide a **14-day written notice** utilizing the Notice of Placement Change letter (see Appendix A) to the parties identified below. This new requirement under AB 2247 supersedes the prior 7-day notice requirement for providers and child welfare agencies. The following parties must receive notice:

- The foster child/youth's parent/guardian
- The foster child/youth's caregiver, including resource families, foster family agencies and short-term residential therapeutic program (STRTP)
- The foster child/youth's attorney

- The foster child/youth, if they are 10 years of age or older

The new legislation does not change the requirement that DSS take the school of origin into account when considering other placement options or the requirement to provide notice when a placement change could lead to a removal from the child/youth's school of origin. Refer to [PPG 03-14-006 School Stability](#)

In addition, under AB2247 no placement changes are to occur between the hours of 9 p.m. and 7 a.m. unless a unanimous agreement is made by the following persons:

- The foster child/youth if they are age 10 years old or older
- The foster child/youth's attorney if they are under 10 years old
- The foster child/youth's current caregiver
- The foster child/youth's prospective caregiver; and
- The foster child/youth's SW

In the event that the placement change does need to occur after 9 p.m., the SW will document in the child's case in CWS/CMS the agreement of all parties identified above. If placement occurred after 9 p.m. and the agreement of all parties was not obtained due to the emergent nature of the placement change, the case managing SW or the placing SW will document in the child's case the circumstances under which the placement occurred and reasons why agreement from all parties was not obtained.

The role of the CFT during placement transitions is critical to ensure that the child/youth, family members, caregivers, CASA representative (if applicable), educational rights holder, and service providers are engaged in the process to ensure a smooth and successful transition to a new placement. With any transition, it is important that referrals for continuing care and supportive resources are in place and working prior to the transition.

Exemptions from Placement Change Requirements

AB 2247 permits DSS to make a placement change without complying with the requirements of Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC) 16010.7 subdivisions (b) (placement preservation strategy) and (e) (placement change notice) in either of the following circumstances:

- It has been determined that remaining in the existing placement or providing prior written notice of the placement change poses an imminent risk to the health and safety of the foster child/youth or other children in the home/facility.
- If the CFT and the foster youth/child, if they are 10 years of age or older, or their representative if they are less than 10 years of age, unanimously agree to waive the placement change requirements.

The placement change requirements do not apply to non-minor dependents (NMDs) placed in Transitional Housing Placement (THP) programs or in Supervised Independent Living Placement (SILP). These provisions also do not apply to a planned placement change that is informed by the CFT and that is described in the foster child/youth's case plan or documented as an agreed upon plan

in the case file. Planned placement changes include a change in placement that is ordered by the court, including when a child is returned to the home of the parent.

Office of the State Foster Care Ombudsperson

The Office of the State Foster Care Ombudsperson (OFCO) receives, investigates, and attempts to resolve complaints made by or on behalf of foster youth. AB 2247 requires the OFCO to provide its investigation findings regarding placement change violations to the Child Welfare Director or designee for the purpose of quality improvement, technical assistance, and staff training. The Fresno County Child Welfare Deputy Director's designee for purposes of this requirement is the RFS Program Manager.

Best Practices

Preservation Strategy

The placement preservation strategy is a youth-centered process to support families with resources in order to preserve the stability, placement, and well-being of children/youth placed in out of home care. The ideal preservation strategy is solution focused, restorative and trauma-informed. It is also to focus on resources, training, and services needed for the resource family. Best practices when developing a preservation strategy may include:

- Convening a CFT within 3 business days
- Discussing/convening a Technical Assistance call with CDSS
- Safety planning
- Harm reduction strategies
- Action-oriented tasks when coordinating services and supports to the child and resource family in a timely manner
- Strategies align with the CANS assessment, case plan and plans developed by the CFT

Refer to the Placement Stability Strategies Desk Guide ([linked here](#)) for more comprehensive strategies and best practices.

Child and Family Team

CFTs explore options and establish a plan regarding the child's needs, which includes the youth, family, and community partners prior to making any placement decisions. Refer to PPG 03-12-06 ([linked here](#)) for additional information about the CFT meeting. Best practices for a CFT may include:

- Engaging the parent(s), child(ren), and relatives/mentors in the process
- Inclusion of mental health providers, foster family agency representatives, CASA, tribal representation (if applicable), RFS, and ISFC liaison.
- Age appropriate engagement and conversations with an opportunity to have their voice heard utilizing Safety Organized Practice Tools such as 3 Houses.
- Conflict resolution practices

In preparation for the CFT, the SW and SWS shall fully assess returning the youth to a parent, or guardian. If that is not a possibility the SW and SWS shall fully assess placing the youth with family. In assessing a return to parent or a relative/mentor placement, the SW and SWS shall gather information for the following questions:

1. Did you assess the parents for a return? If not able to return at this time, did you assess for a liberal or extended visit? Did you address or attempt to problem solve any barriers to a return or visit?
2. Did we ask the parent(s) and child(ren) of any potential family and/or mentors who may be available to accept placement? Did you address or attempt to problem solve any barriers to placement with a relative or mentor?
3. If family and/or mentors are not available for placement, could they be authorized for a visit until a purposeful placement is identified?
4. If there are no family members and/or mentors available, have we submitted a referral to Family Finding (a referral consists of a simple email, consisting of case name and number, to "DSS Family Finding")?

Transitions

Thoughtful, trauma-informed, and intentional transitions are best practices for any child or youth in out of home care. Best practices for transitions may include:

- Maintaining and preserving sibling relationships
- Maintaining important lifelong relationships for the child/youth by providing contact information and action plans to support connections
- Coordination with the education right's holder and preserving enrollment at school of origin
- Planning transitions to occur during school breaks and holidays
- Arranging meet and greets prior to placement to ensure that the prospective resource family is the best fit for the child/youth

Attachment A

Date:

Foster Youth Name:

Placement Date:

Notice of Placement Change

Dear <<Parent/Guardian/Caregiver/Foster Youth's Attorney/Foster Youth>>,

This letter is to provide you with a 14-day written notice that the child or youth named above will be moved to a new placement home on <<DATE>>.

A Child and Family Team Meeting was held on <<DATE>> to discuss a placement preservation strategy for the child/youth's current placement however the decision was that a placement move is necessary at this time.

It is the goal that a thoughtful, trauma-informed, and intentional transition take place for the child/youth. Please consider your role in the following:

- Maintaining sibling connections
- Maintaining important relationships and lifelong connections for the child/youth
- Maintaining continuity at school of origin
- Maintaining continuity with service providers such as mental health
- Ensuring the child/youth has all of their belongings
- Ensuring the child/youth is able to meet the prospective caregiver prior to placement

These and other transitional plans were discussed at the Child and Family Team Meeting and specific action items developed to ensure a smooth transition. Please take note of any of the above and your role in ensuring a successful transition happens for the child/youth. If you have any questions please feel free to contact the assigned Social Worker <<NAME>> at <<PHONE NUMBER>>.

Sincerely,

<<NAME>>

Address:

Email:

Phone: