

RESOURCE FAMILY APPROVAL (RFA)

COMPREHENSIVE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

FOR DEL NORTE COUNTY

**RESOURCE FAMILY APPROVAL (RFA) COMPREHENSIVE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

**County of Del Norte 2015/16**

**Program Statement and Vision**

Purpose

The purpose of the Resource Family Approval Program is to implement a unified, family-friendly, and child-centered resource family approval process to replace the existing multiple processes for licensing foster family homes and approving relatives and non-relative extended family members as foster care providers, and approving families for legal guardianship or adoption.

A Resource Family shall be considered eligible to provide foster care for related and unrelated children in out-of-home placement, shall be considered and approved for adoption or guardianship, and shall not have to undergo any additional approval or licensure.

Vision

Del Norte County is committed to implementing a unified, family friendly and child-centered Resource Family Approval (RFA) process that eliminates duplication, unifies approval standards, and expands training and ongoing support for all RFA homes.

The RFA process will be sensitive to the individual needs of the children and families we serve while supporting a high quality level of permanency and care. There will be supports in place and resources available for caregivers who are valued partners in the care of the children entrusted to them.

**Program Goals, Objectives, and Outcomes**

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| **GOAL #1:** | Implement RFA procedures by January 1, 2017 |
| **Objectives** | |
| 1. | Ensure tool, forms, policies and procedures are in place. |
| 2. | Train staff in RFA policies and procedures |
| **Proposed Outcome(s)** | |
| To develop child centered families that will ensure safety, permanency, and well-being of children in RFA families. | |
| **GOAL #2:** | Develop a unified process and policies to approve relatives, non-related extended family members, licensed and adoptive families providing care for children and youth in out of home placement.  Develop a unified process and policies to approve relatives, non-related extended family members, licensed and adoptive families providing care for children and youth in out of home placement.  Develop a unified process and policies to approve relatives, non-related extended family members, licensed and adoptive families providing care for children and youth in out of home placement. |
| **Objectives** | |
| 1. | Create a streamlined process for all eligible applicants to follow. |
| **Proposed Outcome(s)** | |
| Improved outcome measures directly related to SIP goals of permanency in 12 months of children entering care and placement stability. | |
| **GOAL #3:**  CDSS Required Document | Provide increased assessment, training and support for all RFA families. |
| **Objectives** | |
| 1. | Focus on quality training and support to ensure child-centered caregiving and trauma-informed caregiving for all resource families |
| 2. | Better prepare resource families to facilitate successful reunification and provide permanency for children |
| **Proposed Outcome(s)** | |
| * Fewer placement moves due to RFA families having adequate training and support. * Improve placement stability | |

**Program Organizational Structure**

Please describe the infrastructure that will manage the RFA program, including program staff roles and responsibilities and any contracted agencies and/or individuals. How will your agency be organized to do RFA, will there only be RFA workers? How will you transition your Licensing, Adoption and Relative approval functions?

**Title: Child Welfare Program Manager**

Responsibilities:

* Participate in all decision-making surrounding the implementation of RFA. This includes attending implementation committee meetings, facilitating stakeholder meetings, interfacing with CDSS representatives, working with partner agencies, and approving revised policies and procedures.
* Approve/deny CORI exemptions.
* Support RFA staff.
* Monitor outcomes for placement stability, length of time in foster care, and permanency within 12 months.

**Title: Social Worker Supervisor, Adult and Family Services**

Responsibilities:

* Attend all RFA implementation, stakeholder, and subcommittee meetings, providing support as appropriate.
* Participate in all decision-making meetings.
* Create and/or revise policy and procedures as needed.
* Assist program manager in preparing progress reports as needed.
* Ensure RFA social worker is able to attend scheduled RFA trainings.
* Ensure RFA applications are processed timely.
* Provide support for creating/maintaining/updating training materials.
* Provide tools and materials to support to line staff.
* Work with Information Technology staff to develop a tracking and reporting mechanism for RFA approvals and renewals.
* Review complaints filed against RFA families and assign to RFA Social Workers.
* Approve complete applications for RFA Certificate.
* Provide individual supervision to RFA social worker
* Be responsible for coordinating Fair Hearings and the denial process.
* Be responsible for reviewing exemptions for approval/denial from substantiated child welfare history and certain felony convictions.

