CCR & RFA: Making it work for kinship families
OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND

History of CCR
Vision

• All children live with a committed, permanent and nurturing family with strong community connections
• Services and supports should be individualized and coordinated across systems and children shouldn’t need to change placements to get services
• When needed, congregate care is a short-term, high quality, intensive intervention that is just one part of a continuum of care available for children, youth and young adults
• Effective accountability and transparency drives continuous quality improvement for state, county and providers
Key Strategies

• Child and Family Teams (CFTs) drive case planning, placement decisions and care coordination

• New licensing requirements for FFAs and STRTPs:
  – Limit use of residential care to when an Interagency Placement Committee finds child requires short-term intensive services
  – Ensures STRTPs and FFAs have an identified ability to meet the varied needs of children (i.e. “core services”) including mental health services
  – Ensures STRTPs and FFAs are nationally accredited and have engaged placing agencies in program development

• New approval requirements and restructured rate system for caregivers provides for a single residential rate and a home-based rate

• Local collaboration between Child Welfare, Mental Health, Probation, and Education to provide integrated services
RFA Standards – what hasn’t changed?

Aspects of the Approval process that do NOT change include:

1. Preferential placement with relatives
2. Ability to place with relatives prior to approval
3. Home Inspection with ability to waive certain non-safety requirements Criminal background check with exemption process
RFA Standards – what’s changed:

7. 90-days to complete the approval process when placement prior to approval occurs

8. Enhanced due process for denials

9. Complaints investigated by county staff but with additional oversight by DSS.

10. Be approved to take all children, if a relative is willing, not just their relative children.
What **changed** for Relatives?

Under RFA, relatives:

1. Complete both pre-approval and post-approval training, Health screening & TB screening
2. First Aid and CPR certification
3. Psychosocial assessment – Includes 3 face-to-face interviews
4. Three personal references
5. DMV report
FOCUS ON KINSHIP CAREGIVERS
Relative Caregivers Support Child Well-Being

Research has shown that foster children in kinship care have:

- Fewer prior placements
- More frequent and consistent contact with birth parents and siblings,
- Felt fewer negative emotions about being placed in foster care than children placed with non-relatives
- Less likely to runaway
Kinship families are the backbone of our child welfare system

• Hidden in plain sight - kinship families are the largest child welfare system in America
  o Extended family members and close family friends care for more than **2.7 million** children in this country
  o Over the past decade **the number of children in kinship care grew six times faster** than the number of children in the general population
  o **287,996** children in California live in homes with grandparent householders where grandparents are responsible for them - of these children, **80,248** have no parents present in the home.
  o **In California, 19,635** of our state’s 63,000 foster children are in kinship placements
Kin Most Likely to Support ALL Siblings

% of Siblings ALL Placed Together

- 2 siblings: 78%
- 3 siblings: 65.90%
- 4 siblings: 57.10%
- 5 siblings: 41.20%
- 6 siblings: 35.10%

Bar chart showing the percentage of siblings placed together for different numbers of siblings, with categories for Kin, Foster, FFA, and Group.
Kin Provide Greater Stability – Even with Older Foster Youth

Youth Ages 14 - 17 Still in Care at 12 Months
Kin Have Different Needs

- Kin, generally, have fewer financial resources
- Kin are recruited in a crisis situation, after the child has been removed, and are not given a chance to prepare financially, emotionally or logistically
- Kin are more likely to need child care
- Kin often need counseling to help them deal with birth parents, feelings about parenting again, and their new relationships with their related children
- Older caregivers, many of whom are kin, are more likely to need help meeting children’s educational needs and providing recreational services
In Practice, Kin Receive Fewer Services

“State policies indicate that kin are generally eligible to receive the same services as non-kin foster parents. However, past research has clearly shown that in practice, kin foster parents and the children in their care receive fewer services. Kin are offered fewer services, request fewer services, and receive fewer services.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Non-Kin</th>
<th>Kin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respite Care</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Group</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialized Training</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Care</td>
<td>Less than 10%</td>
<td>Less than 10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health Services</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SW Contact within last month</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average # of Services on 0 to 6 Scale</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Relatives are key to reducing reliance on congregate care

