

DSS Policy and Procedure Guide

Division 03: Child Welfare

Chapter 05: Placement

Item 038: Placement of Youth in Short Term Residential Therapeutic Programs

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

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References: [Family First Prevention Services Act Part IV](#); [AB 153](#); [W&IC 4096](#); [W&IC 16010.7](#); [W&IC 16501.1](#); [W&IC 361.31](#); [ACL 21-113](#); [ACL 21-114](#); [ACL 21-115](#); [ACL 21-116](#)

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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 Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) Part IV establishes requirements for placement in child-care institutions to be eligible for Title IV-E federal financial participation (FFP) with the aim of limiting reliance upon such settings and making certain any placement in congregate care is necessary and that the child/youth's needs cannot instead be met with family members or in a family home. These requirements apply to new entries into a Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Programs (STRTP) made on or after October 1, 2021.

Procedure

The Department of Social Services (DSS) has children/youth in their care and custody that require Specialty Mental Health Services (SMHS) and other specialty services within a short-term residential setting. FFPSA Part IV sets forth new requirements for Child Welfare and Juvenile Probation agencies when placing children/youth into STRTPs. The new requirements include the implementation of the Qualified Individual (QI) activities, Court oversight for all children/youth placed in STRTPs, additional documentation within the Child Welfare case plan, and the implementation of aftercare services following the child/youth's discharge from a STRTP.

Definitions

Emergency Placement – An emergency placement is a placement made prior to an assessment by the QI when the child/youth appears to qualify for placement into a STRTP and the placement is necessary to

address the immediate and acute needs of the child/youth and delaying the placement pending the assessment by the QI would be contrary to the well-being of the child/youth for reasons including, but not limited to, instances when the child would otherwise remain in a more restrictive setting or lack appropriate care and services.

Family-Based Aftercare Services – Family-based aftercare services as defined in Welfare and Institutions Code ([W&IC](#)) [4096.6](#) are an array of integrated services and supports that are provided to or on behalf of a child/youth or non-minor dependent (NMD) for at least six months post-discharge from a STRTP, or from an out-of-state residential facility, are family-based and implemented as part of an individualized, child-specific transition plan in a manner that supports the child’s permanency plan and incorporates the recommendations of the QI, and meet specific standards.

Integrated Practice-Child and Adolescent Needs and Services (IP-CANS) – The IP-CANS is an evidence-based, validated, functional assessment tool approved for use as a key component of the QI assessment pursuant to [W&IC Section 4096\(g\)\(3\)\(B\)](#).

QI – Under W&IC 16501(1), a trained professional or licensed clinician responsible for conducting the assessment described in [W&IC 4096](#) and determining the most effective and appropriate placement for a child/youth. In the case of an Indian child, as defined in W&IC Section 224.1, a person may be designated by the child’s tribe as the QI.

QI Referral – Pursuant to [W&IC Section 4096\(h\)\(1\)\(B\)](#), is a State approved QI referral form to be completed by the placing agency SW and submitted to the QI along with all required supporting documentation. This form must be used to obtain an assessment by the QI as required under [W&IC 16010.7](#), whenever placement of a child/youth or NMD into a STRTP is being considered.

SMHS – Mental health services provided to Medi-Cal beneficiaries by county mental health plans (MHPs) defined by the Rehabilitative Mental Health Services section of the California’s Medicaid State Plan.

Eligible Youth

In order for a child/youth to be placed in a STRTP they must meet one of the following criteria:

- Medical necessity criteria for Medi-Cal SMHS
- Assessed as Seriously Emotionally Disturbed (SED)
- Requires emergency placement
- Assessed as needing the level of service provided by the STRTP
- STRTP has specialized programs to serve Commercially Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC), juvenile sex offenders, and/or youth affiliated with a gang

A child/youth placed into a STRTP setting that does not meet the above criteria will be ineligible for Title IV-E funding after two weeks in a non-eligible facility. In addition, if placement is located for a child/youth in a facility that is not accredited, the approval of the Child Welfare Deputy Director (DD) or designee must be sought prior to placement. Placement into a non-accredited facility is temporary and must be reassessed every two weeks.

Timeline for Assessment

Within 72 hours of emergency placement, a licensed mental health professional must make a determination that the child/youth requires the level of services and supervision provided by the STRTP.

Within 30 days of emergency placement, the Interagency Resource Placement Committee (IRPC) shall make a determination, with recommendations from the Child and Family Team (CFT), as to whether the STRTP is appropriate.

When a youth is placed in a STRTP as a planned placement the IRPC will make a determination, with recommendations from the CFT, whether the STRTP is appropriate prior to placement.

QI Assessment

The QI assessment must be **completed** within 30 days of placement. The QI assessment includes the completion of a standardized assessment tool, IP-CANS, which is vetted with the CFT. In addition, the QI shall:

- Determine whether the needs of the child/youth can be met with family members or through placement in a resource family home or, if not, which allowable placement setting would provide the most effective and appropriate level of care for the child in the least restrictive environment and be consistent with the short and long-term goals for the child/youth, as specified in the case plan and;
- Develop a list of child-specific short and long-term mental and behavioral health goals and;
- Work in conjunction with the CFT conducting and making the required 30-day assessment.

