

January 1, 2023

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ALL COUNTY LETTER NO. 23-02

The purpose of this All County Letter is to inform county child welfare agencies and juvenile probation departments of the Flexible Family Supports and Home-Based Foster Care funding provided by the Budget Act of 2022 ([Assembly Bill 179, Section 148, Provision 32, Chapter 249, Statutes of 2022](#)), and provide guidance regarding the instructions for counties to access the funding and associated reporting requirements.



KIM JOHNSON
DIRECTOR

CALIFORNIA HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
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GAVIN NEWSOM
GOVERNOR

January 1, 2023

ALL COUNTY LETTER NO. 23-02

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS
ALL CHIEF PROBATION OFFICERS
ALL CHILD WELFARE SERVICES PROGRAM MANAGERS
ALL FOSTER CARE MANAGERS
ALL COUNTY WELFARE FISCAL OFFICERS

SUBJECT: FLEXIBLE FAMILY SUPPORTS AND HOME-BASED FOSTER CARE FUNDING

REFERENCE: [ASSEMBLY BILL 179, SECTION 148, PROVISION 32 \(CHAPTER 249, STATUTES OF 2022\)](#)

This All County Letter (ACL) provides counties with instructions and guidance regarding Flexible Family Supports and Home-Based Foster Care funding provided by [Assembly Bill \(AB\) 179](#), the Budget Act of 2022. The [AB 179](#) appropriated \$50 million General Fund in one-time funding, available for expenditure until June 30, 2025, for County Welfare Departments (CWD), County Probation Departments (CPD), and participating Tribes that elect to access the funds to increase home-based family care and provide additional resources to children and youth in foster care, and their foster caregivers¹.

The funding includes a five percent set-aside for participating Tribes.² The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) will consult with federally recognized Tribes in California regarding the procedures, allocations, and reporting requirements for accessing this funding. Following tribal consultation, CDSS will release additional programmatic guidance for participating Tribes that elect to access this funding.

¹ For the purpose of this letter, "foster caregiver" means relative caregivers, resource families, tribally approved homes, a home with a placement funded pursuant to [Welfare and Institutions Code \(WIC\) Section 11461.3](#), and the home of a relative or nonrelative extended family member, or extended family member as defined in [WIC Section 224.1](#) in the case of an Indian child, with an emergency placement pursuant to [WIC Sections 309, 319, 361.45](#), or [727.05](#), or a compelling reason placement pursuant to subdivision (e) of [WIC Section 16519.5](#).

² For the purpose of this letter, "participating Tribes" means those Tribes, consortia of Tribes, or Tribal Organizations that elect to access this funding and that have or will enter a state agreement pursuant to [WIC section 10553.1](#) or in accordance with 25 U.S.C. 1919.

Background and Additional Flexible Family Supports and Home-Based Foster Care Funding Information

Support for foster caregivers can reduce the need for changes in placements and increase life-long familial connections for children and youth in care. Flexible Family Supports and Home-Based Foster Care funding is intended to increase the use of home-based family care and provide increased support to children and youth to maintain these connections.

This funding is being made available to support children and youth placed with relative caregivers, resource families, tribally approved homes, a home with a placement funded pursuant to [WIC Section 11461.3](#), and the home of a relative or nonrelative extended family member, or extended family member as defined in [WIC Section 224.1](#) in the case of an Indian child, with an emergency placement pursuant to [WIC Sections 309, 319, 361.45, or 727.05](#), or a compelling reason placement pursuant to subdivision (e) of [WIC Section 16519.5](#). Funds can also be used for the purpose of making one of the family based placements possible for a child or youth who is currently in a more restrictive placement.

The [AB 179](#) mandates the funds to be used for the following:

1. Respite care.
2. Costs to facilitate a foster caregiver and child's participation in child and youth enrichment activities that are not covered by the caregiver-specific rate and that would stabilize the placement or enhance the child's well-being.

*** Note that "Extracurricular and enrichment activities" are activities that are designed to enhance the foster child or nonminor dependent's skills, abilities, self-esteem, relationships, and overall well-being and healing, and include, but are not limited to, the following: (A) Lessons or time spent engaging in music, dance, or drama. (B) Summer camp attendance (including travel and supplies or equipment). (C) Sports team or activity participation (including transportation and supplies or equipment). (D) Community activities. (E) Trips and excursions with or without peers, caregivers, and family. (F) Other age-appropriate activities, including hobbies and activities, chosen by the child or nonminor dependent that are provided in a formal or informal setting and provide healing and/or help the youth establish supportive relationships.

3. Supports to enable or continue a foster child's relative or nonrelative extended family member connections, which may include a child's tribe, tribal community, or tribal cultural events in the case of an Indian child.

***Note that it is important to maintain social and cultural connections to family and community, both when a child is placed with a relative/NREFM and when they are placed in another home-based setting. For example, support provided under this category may include transportation to enable the child or family member/extended family member to visit and participate in activities together.

4. Concrete costs associated with facilitating a placement with a relative or nonrelative extended family member, or extended family member as defined in [WIC Section 224.1](#) in the case of an Indian child, who otherwise would be unable to take the placement due to current housing arrangement limitations.

***Note that concrete costs include the provision of financial assistance, including assistance needed to expediently resolve a Corrective Action Plan or other home environment assessment issues (including, when necessary for the well-being of the child, moving costs when the caregiver needs to move to a larger home, e.g. to take in sibling sets).

5. For any other activities or direct supports and services that further the intent of this provision, as specified by the department in written instructions or as authorized by the department in response to a request for approval by the county.
 - o If a county intends to use the funding for anything other than the items listed above (1-4) they must first submit a request to the CDSS via email to FFSFunding@dss.ca.gov and receive written authorization from CDSS prior to utilizing funds for their requested activity, support, or service. The request submitted via email shall include:
 - The name of the county contact.
 - The intended use of the funds and how using the funds in that manner will increase the use of home-based family care and/or increase the provision of services and supports to children in foster care and their foster caregivers.
 - The estimated amount of the funds allocated to the county that will be used for this activity/service.

Request for Funding Letter of Intent

All CWDs and CPDs must inform CDSS of their decision to elect to access the funding by submitting a Request for Funding Letter of Intent (Attachment I). Letters of Intent will be **accepted on a rolling basis through July 1, 2024**. Please refer to Attachment I for more detail. The CWDs and CPDs are not required to provide an estimate of anticipated spending for the specific allowable activities.

Please note: The Request for Funding Letter of Intent must be sent electronically to FFSFunding@dss.ca.gov.

Reporting Requirements

All CWDs and CPDs that elect to access this funding must submit an annual Reporting Requirements and Evaluation form (Attachment II) by July 31st of each year in which funds are claimed. The form must be filled out in its entirety and detail the outcomes achieved as a direct result of the funding claimed in the FY directly preceding the report. Please refer to Attachment II for more detail.

Please note: The annual Reporting Requirements and Evaluation form (Outcomes Report) must be sent electronically to FFSFunding@dss.ca.gov.

Funding Allocation and Claiming

The funding will be allocated by CDSS to participating CWDs and CPDs by January 2023. The funding is available for expenditure until June 30, 2025. The funding must supplement and not supplant any existing services and supports. Allocation and claiming County Fiscal Letters will be forthcoming.

Contacts

Any policy questions regarding this ACL should be directed to the Foster Caregiver Policy and Support Unit at (916) 651-7465 or via email at FFSFunding@dss.ca.gov. Questions concerning fiscal claiming should be directed to fiscal.systems@dss.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Original Document Signed By

ANGIE SCHWARTZ
Deputy Director
Children and Family Services Division

Attachments

**Flexible Family Supports and Home-Based Foster Care Request for Funding
Letter of Intent**

*This form is to be completed by counties that elect to access the funding. Letters of Intent will be **accepted on a rolling basis through July 1, 2024**. All funding expires on June 30, 2025, and all services using these funds must be encumbered by this date.*

County Name: _____

Indicate the primary contact regarding the request for funding.

Contact Name and Title: _____

Address: _____

Email Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

I. PROGRAM DETAIL: SERVICES AND SUPPORTS TO BE PROVIDED

In the Letter of Intent, please address the following:

- 1) If you have an existing program that provides additional services and supports to children, youth, and their foster caregivers, please describe your current program and how you will utilize the funding to enhance that program including the projected number of children/youth who will be served with these additional funds.
- 2) Describe your capacity to design and implement any additional services and supports through the Flexible Family Supports and Home-Based Foster Care funding to either your existing program(s) or to start a new program. Please include any steps that will need to be taken in order to maximize the use of the funding. For example, include items related to developing or finalizing formal partnerships with contractors.
- 3) Describe the county plans to provide financial assistance that will be available to support the expenses associated with securing and maintaining home-based placements (clothing, furniture, etc.). Counties should leverage community-based organizations (CBOs) for tangible items first.

**II. COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTOR'S/CHIEF PROBATION OFFICER'S
CERTIFICATION**

I certify that the County will administer the Flexible Family Supports and Home-Based Foster Care funding pursuant to the conditions set forth by the California Department of

Social Services. I certify that the information completed above and attached is true and correct.

Director's/Chief's Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION FORM

Counties must submit this annual report to CDSS by July 31st for each fiscal year in which funds are claimed. The CDSS will send out a survey tool to collect the information below in March of each fiscal year.

- 1) Number of children/youth served.
- 2) Number of children/youth provided respite care.
- 3) Number of children/youth who participated in enrichment activities that are not covered by the caregiver-specific rate and that would stabilize the placement or enhance the child's well-being. Please describe enrichment activities.
- 4) Number of children/youth provided with supports to enable or continue a foster child's relative or nonrelative extended family member connections, which may include a child's tribe, tribal community, or tribal cultural events in the case of an Indian child. Please describe direct supports and/or services.
- 5) Number of children/youth provided with concrete costs associated with facilitating a placement with a relative or nonrelative extended family member, or extended family member as defined in Section 224.1 of the Welfare and Institutions Code in the case of an Indian child, who otherwise would be unable to take the placement due to current housing arrangement limitations. Please describe concrete costs.
- 6) Number of children/youth provided with any other activities or direct supports and services that further the intent of this provision, as specified by the department in written instructions or as authorized by the department in response to a request for approval by the county. Please describe direct supports and/or services.
- 7) Number of children/youth who could not be provided with additional services and supports. Please explain.
- 8) Describe how data and outcomes are or will be used to inform continuous quality improvement and/or any future plans to continue providing additional services and support.