**Title: Resource Family Approval Social Worker**

Responsibilities

* Attend all RFA implementation, stakeholder, and subcommittee meetings, providing support as appropriate.
* Send out welcome packet.
* Process RFA applications.
* Communicate with applicants on status of application and missing forms.
* Conduct Home Environment Assessments.
* Conduct face-to-face interviews with applicants and others in the home.
* Perform criminal exemption activities.
* Communicate with Foster Kinship Care Education as to status of training hours.
* Communicate with Probation as to status of RFA applicants referred by Probation or where Emergency Response approval was completed by Probation.
* Conduct bio-psychosocial assessment on applicants.
* Conduct complaint and/or incident investigations.
* Coordinate investigations with Emergency Response unit on complaints and/or incidents alleging child abuse/neglect).
* Conduct Annual Updates.
* Attend implementation, stakeholder, and subcommittee meetings.
* Provide input on RFA impact to their daily duties.
* Attend scheduled trainings.
* Provide training in conjunction with FKCE.
* Keep supervisor/s appraised of any issues or concerns.
* Collaborate with community partners and Cooperative Agencies.
* Conducting complaints related to buildings and grounds or other non-child abuse or neglect concerns.

**Title: Ongoing and Emergency Response Social Workers**

Responsibilities:

* Complete Emergency placements with resource families
* Attend training on RFA’s.
* Emergency Response Social Workers will be responsible for:
* Conducting complaint and/or incident investigations for child abuse/neglect allegations in Resource Families.
* They will notify the resource family approval social worker of allegation.

**Title: Foster Care Eligibility Workers**

Responsibilities:

* Attend RFA trainings.
* Notify supervisor of additional training needed.
* Assist RFA families in receiving appropriate benefits for the children in their care.

**Cooperative Agencies (Non-County Staff/Agency Involvement)**

**1. Agency:** California Department of Social Services- Adoptions (CDSS-A)

**Role:** Provide case management to children identified with a permanent plan of adoption.

**Responsibilities:**

* Consult and review children in out-of-home care who need concurrent planning services.
* Assess and provide a written assessment of the most appropriate permanent plan of a child pursuing to W&I Code, Section 361.5, 366.21, or 366.22
* Inform caregivers and birth families of provisions and availability of kinship adoptions, post adoption contact agreements, and related services.
* Provide relinquishment services for birth/legal parents who are considering the option of adoption.
* Make preliminary assessments and written reports concerning the prospective adoptive parents for the W&I Code, Section 366.26 hearing.
* CDSS will provide testimony for contested hearings regarding the reports as requested by County Counsel.
* Match children with prospective adoptive families and place children for adoption.
* Review and provide medical and social background information concerning a child and his/her birth parents to adoptive parents at the time of the adoptive placement.
* Supervise adoptive placements until finalization and provide post-adoptive placement services to families.
* Establish and assess for Adoption Assistance Program (AAP) eligibility and benefits pursuant to governing laws and County Programs regarding.
* AAP eligibility (i.e., W&I Code, Sections 16115-16123 and Title 22 California Code of Regulations (CCR) Section 35325 et. seq.)
* Provide other appropriate and necessary adoption services as needed.

