



CDSS

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DIRECTOR

STATE OF CALIFORNIA—HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

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ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER
GOVERNOR

November 24, 2009

ALL COUNTY INFORMATION NOTICE NO. I-83-09

REASON FOR THIS TRANSMITTAL

- State Law Change
- Federal Law or Regulation Change
- Court Order
- Clarification Requested by One or More Counties
- Initiated by CDSS

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS
ALL COUNTY WELFARE FISCAL OFFICERS
ALL CHIEF PROBATION OFFICERS

SUBJECT: CAREGIVER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION PILOT

The purpose of this All County Information Notice (ACIN) is to provide information regarding the opportunity to participate as a pilot site for a Caregiver Recruitment and Retention Pilot project and information on an upcoming meeting for interested counties. The pilot is a collaborative effort between the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), Youth Law Center (YLC), and Child Welfare Directors Association (CWDA).

Foster Care Recruitment and Retention Project

In early 2009, CDSS, YLC, and CWDA joined in a collaborative effort to create the Foster Care Recruitment and Retention Project (R&R Project). The main goal of the project is to develop a statewide approach to recruiting and retaining high quality caregivers who provide excellent care to children in California's child welfare system.

It is recognized that attracting and retaining quality caregivers is critical to the success of all child welfare improvement efforts. The project presents a unique opportunity to strengthen efforts on a statewide basis in the recruitment and retention of quality caregivers. Advisors to the project include county and state staff, caregivers, biological parents, community partners, and private agencies.

Pilot Sites

The overall purpose of the R&R Project is to develop best practices related to recruitment and retention through testing various strategies in a small number of selected counties. As a pilot site, the county will:

- a. Engage in a planning process to conduct an assessment of current practice related to retention and recruitment.

- b. Receive technical assistance from CDSS and YLC. The type and level of technical assistance provided will be dependent on the needs of the counties, but may be on topics such as use of data, human resources principles in support and retention, and/or assessing quality and marketing.
- c. Receive access to resources to improve retention and support for foster parents.
- d. Test new recruitment material developed by public relations professionals designed to target those groups most likely to be successful foster parents.

Criteria for interested counties will be discussed at the meeting, but are generally:

1. Commit to begin the planning process upon selection.
2. Dedicate sufficient time and staff to ensure the process is complete by the end of the specified timeline.
3. Commit to process and to implement changes recommended by the team at all levels in the department.
4. Include a broad selection of representatives and stakeholders in planning group. For example, participants might include representation of all casework functions, support staff, foster families, biological families, youth, court, private agencies and other contractors, foster parent trainers and supporters, mental health, substance abuse, etc.
5. Commit at least four full days to the process, plus planning time between meetings.
6. Have sufficient capacity to input, maintain, review and report data.

There will be an informational meeting to provide interested counties with an overview of the pilot process including a presentation from Florida agency staff and foster parents who have been partnering with YLC on a similar effort. The meeting will also include a question and answer session. The logistics and other details regarding the meeting are provided below:

Date: Thursday, December 10, 2009
Time: 10:30 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. *Lunch will be provided
Location: The Stuart Foundation
500 Washington Street, 8th Floor,
San Francisco
Audience: County Directors and R&R County Staff

Counties are encouraged to bring a caregiver to the meeting as a vital part of the county's recruitment and retention team. A "Save the Date" flyer was distributed via e-mail through CWDA during the week of November 2, 2009, regarding this event (see attachment). Counties who are interested in participating in the meeting are requested to follow the directions for registration provided in the attached flyer. The meeting location has limited space; therefore, counties are encouraged to send no more than three attendees. Participating counties will be sent additional information such as available parking and video conferencing instructions prior to the meeting date. The final date for registration is December 2, 2009.

BACKGROUND

The Program Improvement Plan (PIP) and the R&R Project

As you are aware, in 2002, the Federal Administration of Children and Families conducted a Child and Family Services Review of California's child welfare system. The review targeted various areas including recruitment and retention of foster and adoptive caregivers. It was noted in the final report that California lacked a sufficient number of caregivers as well as adequate data to identify the areas needing the most recruitment efforts, such as children with special needs or older youth. As a result, CDSS was required to develop specific action steps identified in California's PIP to address the deficiencies in this area.

The CDSS has been afforded the opportunity to utilize the R&R Project to satisfy some of the action steps in the PIP relating to recruitment and retention. One of the action steps involves conducting a statewide campaign to improve recruitment and retention efforts. It is the intent of CDSS to utilize the R&R Project to develop a statewide campaign, through identifying best practices that counties will be encouraged to integrate into their recruitment and retention plan.

The CDSS is excited about the multiple efforts underway to improve the recruitment and retention of caregivers. Loving and skilled foster families provide children the opportunity to thrive and are the foundation of improved outcomes for children and families. The CDSS is looking forward to partnering with selected county pilot sites on this important endeavor.

If you have any questions regarding this ACIN, the R&R Project, or the informational meeting, please contact Jill Sevaaetasi, Manager, Recruitment Network Development Unit, Foster Care Support Services Bureau at (916) 651-9774, or Jennifer Rodriguez, Attorney, Youth Law Center at (415) 543-3379 ext. 3922.

Sincerely,

Original Document Signed By:

KAREN B. GUNDERSON, Chief,
Child and Youth Permanency Branch
Children and Family Services Division

Attachment

c: County Welfare Directors Association
California Probation Officers of California

Save the Date

What: Information meeting for counties interested in serving as pilot sites for the Caregiver Recruitment and Retention Pilot.

When: **Thursday, December 10, 2009 from 10:30-2:00 pm- LUNCH will be provided**

Where: Stuart Foundation, 500 Washington St, 8th Floor, San Francisco

Who: Child Welfare Director/Deputy Director and a Foster Parent (if possible)

Attracting and retaining foster parents who provide excellent care is critical to the success of child welfare improvement efforts. CDSS in partnership with the Youth Law Center and the County Welfare Directors Association has developed an approach to foster parent recruitment based on quality improvement and better marketing techniques. Several Counties will be selected to pilot this approach and receive additional technical assistance and support.

Participants will be able to join the meeting via web conference/conference call if unable to attend in person. We will provide instructions for participating by web conferencing when participants RSVP.

Please RSVP by December 2nd to Mamie Yee at 415-543-3379 ext. 3914 or myee@ylc.org