Upon receipt of the appropriate Release of Information (ROI) forms or court order indicating there is a free exchange of information among DSS and treating agencies, the QI has **30** business days to complete the assessment.

If a child/youth was placed in a STRTP as an emergency placement and the QI assessment determines that the placement is not appropriate, DSS has 30 days from the date of the QI determination to locate an alternative family-based placement for the child/youth.

Court Oversight

The Court must schedule a hearing within **45 to 60 days** from the start of the child/youth's placement in a STRTP. In order for the Court to consider the placement in a timely manner, the DSS QI liaison will submit the court report with the recommendation and supporting documentation to the Court 10 court days prior to the hearing.

Within 60 days of placement in a STRTP the Juvenile Court must:

- Consider the assessment by the QI and;

- Determine whether the needs of the child/youth can be met through placement in a family home or, if not, whether placement of the child/youth in a STRTP provides the most effective and appropriate level of care in the least restrictive environment and;
- Approve or disapprove the placement

Approval without a Hearing

In order for the Court to approve the placement without a hearing the following requirements must be met [Rules of Court 5.618(f)]:

- The report must be filed and served at least 10 court days before the scheduled hearing and;
- The placing agency has verified through the JV-237 proof of service that they served the report 10 court days before the hearing on all parties and;
- No party has objected to the placement through the JV-236 within five court days of receiving the report and;
- The court intends to approve the placement based on the information before it

The Court must continue to review the need for placement every six months.

DSS QI Liaison Responsibilities

Upon a youth's placement into an accredited STRTP, Resource Family Support (RFS) will send an email to the [CWS SB163](#) mailbox notifying them that the youth has been placed. The DSS QI liaison will complete the [Referral for Qualified Individual Assessment](#) and submit it to [the DBH Qualified Individual Referral inbox](#) along with all required supporting documentation within two business days (refer to [QI Contact List](#)). All ROI forms must be signed by the appropriate parties for the QI to be able to gather information. **A court order that allows free exchange of information is sufficient in the event an ROI is not available.** The DSS QI liaison will coordinate communication and information sharing between the case carrying SW, **QI Clinician**, the CFT, and the Court.

**Please note that if the child/youth is placed into a non-accredited facility and placement is subsequently located in an accredited facility the QI assessment is to be initiated immediately while the placement transition plan is being developed for the child/youth.

The DSS QI liaison will review Odyssey to obtain the STRTP hearing date and provide it to the assigned Office Assistant (OA).

The DSS QI liaison will **complete the STRTP Case Plan**, prepare the Court report and file it with court and serve it on all parties at least 10 court days before the scheduled hearing. The court report must contain the following information, per W&IC 361.22(c) and 727.12(c):

- The QI assessment which includes a copy of the assessment, determination, and documentation

- Rule 5.618(d)(3): shall not contain information that is privileged or confidential pursuant to existing state law or federal law or regulation without the appropriate waiver or consent.
- The case plan documentation required pursuant to [W&IC 16501.1\(d\)\(2\)\(C\)](#)
- The tribe was conferred on placement preference under [W&IC 361.31](#) in the case of an Indian child
- Statement whether any party objects to the placement

The DSS QI liaison will again complete the Proof of Service – STRTP ([JV-237](#)) verifying that they served the report 10 court days prior to the hearing on all parties.

If the QI made the recommendation that the STRTP is not an appropriate placement for the child/youth, the court report will reflect that the department is not in agreement with the placement and provide a specific date as to when the child/youth will be removed from the STRTP.

The DSS QI liaison will create a Foster Child’s Data Record and AFDC-FC Certification (SOC 158A) noting in the “Rationale Description” section when any of the following circumstances occur:

- Child/youth has been placed in a non-accredited STRTP
- Assessment by the QI has not been completed or has not been completed within 30 days of placement
- Assessment by the QI has been completed timely and STRTP placement is not recommended
- Court decision has been delayed beyond 60 days
- The Court denies the STRTP placement

The DSS QI liaison will email the updated SOC 158A to the [ETA Foster Care Placement](#) mailbox with “FFPSA” in the subject line of the email.

Please note that when entering updated information into the “Rationale Description” section of the SOC 158A do not delete any information currently in that section. **In addition, the rationale is to indicate the QI approved/not approved date as well as the Court approved/not approved date.