CDSS Required Document

**2. Agency:** College of the Redwoods Foster and Kinship Care Education (FKCE) program

**Role:** Provide Pre- and Post- RFA training and supportive on-going training

**Responsibilities:**

* Provide 30 hours of training to RFA applicants leave during the year on subject matters to include, but not limited to: Child Abuse and Neglect, Child Abuse Reporting mandates, Juvenile Court process, Health and Well-Being of Children, Community Supports, and Visitation.
* Provide 8 hours of annual Ongoing and Post-RFA training.
* Support RFA applicants by providing the opportunity to complete the RFA application.
* Provide CPR/First Aid certification and recertification.
* Maintain a database of completed training hours for RFA applicants.
* Maintain frequent communication with the RFA Unit, Supervisor, and Manager as to any concerns or issues related to an RFA family.

**Plan for Maintaining Program Staff Qualifications, Skills, and Program Expertise**

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| Requirement | How will you accomplish requirement? |
| Ensuring Minimum Staffing Qualification  Does this match state? | Resource Social Worker must have  EITHER   Pattern 1: Graduation from an accredited four year college or university;   or   Pattern 2: Successful completion of thirty (30) college semester units (45 quarter units) from an accredited college or university, including fifteen (15) semester units (22 quarter units) in social welfare, social/human services, sociology, or other social or behavioral science;\*  and  One (1) year of full-time experience in the Social Service Aide, Eligibility Worker II, Employment and Training Worker II or comparable classification;  or   Three (3) years of full-time experience interacting with children or adults providing direct services in a private or public agency.   (Examples of acceptable social or behavioral science courses include: anthropology, criminal justice, education, ethnic studies, history, human) development, human services, law, nursing, nutrition, psychology, public health, social welfare, sociology, welfare, women's studies. |
| Develop and maintain staff skills | Attend required training |

**Resource Family Approval Process**

**RFA Process, Emergency Placement**

An Emergency Placement is defined as a home evaluation for Relatives/NREFM’s received directly from Child Welfare Services social workers to facilitate the initial placement of children with their family. This is intended to be a same-day service, and 24 hour follow-up is required to ensure that children are placed in Relative/NREFM care, if at all possible, so as to mitigate the trauma of removal. Social workers may submit a referral and request it to be expedited on a case-by-case basis to address a 7-day notice and other requirements. The Resource Family Approval social worker shall respond as soon as possible after receiving an accurately completed referral. The Resource Family Approval social worker will coordinate with the Child Welfare Services social worker to best meet the needs of the Emergency Placement request.

If an adult in the home has an existing or pending criminal or child welfare history:

* The Resource Family Approval social worker will check CWS/CMS Collateral section for all new and returning RFA applicants to review whether a prior Home Approval had been completed through the exemption process.
* If such a Home Approval exists, the Resource Family Approval social worker shall investigate whether the Department has sent a No Longer Interested (NLI) Notification (BCIA 8302) to DOJ in reference to any and all adults that would require an exemption. The NLI notice discontinues the Department’s notification from DOJ of any individual’s subsequent arrests/convictions.

CWS and/or RFA Social Worker will:

* Assess caregiver/s’ suitability and willingness to provide care.
* Conduct an in-person Buildings and Grounds inspection.
* Ensure caregiver understands the Child’s Personal Rights.
* Perform a criminal records and prior child abuse/neglect history check on all adults in the home, to include, CLETS and CACI clearance on all caregivers. Criminal exemptions will be approved or denied in accordance with County policy and practice.
* Start a conversation about becoming a Resource Family for the child.
* Approve Family Caregiver Home for emergency placement only.

**RFA Process, Non-Emergent Placement**

During the initial 30 days of the RFA process, DHHS and/or FKCE will work with the Resource Family applicant/s to begin the RFA process:

* Meet with the potential RFA applicant/s to discuss process and requirements.
* If potential RFA applicant/s is/are ready to move forward, have the applicant/s complete the RFA application.

