

RESOURCE PARENT GUIDE

Information and Benefits for the Resource Parent



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INTRODUCTION

The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) in partnership with the California Alliance of Caregivers (CAC) has developed this Resource Parent Guide. For questions not seen here please contact the CDSS Foster Caregiver Policy and Support Unit at caregiversforyouth@dss.ca.gov.

Sharing Information with the Court



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Resource Parents Share Information with the Court

As a Resource Parent, when you share information with the court, it enables all team members to better meet the needs of children and youth living in your home. Caregivers may attend review hearings and submit any evidence deemed relevant to the court in writing ([WIC §§ 293\(f\); 16010.4\(e\)](#)). Caregivers may, but are not required to, use the [JV-290 Caregiver Information Form](#) to submit information. This form helps you organize information about the child or youth in your care, including potential placement disruptions, visitation issues, and unmet needs.

There are a couple of ways you can submit the JV-290 form to the court. You can give it to the child or youth's social worker or attorney, or you can file it directly with the court prior to the hearing.

If you choose to file it with the court, you will need to contact your local court and follow their process for getting documents submitted. For more about submitting the JV-290 form, please see [ACIN I-87-21](#).



CHILD AND FAMILY TEAM PARTICIPATION

The Child and Family Team meeting (CFT) explores options and establishes a plan to meet the needs of the child or youth in your care, as described in [ACL 16-84](#).

Resource Parents Participate on the Child and Family Team

The Child and Family Team (CFT) meeting explores options and establishes a plan to meet the needs of the child or youth in your care, as described in [ACL 16-84](#). To best support the child or youth, relationship building between you and the biological parent is encouraged. Transparency and

communication are important amongst the child and family team members. If the CFT is about the biological parent, however, you may be asked to join the CFT for only a portion of the meeting, unless the biological parent gives written, informed consent agreeing to share the information with you. This way, sensitive or confidential discussions can be held privately and consistent with the wishes of the biological parent. The social worker or probation officer will provide you with the information that you need.

The law requires that the following individuals must be invited to participate in the CFT meeting:

- The child or youth,
- The child or youth's family, including biological parents,
- Other people important to the family or to the child or youth.

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When appropriate, the CFT must also include those who provide formal supports to the child or youth and family, including, but not limited to:

- The Resource Parent, the placing agency caseworker,
- Representative from the Foster Family Agency (FFA),
- County mental health representative (required to be a licensed mental health professional if placement into a short-term residential therapeutic program or FFA that provides treatment services has occurred or is being considered),
- Representative from the regional center if the child or youth is eligible for regional center services,

- The child or youth's Court-Appointed Special Advocate, if one has been appointed, unless the child or youth objects,
- Representative of the child or youth's tribe or Indian custodian, as applicable.

The CFT may also include, as appropriate:

- Other formal support persons who provide services to the child or youth and family (such as substance use disorder treatment professionals and educational professionals),
- Extended family and informal support persons identified by the child or youth and family (e.g., friends, coaches, faith-based connections, tribe members).

For a list of CFT process questions and answers, please see [ACL 18-23](#).



Placement Change

A 14-Day Written Notice is Required Prior to a Placement Change

One of the goals of the child welfare system is to prevent children or youth in foster care placement from experiencing unnecessary or abrupt foster care placement changes that negatively impact their well-being or sense of security. The laws related to placement preservation can be found at [WIC § 16010.7](#).

In short, these laws require that prior to making a placement change, the social worker or probation officer will develop, together with you and the child or youth's CFT, a placement preservation strategy. It is your responsibility as the caregiver to aid in the implementation of this new placement preservation strategy and provide support prior to giving notice. If, after implementation, a placement change is necessary, you may give notice to the social worker or probation officer and they will put in a 14-day notice at that time.

The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) issued [ACL 19-26](#) detailing the requirements of [AB-2247](#). Some of those changes are highlighted below, but please see the ACL for more detailed information.

