




Resource Family Approval




Regional Training
Judicial Council of California



What is the Resource Family Approval Program?

RFA Legislative Intent *

To develop a unified, family friendly, and child centered resource family approval process that:

-  Eliminates duplication
-  Increases approval standards
-  Includes approval for: foster care, adoption, guardianship

*Authorized by Assembly Bill 340 Chapter 464, Statutes of 2007) and reauthorized by Senate Bill 1013, (Chapter 35, Statutes of 2012)

RFA Key Messages

Focuses on Lifelong Relationships & Quality Parenting


- No additional assessment of the family for adoption or guardianship.
- Considers family's ability to meet the needs of vulnerable children.


Achieves Results for Children and Families

- Families are better prepared and supported
- Less intrusive to family
- Training and support for all families → more stability, fewer moves.

Improves Efficiency

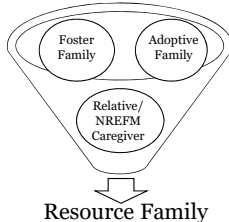
- Eliminates redundant processes





Who Does RFA Affect?


Foster Families → Resource Families



Resource Family Approval:

- Related and non-related families – including those providing a foster care placement for a probation child
- Training for all families
- Resource Families still choose the role they play in the system: temporary or permanent
- Prepared for permanency-no additional approvals necessary

* TAHs are exempt from the RFA process



What Happens When a Child Should Be Placed with a Family Who Is Not Yet Approved?

PLACEMENT PRIOR TO RESOURCE FAMILY APPROVAL

1. Emergency Basis:

- ▶ Must be with relative or nonrelative extended family member
- ▶ Requires WIC 309/361.45 assessment
- ▶ Caregiver must submit RFA application and begin home environment assessment (including background checks) within 5 business days
- ▶ Placements made on an emergency basis may occur at any time during the life of the child's court case

2. Compelling Reason:

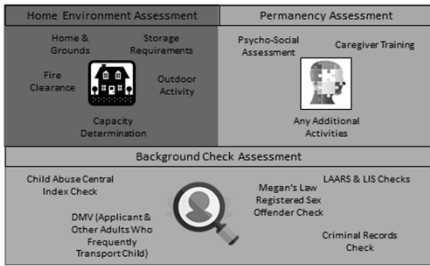
- ▶ Can be with relative/NREFM or someone from the community
- ▶ Based on needs of the child
- ▶ After home environment assessment (including background check) completed
- ▶ Permanency assessment to be completed within 90 days

**AFDC-FC funding is not available to families until full approval has been achieved*

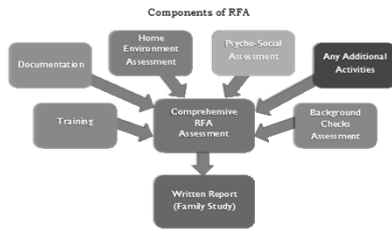
What does a Comprehensive RFA Assessment Look Like?

- ▶ Look at the family as a whole, not just the home
- ▶ One approval standard:
 - ▶ One application
 - ▶ One criminal background check
 - ▶ Combined home environment and psychosocial assessment
 - ▶ Pre- and post-approval training for all families
 - ▶ Annual Updates

Comprehensive Assessment Components



Components of RFA



What is a Psychosocial Assessment and What is its Purpose?

- ▶ 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

Commonly Misunderstood RFA Definitions

- ▶ **Comprehensive Assessment:** An evaluation of an applicant using the home environment assessment, background check, psychosocial assessment and any other factors set forth in the Written Directives for purposes of determining the applicant's suitability as a Resource Family.
- ▶ **Permanency Assessment:** A component of the Resource Family Approval process which meets standards that include, but are not limited to, an applicant's completion of the following: caregiver training, psychosocial assessment, and any other activities that relate to a resource family's ability to achieve permanency with a child.
- ▶ **Psychosocial Assessment:** An in depth description and evaluation of the family system and dynamics that include strengths of a family and areas where more support or resources may be needed for more effective and quality parenting skills. It is one of the three required components of a permanency assessment.
- ▶ **Written Report (aka Written Assessment or Family Study):** A summary, analysis, and determination of an applicant's capacity to foster, adopt, or provide legal guardianship of a child or nonminor dependent based on all the information gathered through the Resource Family application and assessment processes.

Approval Standards	Adoption (Existing)	Relative/NREFM (Existing)	Foster Homes (Existing)	RFA
Criminal Records/Child Abuse Review	✓	✓	✓	✓
Standardized Criteria for Criminal Record Exemptions		✓	✓	✓
Homes and Ground Safety Check	✓	✓	✓	✓
Training Required			✓	✓
Psychosocial Assessment	✓			✓
Applicant References	✓			✓
Annual Review of all families		✓		✓

Conversion of Existing Families - AB 403

- ▶ By 12/31/19, all licensed or certified foster families and approved relatives must be converted to Resource Family approval
- ▶ Families with an approved adoptive homestudy by 1/1/18 and are currently licensed, certified or approved as a relative/NREFM are deemed a Resource Family
- ▶ Approved relatives and licensed and certified foster families with placement in last year may be approved as a Resource Family upon successful completion of a family assessment
- ▶ Licensed foster families with no placement for a year may apply to be a Resource Family



How Are We Going To Pull This Off?

No more business as usual

BUSINESS UNUSUAL

Philosophical Considerations

RFA is much more than just changes to your business operations

- ▶ Cultural shift with agencies, courts, staff
- ▶ Look at families differently
- ▶ Managing the fear of change and the possible impacts on our staff and existing caregivers
- ▶ What will success look like?

Increasing Capacity for Home-Based Family Care

- ▶ Foster Parent Retention, Recruitment and Support (FPRRS) to Resource Families (\$54.7 million TF for CW and PDs - ACL No. 16-52)
- ▶ New rate structure for home-based care based on Level of Care protocol to be informed by the CFT process.
- ▶ Child Welfare, Mental Health, Probation and Education must work together to re-envision the existing patchwork of services into an integrated family-friendly continuum of care and maximize FFP. (Wrap around, Foster Youth Services. etc)
- ▶ Child and Family Teams (CFT) (ACL 16-84)
 - ▶ Drive case planning, placement decisions and care coordination

What's Worked Well for Early Implementing Counties

- ▶ Identify and Engage Stakeholders
 - ▶ Staff (child welfare and probation)
 - ▶ Courts
 - ▶ Community Partners
 - ▶ Resource Families
 - ▶ Youth
- ▶ Start early. Do frequent check ins to see if anyone is missing from the dialogue
- ▶ Encourage open dialogue, clear expectations and flexibility
- ▶ Create a shared vision with Stakeholders
- ▶ Collaborate with other counties



Lessons Learned Since Implementation

- ▶ Separating Out Emergency Placement from RFA process
- ▶ How CDSS forms helped/hindered the process
- ▶ Where clarity or amendments to WD were needed
- ▶ Need to continuously revisit/review RFA policies/procedures/forms to ensure alignment with evolving RFA requirements



Lessons Learned *(continued)*

- ▶ Relatives appreciate the training and find it helpful
- ▶ Importance of providing supports and strategies to assist relatives with process
- ▶ RFA can increase capacity for placements



County Considerations to Ensure Timely Approvals

- ▶ What is important to determine approval/denial of a family and what can wait for pre placement or post approval
- ▶ Additional requirements beyond the Written Directives or added procedures may add delays to timeliness of approvals
- ▶ Examples of requirements potentially creating delays include:
 - ▶ Pre approval training hours beyond the state minimum required
 - ▶ Verification of marriages/dissolutions/deaths (this is required prior to adoption finalization)

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County Considerations to Ensure Timely Approvals (continued)

- ▶ Examples of added procedures potentially creating delays include:
 - ▶ Bifurcation of RFA process
 - ▶ Many reasons counties considering this option

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County Considerations to Ensure Timely Approvals (continued)

- ▶ If bifurcating, some considerations for timely approvals:
 - ▶ Ensure bifurcated process is not linear
 - ▶ Some counties refer family to contracted agency after 30 days once paperwork and home environment is completed
 - ▶ Other option is to refer immediately and work conjointly: while county gathering paperwork and completing home environment, other agency is working on psychosocial assessment
- ▶ Recruitment of Resource Families – don't let the recruited families get lost in the shuffle

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Final Takeaways

- ▶ RFA is a longer approval process
 - ▶ This is new and we are all learning
- ▶ RFA continues to evolve
 - ▶ We don't have all the answers yet

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Questions and Contact Info

- ▶ Welfare and Institutions Code section 16519.5
<http://www.leginfo.ca.gov>
- ▶ Additional CCR information on the CDSS website at:
<http://www.cdss.ca.gov/cdssweb/default.htm>
- ▶ Resource Family Approval Program - RFA*
<http://www.childsworld.ca.gov/PG3416.htm>
- ▶ Quality Parenting Initiative - QPI
<http://www.qpicalifornia.org>
- ▶ Questions can be sent to: ccr@dss.ca.gov or rfa@dss.ca.gov

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Questions



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