Once the RFA application is received by the Department, the RFA Social Worker will work with the applicant/s to:

* Assess the applicant/s suitability and willingness to provide care.
* Ensure the applicant understand Child’s Personal Rights.
* Complete Initial Risk Assessment.
* Conduct in-person Home Environment Assessment.
* perform criminal records check.
* Refer the RFA applicant/s to enroll in RFA training.
* Gather the required documents (i.e., DMV records, Criminal Record Statement, Health Screening, etc.)

Upon completion of the process, the RFA Social Worker Supervisor will review the RFA Application and Comprehensive Assessment to ensure professional standards of practice and consistent compliance with state regulations. In addition, the Social Worker Supervisor will affirm the appropriateness of the applicant/s to be certified as a Del Norte County Resource Family. The RFA application and Written Assessment is then forwarded to the Child Welfare Manager for a decision pertaining to the Resource Family application.

DHHS Child Welfare Services retains final authority and responsibility for any decisions pertaining to the RFA process. DHHS CWS will be responsible for retaining a copy of the RFA approval certificate. The original certificate will be provided to the RFA family. These documents will be kept in a separate locking file cabinet. Only RFA staff, supervisors, and Child Welfare Services program manager will have access to the files.

Once the RFA home is certified, RFA workers will provide approval documents to Foster Care Eligibility Workers. Foster Care Eligibility Workers will determine the financial eligibility of the child, benefit amount, and duration, and will prepare associated RFA paperwork as required.

**Proposed Resource Family Assessment Tools**

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| Tool | Description |
| |  | | --- | | Monthly generated RFA implementation overview report | | CWS will generate a monthly report to monitor RFA activities. This report will include such areas as:   * Percentage of placements with relatives/ matched families versus unmatched families. * Percentage of realignment versus federal dollars used to fund Foster Care * Average length of time to achieve permanency (reunification, legal |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | RRFA Implementation Steering Committee meetings |  | | The Implementation Steering Committee will meet every other week to review progress toward implementation. |
| RFA Subcommittees | |  | | --- | | Members of the RFA Implementation Steering Committee will meet with subcommittees (which include staff, community partners, and foster parents) to guide training, the application process itself, and complaints about families | |
| RFA Database Reports | Use reports to identify the number of RFA applicants, approvals/declinations, and applicant/home compliance, in addition to other information required by the State. |

**Confidentiality**

To ensure confidentiality, the following steps will be followed:

**Child Welfare Services**

* All staff will follow CWS Confidentiality Policies and Procedures.
* A series of Release of Information forms will be obtained from RFA families allowing CWS to release information to Cooperative Agencies and others as applicable.

**Probation**

* A Release of Information will be obtained from the RFA family allowing Probation to release information to CWS and the Cooperative Agencies.
* Probation staff will be trained in and will follow Confidentiality Policies and Procedures.

**Cooperative Agencies**

* Cooperative Agencies will be trained in and will follow Confidentiality Policies and Procedures.
* Cooperative Agencies will not have access to the CWS RFA database.
* Under no circumstances will Cooperative Agencies share confidential information regarding RFA applicants or RFA families with anyone other than the assigned RFA Social Worker or Supervisor.

**Training Plan for Program Staff**

RFA social worker and Child Welfare Services social workers will be trained on the new RFA Program, regulations, statutes, and policies and procedures prior to implementation.

The Resource Family Approval Program overview and training will be required for all staff. The RFA Unit supervisor and/or Program Manager will begin early discussion of the RFA program with the division on a monthly basis prior to the actual implementation. A detailed training will be provided to all staff during the implementation month on how to conduct emergency approvals of relative or non-relative extended family member homes.

**Training Plan for Resource Families**

Resource Families are required to complete an initial training related to foster parenting and child development. The 30 hour curriculum is prepared and facilitated by the Foster Kinship Care Education Program of Woodland Community College.

