



Recommended Facebook Group Guidelines for County Human Services Agencies

Using Facebook Group Pages for Foster Parent Recruitment, Retention & Support Efforts

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I. Overview

California counties are launching various activities and strategies to improve support for foster parents, resource families and relative caregivers, recognizing that well-supported caregivers and home-based options significantly improve child well-being and increase the likelihood caregivers will continue to open up their loving, stable homes to children in foster care.

One of the activities counties are pursuing is creating virtual support groups for caregivers on Facebook. While some counties may have convened in-person support groups, a virtual support group will allow caregivers to more readily connect with one another and share resources. It also allows the Facebook page administrator/foster parent liaison to the county to regularly stay in touch with families and caregivers.

This guide seeks to assist counties looking to set up a Group Facebook page – either Public, Secret or Closed – including guiding principles, the basic steps and appropriate content.

II. Purpose and Guidelines

Purpose: Before a county sets up a Facebook Group page, establish the purpose of the Group page and core principles so that all involved understand the relationship and agreement they are entering into when joining the group.

- Will this page be for only the county to advertise information, such as upcoming trainings, events, requirements?
- Will this page be to encourage the exchange of information or resources amongst its members?

Guidelines: Consider what guidelines need to be established to support attainment of these goals?

- Will you allow caregivers to exchange advice and event information? Consider how you will encourage group members to set up neutral meeting places for the exchange of goods, such as baby clothing or other products, to maintain confidentiality.
- What are grounds for members being removed?
- The group, similar to an in-person support group, should be guided by principles of respect and maintaining confidentiality of children.

III. Facebook Group Page Options

There are three types of Group pages:

1. Public – Anyone can join or be added or invited by a member; anyone can see the group, who is in the group, group tags.
2. Closed – Anyone can ask to join or be added or invited *by a member*; only current members can see stories (posts) about the group; but anyone can see who is in the group, group tags.
3. Secret – Anyone can join, but they have to be added or invited *by a member*; this is the most restrictive among the Group page options.

For a full breakdown of the Group options, visit this [Facebook Help link](#)

Counties should thoughtfully consider which type of group best meets their purpose and the desire of its caregivers. A Public group may suite your county well if the Facebook Group page's purpose is ONLY for sharing information on events and trainings. A Secret group will be beneficial to ensure bio parents and members of the public do not gain access to the group. However, a Closed group may be best for some counties who do not have regular access or contact with caregivers and would like the ability to allow the caregiver community to find the page.

IV. Setting up a Closed Facebook Page

The page administrator must have a personal Facebook page to set up a Group page. You can add more than one Facebook administrator to a Group page, which is recommended. It is recommended there be at least two administrators – such as a county staff person and caregiver mentor – for the page. The administrators will be responsible for screening requests to be added and verifying the individuals are current caregivers.

To create a group:

1. From your personal Facebook [home page](#), go to the **Groups** section on the left side menu and click **Create Group**.
2. Click **+ Create New Group** at the top of the page. A window will appear, where you'll be able to add a group name, add members and select the [privacy settings](#) for your group.

Counties will want to select “Secret” or “Closed”. Anyone can join the group but they have to [be added or invited](#) by a member.

**Important note – For all Group page types, current group members can suggest their friends be added but the administrator must still approve all requests.*

3. Click **Create** when done.

Once the group is created, the administrator will be taken to the group. To get started, click ***** at the top right of the group and select **Edit Group Settings**. From here you can add a group description, tags, set a group email address and add a group picture.

More assistance can be found at the [Facebook Help Center](#)

V. Invitation & Content

Invitation

Caregivers can be invited into the Facebook Group based on local protocols. For example, some counties may choose to invite foster caregivers after completing pre-service training or other licensing/approval requirements. Others might send out fliers via monthly payments. Be sure to look

to list of existing caregivers as a place to start. An online support group cannot thrive without active and engaged members.

Counties will want to develop a plan for creating awareness about the page and make it clear what the purpose of the page. (See the Purpose and Guidelines, and Content sections in this Guide and consider incorporating that into your invitation messaging.)

To add new members to a group:

1. Go to the group
2. Click the **+ Add People to Group** field in the right column
3. Type the Facebook name caregiver has provided (since it may be different than the formal name on file) and click on them to add them to the group. You may need to ask caregivers what name they use on Facebook, i.e. a nickname or abbreviation vs. a formal name.

Content

Remind caregivers the purpose is:

- For resource parents to support one another
- To share supplies such as strollers, clothing, books, toys, etc.
- Opportunity to share information that supports their parenting roles
- A place to build relationship between the county agency and caregivers, and among the caregiver community

*Confidentiality of children still must be maintained.

- Tone is supportive, positive, orientated toward what caregivers need and being each other's cheerleaders.
- It is not a place for venting.
 - When administrator sees those type of comments that is a signal it's time for a check-in call to the caregiver. The administrator(s) might say "I just read your post and it sounds like you're tired. Do you want to talk? Is there something you're need support with this week?"

Example post – A caregiver has just received her first placement, a newborn. The Facebook administrator welcomes the caregiver to the Facebook group and let's others know about needs. Note the type and tone of comments.

CS Yesterday at 10:37am

Welcome XXXXX to our group. She is a relative caregiver accepting placement of a newborn. She hasn't parented before and welcomes your advice, support, and needs help in getting ready. He is coming on Tuesday - we will shop at Target in Woodland on Tuesday afternoon. Thanks everyone!

(Comments:)

VR I've got baby blankets, preemie diapers (if needed), bottles
Like · Reply · 1 · Yesterday at 10:49am

LSB Anyone have a stroller? Baby carriers? Bottles? 3mo boy clothes? This is XXXX's first baby so still learning what she does need so any help would be appreciated.
Like · Reply · 2 · Yesterday at 11:33am

DMM I have a carrier.

Like · Reply · Yesterday at 12:33pm

LSB Let's try to get things to Woodland on Tuesday, CS let us know the time when you will be there

Like · Reply · 1 · Yesterday at 11:34am

CS Shopping Tuesday at 4:00 pm / Woodland Target. We can meet in the parking lot at 4:00 pm sharp? Will that work.

Like · Reply · 2 · Yesterday at 11:49am

CPW Thank you everyone!!!! I am so grateful for you all. I am crying while typing. I am scared, nervous, and excited all in one.

Like · Reply · 1 · Yesterday at 11:49am

VR You are already a great momma - you can do this XXX & just know that none of us can do this by ourselves - you rock!!

Like · Reply · 4 · Yesterday at 11:55am

VI. Features

In addition to creating Posts and allowing group members to communicate, a Group page allows you to have different Features, such as creating Group Events, uploading videos and files or members chatting with one another in smaller groups. For more on Features, see the Facebook Help section on [Features](#).

Counties may want to establish a rule that Group members not post photos to maintain confidentiality.

This guide was developed by CWDA Staff. As counties implement Group pages and engage with caregivers, CWDA welcomes feedback and suggested modifications. Contact Sarah Jimenez or Diana Boyer at (916) 443-1749 or sjimenez@cwda.org and dboyer@cwda.org.