A social worker, probation officer, or placing agency must provide a written notice of removal a minimum of 14 calendar days in advance of a placement change to the following people:

- Dependent foster youth if they are age 10 years old or older;
- Dependent foster youth's representative if they are under 10 years old;
- Dependent foster youth's current caregiver;
- Dependent foster youth's prospective caregiver; and
- Dependent foster youth's social worker or probation officer.

Unplanned placement changes are prohibited between the hours of 9p.m. and 7a.m. unless unanimous agreement is made with the parties noted above.

Please note: Circumstances that fall outside of the placement preservation and placement change requirements may necessitate an immediate placement change. They are listed below:

- It is determined that there is an imminent risk to the health or safety of the child or other children in the home.
- The youth who is 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.
- There is already a planned placement change that is informed by the CFT and is noted in the youth's case plan or documented as an agreed upon plan, including when a child is returned to the home of a parent.



PARENT ACCESS TO INFORMATION

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Resource Parents are Provided Access to Information

As a Resource Parent, you will be provided basic information about the children or youth in your care. This information is needed in order for you to obtain social and health services for children, enroll children in school and extracurricular activities, and update social workers and court personnel about important developments affecting the children or youth in your care [WIC § 16010.4](#), [ACIN I-05-14](#).

You should have the following:

- Placement Agreement
- The case plan outlining the child or youth's needs and services, including information on family and sibling visitation
- Contact information for the child or youth's social worker, the social worker's supervisor, attorney, and court-appointed special advocate, if any
- Information about the child or youth's juvenile court case including how to contact the court and the case number
- Key identifying information such as a copy of the birth certificate, passport, or other identifying documentation of age
- Medi-Cal information or health insurance plan number, State Department of Social Services identification number, and child's social security number, if available
- Prescribed medications or treatments in effect at the time of placement and instructions for use (must be provided within 48 hours of placement)
- A copy of the child or youth's health and education summary, including mental health information (must be provided as soon as possible but no later than 30 days after initial placement and within 48 hours of any subsequent placements)
- Information of any known or suspected dangerous behavior of the child or youth





Foster Children or Youth Living with Resource Parents may Access Benefits as Listed Below

All Approved resource families receive a monthly benefit known as the basic rate to provide for the care and supervision of the children or youth placed in their home. The child or youth in your care may be eligible for additional benefits in your county to meet their care and supervision needs. Consult your county, for help in determining eligibility.

- **Level of Care (LOC):** The LOC Protocol uses a strength-based rate setting methodology to identify the individual care and supervision expectations that are paired to the daily needs of a child or youth based on the 5 Core Domains (behavioral/emotional, health, education, physical and permanency/family services). LOC assessments may result in a higher rate in addition to the basic rate. [ACL 21-17](#).
- **Intensive Services Foster Care:** This payment is for foster children or youth placed in resource family homes who have undergone additional training and are better suited to meet a child's exceptional needs.

- **Emergency Caregiver Funding:** Emergency Caregiver (EC) Funding is available for emergency or compelling reason placements prior to Resource Family Approval (RFA) or Tribally Approved Home (TAH) status. If certain criteria are met as described in [ACL 19-84](#), the funding (equivalent to the basic funding rate) may be continued for up to 365 days. [ACL 20-93](#).
- **Supplements:** A teen who is parenting or a child with specialized needs may be able to receive additional support to supplement the basic rate.
- **Specialized Care Increments (SCI):** Some counties operate an SCI program to provide additional financial support to RFA and TAH homes when there are exceptional behavioral, emotional, or physical needs of children or youth in their care. Eligibility rules vary. Consult the county where you are living for more information or visit the DSS web page for [Specialized Care Increments per county](#). For more information about specific SCI plans, please contact the Foster Care Rates Bureau, at SCI@dss.ca.gov.
- **Education Transportation unding:** Reimbursement is available for transporting a child or youth to the school in which the child or youth was enrolled at the time of placement if the school is more than 3 miles from the home, the travel is considered reasonable, and remaining in the school of origin is in the child or youth's best interest as described in [ACL 11-51](#). Additional detail and clarification is provided to counties and providers in [ACIN I-86-20](#). The goal of the funding is to support caregivers in meeting the educational needs of the children or youth in their care.
- **Infant Supplement:** The infant supplement helps cover the additional cost of providing food, clothing, shelter, and supervision to the infant of a foster youth placed in your home. (An infant born to a young person in foster care is not automatically in foster care.) [ACL 17-93](#).
- **Dual Agency Rate:** Eligible children or youth in foster care who are also clients of a Regional Center may be eligible for a monthly payment referred to as the dual agency rate. Regional Centers serve children and youth with a developmental disability, as that term is defined under state law, and children aged 0 – 3 who qualify for early intervention services prior to an official diagnosis.
- **Clothing Allowance:** Some counties offer a clothing allowance on top of the basic rate to help with the purchase of new clothes, including school or other uniforms, based on the needs of children or youth in your care.