Group home placement is associated with poor outcomes for children and youth:

- Significantly increased risk of arrest (Hernandez, 2008)
- Higher rates of re-entry into foster care after reunification than children who are reunified from family-based care (Barth, 2002)
- Less likely to graduate and more likely to drop-out of school than children and youth in family-based care (Wiegmann et al, 2014)
INITIAL REMOVAL AND PLACEMENT
Social Worker

Court

Emergenc y Home Approval

Clothing, diapers, school supplies

Visitation

Risk Assessment

Training

Resource Family Approval

Going to R&R

Counseling

Getting CW Certification for Child Care

Medical Appointments

Transportation

School/Visits

Getting on child care waitlist #1

Getting on child care waitlist #2

Getting on child care waitlist #3

Getting on waitlist for APP

Getting CW Certification for Child Care

Work School
1. Compelling Reason:
   - Based on needs of the child
   - After home environment approval completed
   - Permanency assessment to be completed within 90 days

2. Emergency Basis:
   - Must be with relative or nonrelative extended family member
   - Requires WIC 309/361.45 assessment (WIC 309 requirements have **not** changed)
   - Home environment assessment must be initiated within 5 business days and caregiver must turn in RFA application

**AFDC-FC funding is not available to families until full approval has been achieved **BUT** counties can use expedited CalWORKs, Foster Parent Recruitment and Retention Funds, and/or Emergency Assistance to bridge the gap!! At a minimum, counties must provide relatives with the Expedited CalWORKs application.**
ISSUE SPOTTING

• Help families complete application and be clear about deadlines

• Ask families who take a child on an emergency basis or based on compelling reason what financial and/or other support they need

• Emergency placement with relatives and NREFMs is allowed after disposition
RESOURCE FAMILY APPROVAL
CORE ELEMENTS OF RFA

• One standard — relatives and recruited families treated the same

• One process — approved for any child in foster care, approved in any county, and approved for guardianships & adoptions

• Comprehensive assessment required, includes:
  o Home Environment Assessment
  o Permanency Assessment

• Pre- and post-approval training required for all families

• Procedures for expedited placements

WIC § 16519.6
Overview of RFA Process

• All resource family applicants will:

  1. Receive a RFA orientation
  2. Undergo criminal clearances and background checks
  3. Undergo home environment assessment
  4. Participate in 12 hours pre-approval training + 8 additional hours within the first year (some counties/FFAs may require additional training hours)
  5. Provide health screening for applicants and TB screening for all adults in home
  6. Participate in a psychosocial assessment
  7. Receive a written report of the resource family
HOME ENVIRONMENT ASSESSMENT

Home environment assessment requires:

1) Criminal record clearance (and any necessary exemptions) of each applicant and all adults residing in, or regularly present in, the home

2) Consideration of substantiated allegations of child abuse or neglect

3) Building, grounds & storage requirements that ensure health and safety

4) Total # of children shall not exceed 6 children.
   - **Exception**: Exceptional circumstances exist that are documented in the foster child’s case file, including but not limited to the need to place siblings together

5) Applicant must understand:
   - Rights of children and his/her responsibility to safeguard those rights
   - Responsibility to act as a reasonable and prudent parent and maintaining the least restrictive environment serving the child’s needs.

*WIC § 16519.5(d)(2)*
PERMANENCY ASSESSMENT

Permanency assessment requires:

1. Caregiver training – minimum of 12 hours pre-approval & 8 post-approval hours annually

2. Psychosocial assessment of caregiver/applicant

NOTE: When the applicant is a relative/NREFM, psychosocial assessment shall consider nature of relationship between the applicant and the child AND county can do child-specific approvals (WIC § 16519.5(d)(3) and Written Directives section 6-07(d))

NOTE #2: The applicant’s preference to provide a specific level of permanency shall not be a basis to deny an application. (WIC § 16519.5 (g)(5)(A)(i)(II))

NOTE #3: If a relative does not wish to adopt or enter into guardianship, the court can order a permanent plan of placement with a “fit and willing relative” (WIC § 366.26(c)(4)(B))
Understanding the Psychosocial Assessment

• NOT an adoption home study

• In depth look of family structures, values, discipline practices, coping strategies, etc.