OA Responsibilities

Within five calendar days the assigned OA will:

- **Submit the Placing Agency’s Request for Review of Placement in a STRTP ([JV-235](#)) to Court along with the Proof of Service – STRTP ([JV-237](#)) and;**
- **Serve the [JV-235](#) on all parties, including CASA, when applicable, and;**
- **Serve a blank copy of the Input on Placement in a STRTP ([JV-236](#))**
- **Create the STRTP Review Hearing in CWS/CMS.**

IRPC Process

Upon completion of the QI referral, the DSS QI liaison will submit the referral to the [CWS SB163](#) inbox to be processed and added to the IRPC agenda for presentation by the case managing Social Worker (SW). The case managing SW will identify the date to present to the IRPC panel prior to a planned STRTP placement or within 30 days of an emergency placement.

Case Managing SW Responsibilities

The case managing SW is responsible to convene a CFT (Refer to [PPG 03-12-006](#)) on behalf of the child/youth who is being considered for placement in a STRTP or emergency placement has already occurred. The SW shall notify CFT members within 24 business hours of an emergency placement and schedule a CFT meeting within 72 business hours. The SW shall present to IRPC prior to a planned STRTP placement or within 30 days from an emergency STRTP placement. The SW shall complete the [STRTP Placement Case Plan Attachment](#) form at initial placement and any subsequent case plan update that coincides with status review hearings. If the child/youth remains in a STRTP for six months, the SW must update the child/youth's case plan to reflect the continued need. In addition, any child/youth that remains in a STRTP for more than six months requires the approval of the Child Welfare DD or designee.

If a child/youth is temporarily placed into a non-accredited facility and an accredited facility is subsequently located the child/youth may remain in the placement for up to two weeks while a placement transition plan is being developed.

Ongoing Status Review Report Requirements

- An ongoing assessment of the strengths and need of the child/youth that continues to support the determination that the needs of the child/youth cannot be met by family members or in another family-based setting, placement in a STRTP continues to provide the most effective and appropriate care setting in the least restrictive environment, and placement is consistent with the short and long-term mental and behavioral health goals and permanency plan for the child/youth.
- Documentation of the child's specific treatment or service needs that will be met in the placement and the length of time the child is expected to need the treatment or services.
- Documentation of the intensive and ongoing efforts made by the SW, consistent with the child's permanency plan, to prepare the child/youth to return home or to be placed with a fit and willing relative, a legal guardian, an adoptive parent, in a resource family home or a tribally approved home, or in another appropriate family-based setting.

RFS Responsibilities

Upon receiving a Foster Placement Request (6252) for a child/youth that **appears to be** eligible for a STRTP placement, the **RFS SW will request Program Manager (PM) approval. The RFS SW will also email CWMH Referrals and request a clinical determination and an emergency STRTP letter of support.**

After receiving PM approval, the RFS SW will first attempt to secure a placement with an accredited STRTP and document those efforts. If a placement is located with a non-accredited placement facility the RFS SW will email the information regarding the placement to the case carrying SW, their Social Work Supervisor (SWS), their PM, RFS SWS, and the placement PM indicating in the body of the email that Child Welfare DD, or designee, approval is required. If a child/youth is placed in a non-accredited facility, the RFS SW will generate the Placement Advisement for Non-Accredited STRTP ([CWS 0105](#)), along with all other required placement paperwork, which indicates that the placement is temporary for a period of two weeks. In addition, the RFS SW will keep the 6252 open as a crisis and continue to search for an accredited placement.

Within one (1) business day of an STRTP placement, the RFS SW shall notify the QI Liaison of the placement.

Upon receipt of a placement request that indicates a TDM or CFT determined that a youth requires an STRTP placement, the RFS SW shall notify the QI Liaison of the determination within one (1) business day.

Case Plan Documentation Requirements

Within 30 days of placement in a STRTP, the case plan shall document the following and be submitted to the court:

- Good faith effort by the SW to identify and include all required individuals in the CFT.
- Contact information for CFT members and other relatives/mentors who are not part of the CFT.
- Evidence that the CFT meeting(s), including meetings to determine STRTP placement, are held at a time and place convenient for the family.
- If reunification is the case plan goal, evidence that the parent provided input on CFT members.
- Evidence that the QI's determination was conducted in conjunction with the CFT.
- The placement preferences of the child/youth or NMD and the CFT relative to the STRTP determination and, if the placement preference are not the placement setting recommended by the QI, the reasons why the preferences of the CFT or the child/youth or NMD were not recommended.

Ancillary Services and Supports

Due to the needs of specific youth, there may be occasions that an STRTP requests reimbursement for additional services and supports. These services and supports include but are not limited to, procurement of additional placements, one-on-one supports, and enhanced staffing levels to increase supervision. Approval for ancillary services and supports must go through the chain of command and require Deputy Director approval. In addition, at minimum monthly CFT's meetings are to be held in order to discuss the progress of the youth and to determine if the ancillary services and supports are still needed.

The terms of the placement shall be listed in the [Letter of Intent](#). In addition the STRTP is to be provided the [SOC 154C Checklist](#) and the [SOC 154C Quarterly Checklist](#). The assigned case manager is to discuss the two SOC154 Checklists with the STRTP and advise the STRTP that completion of the

SOC154's is required in order to demonstrate that services and supports are being provided as agreed upon.