* An Introduction: What is Child Abuse & Neglect
* How the Foster System Works Trauma Informed Caregiving
* Community Supports Placement & Visitation
* Home as a Safe Haven Addiction & Recovery
* Medically Fragile Infants & Their Care

The required 30 hours of training will be provided on an ongoing basis throughout the year. Classes will be held in the evenings and/or Saturdays. Further, RFA Orientations will be held on a monthly basis. Prospective families will be required to complete CPR/First Aid certification.

**Tribal Participation**

We will continue current practices regarding partnerships with tribes whenever applicable, including inviting to stakeholders’ meetings and focus groups, as well as keeping tribes updated with current information.

**Monitoring of Resource Families**

The County of Del Norte will monitor resource families by conducting periodic evaluations and onsite visits, developing Corrective Action Plans when deficiencies are identified, and requiring RFA families to comply with Corrective Action Plans.

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| **Process** | **Responsible Staff** | **Procedures** |
| Annual Evaluations and Onsite Visits | Resource Family Approval Social Worker | |  | | --- | | RFA families shall be updated on an annual basis using the Resource Family Annual Update (Form RFA-04). Annual home visits will be conducted one year from the date of certification.  Updates shall include:   * Annual in-home visit * Verification of background clearance for all adults in the home * Interview of all individuals in the home OR documentation of why an interviewee was not available * A determination as to whether RFA training and CPR/First Aid training are current and up-to-date. * A psychosocial assessment will be conducted if there has been a change to the household composition (i.e., partnership, marriage, divorce, etc.)   RFA families will be contacted via mail 30 days prior to their annual recertification to schedule a home visit and to obtain any remaining ongoing training hours.  A copy of the update will be provided to the Resource Family. | |
| General Practice | RFA Social Worker, Supervisor, and Program Manager | Upon identification of a condition that puts the Resource Family out of compliance, the RFA Social Worker will take appropriate actions and report findings to the Child Welfare Manager.  The Resource Family will be responsible for completing an Unusual Incident Report to the County of Del Norte Child Welfare consisting with reporting requirements specified in California Code of Regulations, Title 22, Division 6, Chapter 9.5, Foster Family Homes, Section 89361.  In all cases, the input of the child and the input of the Resource Family shall be given high priority. |
| |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | Corrective Action Plans |  |  | | Resource Family Approval Worker and Supervisor | When deficiencies related to the buildings and ground or non-child abuse or neglect are noted or reported about an approved RFA home, an RFA social worker will assist the Resource Family in developing and submitting a written Corrective Action Plan. The Corrective Action Plan will describe how the deficiency will be corrected and state the timeline in which the correction must be made.  This plan will be developed in partnership between the RFA Social Worker and the Resource Family. The assigned RFA Social Worker will be responsible for monitoring the plan and ensuring the corrections are made timely.  If a deficiency is so severe that the County determines it is necessary to rescind the home’s approval as a Resource Family, the County will inform the home in writing and provide appeal rights information. The County will ensure that the health and safety of any child/ren placed in the home is considered first and foremost and that, if the children need to be moved, those placement moves are made in accordance with current County business practices. |

**Investigation of Complaints and Incidents Involving Resource Families**

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| Process | Responsible Staff | Procedures |
| Investigating Complaints and Incidents | * Resource Family Approval Social Workers * Emergency Response Social Workers * Resource Family Approval Supervisor * Emergency Response Supervisor | |  | | --- | | Complaints  Upon receipt of a complaint against an RFA home, information will be gathered including:   * Date the event occurred * Alleged victim * Alleged perpetrator * Alleged issues of complaint   Information will be forwarded to the Resource Family Approval Social Worker.  The RFA Supervisor will log the complaint and assign a RFA Social Worker to investigate. When possible, the RFA Social Worker assigned to the investigation will not be the same RFA Social Worker who initially approved the home.  The outcome of the investigation will be sent to the Resource Family and filed in their case folder.  Incidents:  Upon receipt of an Incident report (allegation of child abuse/neglect) within an RFA family, the information will be forwarded to the RFA Supervisor.  The RFA Supervisor will log the Incident report and assign to an RFA Social worker, and working collaboratively with the Emergency Response supervisor, an ER social worker will also be assigned.  The response time on the Incident report is dependent upon the allegation(s), RED team staffing, and SDM Hotline Tool completion. | |