• Allows the social worker to see into the family system and evaluate their strengths and areas where more support may be needed for safer and more effective parenting

• Concerns addressed with the family and mitigated when possible

• Allows for more thoughtful matches and more individualized training to better support families
Maintaining Resource Family Approval

• RFA must be updated annually or more often if “significant changes”
  o Must begin 60 days prior to approval anniversary and be completed no later than 30 days after

• If a resource family moves from one county to another
  o RFA must be updated within 30 days
  o Completed update begins new annual period

• A resource family remains approved until the family surrenders their approval or their approval is rescinded
Conversion to RFA

- Current license/approval is good until December 31, 2019 as long as they have a child in placement at some point during 2017 (WIC § 16519.5(p)(5))
  - Approval can continue after December 31, 2019 as long as RFA initiated by that date
  - All licensed foster family homes that did not have a child in placement between January 1, 2017 – December 31, 2017 shall forfeit license by operation of law on January 1, 2018
  - Applications for a foster family home license or request for relative/NREFM approval received on or before December 31, 2016 are approved/denied under the prior licensing/approval process (not RFA) (WIC § 16519.5(p)(2)(C))

- Truncated RFA Process for Currently Licensed/Approved Families
  - Licensed and approved homes with an approved adoptive home study completed by January 1, 2018 are deemed approved as a resource family
  - Licensed and approved homes with child in placement during 2017 are approved as resource families upon completion of psychosocial assessment
Best Practices for Implementing RFA at the County Level

• Providing financial assistance to help applicants caring for a child placed on an emergency basis pending approval
  - *LA County provides $400 stipend per child for 3 months and caregivers can initiate CalWORKs using expedited app immediately*

• Providing support at placement with purchasing of bedding, and other items

• Assigning specific staff to assist applicants one-on-one with the completion of paperwork

• Using Foster Parents as mentors to support applicants through the process

• Using Foster Youth at Orientations to tell their story and need for families for older youth
Best Practices in Working with Kin

- Get in touch with own biases
- Utilize different lens when assessing and working with kin vs non-kin families
- Recognize our intrusion into the family
  - help family navigate vs judging because of their past or present circumstances
- Value importance of familial bonds
- Understanding safety concerns vs “good enough parenting” (values regarding living conditions, community, parenting)
- Motivation for adoption is unique and different
# Kinship vs Traditional Foster Care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kinship Care</th>
<th>Traditional Foster Care</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unplanned, immediate/crisis-oriented</td>
<td>Planned decision to become foster caregiver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes existing relationships/family roles</td>
<td>Builds new relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hopes and expectations for reunification</td>
<td>May hope to adopt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of family dynamics</td>
<td>Limited knowledge of a family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed feeling about role change</td>
<td>Excitement of a new role of parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed feelings about loss of parent to child</td>
<td>Celebration of new family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited preparation</td>
<td>Prepared and supports in place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unanticipated requirements to become approved</td>
<td>Anticipated requirements to become approved foster parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guilt over the issues of birth parents</td>
<td>No guilt over issues of birth parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings of betraying birth parents</td>
<td>Displaying loyalty to the child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel entitled to be in “driver’s seat” –</td>
<td>Emotional entitlement is more gradual; legal entitlement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>distrusting of system</td>
<td>only after adoption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hesitation to legalize – doesn’t indicate a</td>
<td>Low motivation to legalize triggers concerns about</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lack of commitment to child</td>
<td>commitment to child</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Common Challenges for Kinship Families

*Stepping Up for Kin* a 2012 Report by the Annie E. Casey Foundation finds:

- Kinship caregiver confront financial, health, and social challenges
  - Financial burdens even more severe when kin are already caring for other children, take in large sibling groups, are retired, or are living on a fixed income.
- Many grandparents and other relatives raising children also struggle with feelings of guilt and shame about the family circumstances that led to the caregiving arrangement.
- These challenges are all the more daunting when caring for children who have experienced trauma
RFA Toolkit

• Step by step instructions for families navigating RFA

• Vetted with relative caregivers

• Available online at www.stepupforkin.org

• January 2018 - version two release date
POST-PLACEMENT ASSESSMENTS & CHILD AND FAMILY TEAM
**CHILD AND FAMILY TEAM (CFT)**

- **Who**: The child and family members, professionals, and other people identified by the family who are invested in the child and family’s success. This may include family, friends, neighbors, CASA, school personnel, coaches, clergy, mental health staff, etc.

- **What**: The CFT’s role is to help the family members define and reach their goals and develop a child and family–centered case plan.

- **Why**: CFT convened for purpose of identifying supports and services needed to achieve permanency and to enable youth to be in the least restrictive family setting that promotes normal childhood experiences

*WIC § 706.6 & 16501.1*
CHILD AND FAMILY TEAM (CFT)

- **How**: The placing agency typically convenes the initial CFT meeting and is responsible for coordinating.

- **Where**: The meeting can be at a location that is convenient to the family or other participants.

- **When**:
  - A CFT meeting shall be convened by the placing agency within the **first 60 days** of coming into care or upon entering the system.
  - A CFT meeting will be convened to discuss **any placement changes** for the child or youth into out of home care.
  - A CFT must be held **at least once every six months** following the initial CFT
  - CFT **every 90 days** for youth receiving Intensive Care Coordination, Intensive Home-Based Services, or Therapeutic Foster Care (ACL 16-84)
  - Additional meetings on an “as needed” basis

*WIC § 706.6 & 16501.1*
CFTs and Placement

- CFT convened to discuss any placement changes (after initial placement)

- The CFT must be consulted to identify the most appropriate placement of the child or youth, while always considering the least restrictive placement option (ACL 16-84)

- Placing agency must consider all the CFT placement recommendations – placing agency has ultimate responsibility to determine the most appropriate placement
  - Must inform the CFT of the recommendation and reasoning prior to the court hearing and after the judge has made the placement order
NEW RATES AND SERVICES
"a child placed with a resource family is eligible for the resource family basic rate... at the child’s assessed level of care” (WIC § 16519.5(l))
Home Based Family Care Rate Structure

The HBFC Rate paid to the Resource Family is based on the amount of care and supervision the child needs from the family. A Level of Care (LOC) Protocol tool is being developed to guide the county LOC determination.
Home Based Family Care Agency Rate –
How it Impacts Foster Family Agencies

Paid to the FFA is a rate that correlates to each LOC. The services and supports are not limited to IV-E allowable activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Basic Level</th>
<th>Basic LOC -2</th>
<th>Basic LOC-3</th>
<th>Basic LOC-4</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Worker</td>
<td>$340</td>
<td>$340</td>
<td>$340</td>
<td>$340</td>
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<tr>
<td>Services and Supports</td>
<td>$156</td>
<td>$200</td>
<td>$244</td>
<td>$323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admin</td>
<td>$672</td>
<td>$672</td>
<td>$672</td>
<td>$672</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RFA Activities</td>
<td>$48</td>
<td>$48</td>
<td>$48</td>
<td>$48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource Family</td>
<td>$923</td>
<td>$1,027</td>
<td>$1,131</td>
<td>$1,235</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Intensive Services Foster Care replaces ITFC and is intended to accommodate probation placements, MTFC, special health care or certain medical placements, an alternative to or step down from residential care, Therapeutic Foster Care or other special populations. The Resource Family must meet a level of specified training and competencies based on the child’s needs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paid to the Resource Family</th>
<th>$2,410</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>$3,482</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services &amp; Supports</td>
<td>$200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$6,092</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ISSUE SPOTTING

• Make sure all previously approved/licensed/certified families are receiving at least $923/month – no need to be RFA to receive new rate

• Assess relative placements for SCI

• Encourage counties to adopt policies to provide financial support to families who take in children on emergency basis during the approval process
EXITING TO PERMANENCE
Resource Family Approval is the **Only** Approval Process for the Caregiver/Family

- Once approved, the resource family “shall be considered approved for adoption or guardianship” (WIC 16519.5(c)(4))
- RFA is in lieu of guardianship approval or adoption home study (WIC 16519.5(c)(5))
- **BUT** approval does not guarantee “an initial, continued or adoptive placement... [and] does not guarantee the establishment of a legal guardianship” (WIC 16519.5(c)(6))
Approval Prior to RFA

- If an individual is approved, certified or licensed under existing law – they can retain that approval/licensure/certification until December 31, 2019 and can adopt/enter guardianship without first meeting RFA standards.

- Families that are adopting who were not approved as resource families will have to go through a separate adoption home study (most likely this includes an additional Live Scan).

- **NOTE:** Once the family has an approved adoption home study, they can be deemed a resource family.
INCREASING CAPACITY FOR HOME-BASED FAMILY CARE
High Cost of Child Care

- Housing 28%
- Food 14%
- Transportation 13%
- Health Care 9%
- Miscellaneous 6%
- Childcare 25%

Total Cost: $68,807

2 Adults, 1 infant, 1 toddler
The Child Care Timing Gap

Foster parents experience a “Timing Gap” between the moment a child is placed with them and the moment—often months later—that they are able to access subsidized child care. This is a major barrier to finding foster homes, especially for very young children.
Foster Care Payments Don’t Cover Child Care

Foster care payments are not income. They cover the costs of

- Food
- Clothing
- Shelter
- Daily Supervision
- School Supplies
- Child’s Personal Incidentals
- Liability insurance with respect to the child
- Reasonable travel to the child’s home for visitation
- Reasonable travel for the child to remain in his or her school of origin
The Child Care Bridge Program

• Top barrier for families is access to child care following immediate placement of a child

• The state budget allocated $15.5 million in fiscal year 2017-2018 to the Child Care Bridge Program (and higher amounts for future years)

• The Bridge Program is a county-optional program
First Component: Child Care Voucher

- **Who is eligible for the child care voucher:**
  - Caregivers completing the approval process, where a child was placed with them on an emergency basis or a compelling reason pursuant to 309/361.45
  - Caregivers approved as resource families pursuant to WIC § 16519.5
  - Parenting youth in foster care under the jurisdiction of juvenile court, including non-minor dependent parents

- **Caregivers or parenting youth must:**
  - Have work or school responsibilities,
  - Parenting activities beyond scope of ordinary parental duties, or
  - Must attend court hearings and trainings related to the child or parenting youth’s dependency case.

- **Six month voucher, but can be extended for an additional six months if the family is unable to secure long-term, subsidized child care**
Second Component: Child Care Navigator

- Employed by a local R&R
- Works with the family, child welfare agency worker, and family team
- Help secure child care at the time of placement and long-term high-quality child care
- Assist with any necessary applications to receive child care
- Ensure families are informed regarding benefits of child care and education
Third Component: Training

- The R&R will provide trauma-informed training and coaching to child care providers

- Training will be developed by the Child Care Resource and Referral Network

- Training topics will include:
  - Infant and toddler development
  - Trauma-informed best care practices
  - Strategies for working with children in foster care
Counties must opt-in to receive child care bridge funding

- Counties must take necessary steps to implement the child care bridge program, such as entering into an agreement with local R&Rs.

- Counties must complete a child care bridge plan using a state form by *November 1, 2017* to receive the funding.
Additional Resources

- **Step Up Coalition Webinars**
  - November 15 at 10-12 PM: All in the Family, How to Recruit, Support, and Engage Kin,
    [https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/2426261908629734913](https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/2426261908629734913)

- **Weekly Question Series on CCR:** [http://kids-alliance.org/implementation-sandbox/](http://kids-alliance.org/implementation-sandbox/)

- **California Youth Connection CCR Toolkit available at:**
QUESTIONS?

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