REASONABLE PRUDENT PARENT STANDARD

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Resource Parents and the Reasonable Prudent Parent Standard

The Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard (RPPS) is characterized as, “the careful and sensible parental decisions that maintain the foster child’s health, safety, and best interests while at the same time encouraging the emotional and developmental growth of the child, that a caregiver shall use when determining whether to allow a child in foster care under the responsibility of the state to participate in extracurricular, enrichment, cultural, and social activities.” ([WIC § 362.05](#).)

As stated in [ACIN I-17-13](#), this standard supports your empowerment as a caregiver to exercise common sense and good judgment to assess circumstances and events in which a child may participate. The standard also enables participation by a foster child or youth in age-appropriate extracurricular, enrichment, and social activities in order to improve the normalcy of life during their time in care.

In applying the standard, you should gather adequate information about the activity, consider whether the activity is appropriate for the child or youth, and consider any foreseeable risks. When applying the RPPS, if you have any questions or concerns, consult with the child’s social worker or probation officer.

MOVING AGENCIES

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Resource Parents May Move Their RFA to Another Agency

Based on the needs of your family and the children or youth in your care, you may decide to move your RFA between agencies and counties. This process of moving is called portability. Please refer to [ACL 19-97](#) for more information on portability.



Rights

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Resource Parents are Informed About the Rights of Foster Children and Youth

All foster children and youth are given a copy of their rights at the time they come into foster care, at placement changes, and at least once every six months or during a regular visit with their social worker or probation officer. If you do not have a

copy of the handbook, digital versions of the handbook and coloring book are available in English and Spanish through the Ombudsperson website with an option to order a printed publication. Please see [Foster Youth Rights | FYH \(ca.gov\)](#).

Key rights are the right to contact siblings, case managers, CASAs, family members and the right to participate in age-appropriate extracurricular activities. Please see [WIC § 16001.9](#) for a more inclusive list including the following:

- Health
- Placement/Visitation
- Sexual Orientation/Gender Identity and Expression (SOGIE) Issues
- Personal Rights

If you learn of a potential foster child or youth violation, you can contact the office of the [Foster Care Ombudsperson](#) and speak with someone or file a complaint online.

ACCESSING EDUCATIONAL INFORMATION

What Resource Parents Need to Know About Accessing Educational Information and the Rights of Foster Children and Youth in School

You have the right to access certain education information for children and youth placed in your care. As a Resource Parent, you should feel empowered to provide educational support (such as seeking information on school progress reports, assignments, testing, requesting school meetings or CFTs, speaking with teachers and staff about supports and services, etc.) to the children and youth in your care.

Educational rights holders have full access to a student's records and are permitted to make all education decisions for a child or youth. Resource Parents are sometimes assigned education rights by the courts, but other times, a child or youth's biological parent may retain education rights even after foster care placement. Although you may not be the educational rights holder for the child or youth in your home, you still play a significant role in supporting their education. Being regularly informed of your foster child or youth's progress in school is important. This information enables you to better support their day-to-day educational needs and increase their educational success. The [SB 233](#) (2017) was written to improve coordination with the child or youth's educational rights holder, local education agency, social worker, and attorney to empower Resource Parents to be able to access certain education records to support the children and youth in their care.

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ACCESSING EDUCATIONAL RECORDS

Current law provides:

- A school district is required to permit access to student records by a foster family agency with jurisdiction over a currently enrolled or former student, a short-term residential treatment program staff responsible for the education or case management of a student, and a caregiver who has direct responsibility for the care of the student, including a certified or licensed foster parent, an approved relative or non-related extended family member, or a resource family. You have the right and obligation to access and maintain educational information about the child or youth in your care, regardless of whether you have been appointed as the child or youth's educational rights holder ([Education Code 49069.3\(a\)](#)).
- Access to student records can include the current or most recent records of grades, transcripts, attendance, discipline, online communication, special education assessments, and any individualized education program or 504 plan.
- During the RFA process, you will be provided with training about the expectations for your role in supporting a foster child or youth with their education. Resource Parents are obligated to access and maintain educational information about the child or youth, and relay information they gather to the educational rights holder, when that is someone other than the caregiver. Resource Parents should use the information gathered to update the Health and Education Passport, and to support the care of the child or youth ([Education Code 49069.3\(c\)](#)).
- You have the right to receive assistance accessing educational records from the placement agency. Placement agencies should partner with you to ensure you can obtain your child or youth's educational information and/or Health and Education Passport and should ensure you receive appropriate documentation that confirms your status as the approved caregiver as well as your right to access information. Placement agencies are also responsible for providing you with information about your rights and responsibilities with regard to accessing educational information ([WIC § 16010\(e\)](#)).
- If you have any education questions or follow up questions from the education training that you received during the RFA process ([WIC § 16519.5](#)), you can contact your child or youth's social worker, probation officer, the placement agency, or you may contact: fosteryouthhelp@dss.ca.gov.

For additional information and resources specific to foster youth education, please visit [Foster Youth Education Resource Hub](#).

Other helpful resources include:

- [Foster Youth Education Rights](#) • [California Foster Youth Education Law Fact Sheets](#) • [Navigating Special Education During COVID-19: California Tips for Families and Systems Advocates](#) (Video Resource)

CONCERNS

There are many decisions that occur during the process of becoming a caregiver. Decisions that have appeal processes are listed here:

Processes to Address Concerns

- An Administrative Hearing, also known as a state hearing, can appeal adverse decisions regarding your Resource Family Approval (RFA)
- If the county has revoked your RFA, or denied an application, you have the right to appeal that adverse action by requesting an administrative hearing with the CDSS; [WIC § 16519.5](#), [RFA Written Directives](#). A Resource Parent, applicant, or excluded individual may file an appeal, or request a state hearing, within 25 days of service of a notice of action (NOA), or within 30 days if the NOA is mailed; [ACL 16-110](#).
- For more information about state hearing procedures, see sections 12-09 through 12-21 of the [RFA Written Directives](#).
- A grievance review addresses issues with placement, care, or removal of a child or youth
 - There is no right to a state hearing concerning decisions to remove or place a foster child or youth as provided in [MPP 31-020.21-25](#).
- You can request a grievance review with the Department of Social Services if you are dissatisfied with actions of the County related to the placement, care, or removal of a child or youth (the links to the online and printed hearing request forms are listed below).
- A state hearing addresses issues with foster care related benefits
 - If you have applied for, have received, or are currently receiving benefits and you receive a Notice of Action from a County or a letter denying or reducing your benefits, or you turned in an application or other information and the county did not act on it, you can ask for a State Hearing (note deadlines given in instructions). Requests for a hearing can be submitted by mail or made online using:
 1. [Request a Hearing Form to print](#) and mail or
 2. [Request a Form Online](#) to submit electronically

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