**Due Process for Denial or Rescission of Approvals and Other Adverse Actions**

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| Process | Responsible Staff | Procedures |
| |  | | --- | | Process for RFA denials | | RFA social worker | |  | | --- | | Consultation with CDSS RFA Legal Department. | |
| Process to rescind approval | RFA social worker | Consultation with CDSS RFA Legal Department |
| Process for other adverse actions | RFA social worker | |  | | --- | | If a complaint investigation results in a substantiated finding, the Resource Family will be provided information as to their rights and Due Process. The outcome of any proceedings, Fair Hearings or Administrative Hearings, will be forwarded to the CWS Resource Family Unit for inclusion in the Resource Family’s file. | |

**Placement Transition Plan**

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| Requirements | How will this be accomplished? |
| Minimize disruption to the family | Placement moves will be made in the manner that most honors the needs of the child. |
| Maximize child safety | The child’s safety will always be considered first and foremost in all situations. |
| Ensure that Resource Families will operate in accordance with proper authority   * Federal: Title IV-E, Section 471(a)(10) of the Social Security Act * State: W&IC Code 16519.5 | Resource Families will be consistently monitored for compliance with all W&IC and Health and Safety codes. Resource Families who no longer meet the qualifications will be recommended for placement hold and staff will work with them to bring them back into compliance. |
| Ensure that eligibility for foster care payments will not be delayed or interrupted | Following the certification of the RFA home, at no time will a disruption to eligibility for foster payments occur. RFA Social Workers and Foster Care Eligibility Workers will work collaboratively to ensure seamless service delivery. |

**Termination Plan**

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| Requirements | How will this be accomplished? |
| Minimize disruption to the family | 1. The cutoff date for new foster family home licensing applications will be December 31, 2016  3. ER/After-Hours will continue emergency placements.  4. The Relative Assessment worker will finalize pending Relative/NREFM assessments by December 31, 2016.  5. DHHS will finalize pending licensures by December 31, 2016.  6. Anyone approved as a relative/NREFM or licensed Foster Family Home prior to January 1, 2017, will be required to convert no later than January 1, 2019. |
| Maximize child safety | 1. Oversight of the RFA Program will continue by the RFA Supervisor and Manager.  2. Any concerns will be reported to ER and/or the RFA unit for investigation. |
| Ensure that Resource Families will operate in accordance with proper authority   * Federal: Title IV-E, Section 471(a)(10) of the Social Security Act * State: W&IC Code 16519.5 | The County will follow all related statutes. |
| Ensure that eligibility for foster care payments will not be delayed or interrupted | Emergency Placements- The relative or NREFM applicant is not eligible for an Aid to Families with Dependent Children-Foster Care payment until the applicant completes pre-approval training, complies with the Written Directives, receives Resource Family Approval, and meets any other Title IV-E eligibility criteria . The relative/NREFM caregiver can apply for CalWORKs Non-Needy Caretaker Relative aid, and the Department will make all attempts to expedite this, which may include applying on their behalf. |

**Timeline for Implementation**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Task /Step** | **Apr** | **May** | **Jun** | **July** | **Aug** | **Sep** | **Oct** | **Nov** | **Dec** | **Jan** | **Feb** |
| Implementation Committee Meetings |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Stakeholder Meeting |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Task focused groups |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Development of Training Materials |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Gathering baseline data |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Implementation |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Mass mailing to existing approved families to inform them about RFA |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Follow up with staff to review implementation |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Follow up with stakeholders to review implementation |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Post implementation data |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Implementation steering committee reconvenes to review overall process and determine additional steps |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Follow-up meetings and/or additional trainings as needed |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |