

County of Santa Clara

Social Services Agency

373 West Julian Street
San Jose, California 95110-2335



Greetings resource parents,

Let us begin by saying **thank you** for all you do every day for children and families.

In keeping with the **Quality Parenting Initiative (QPI)** and the **Child & Family Practice Model (CFPM)**, the Department is working to increase its partnership with resource families. This policy is to clarify and standardize the processes for reciprocal communication between resource families and social workers (and other DFCS Staff). Our goal is to increase communication and ensure timely response for the parenting needs of our children.

Due to the nature of the work, an immediate (or within 24-hour) response from the case-carrying social worker is not always possible. However, meeting the needs of our resource parents remains a priority. Resource parents are encouraged to reach out for additional assistance in the event the social worker is unavailable, as meeting the needs of children and families is a shared responsibility within the agency.

Recommendations for Both Resource Parents & Social Worker

Everyday Communication

For everyday communications and matters that do not require an immediate response, social workers and resource parents are encouraged to identify together what their **preferred methods of communication are** (i.e. phone calls, texts, emails, etc.). **As a courtesy, both social workers and resource parents appreciate an acknowledgement that a message was received.**

Please note that when sending information to social workers that would be pertinent for the rest of the team, social workers appreciate having team members Cc'd on emails so they do not have to separately inform other team members.

***For the purposes of this letter, business hours are defined as 8:00am – 5:00pm Monday through Friday.**

Recommendations Specific to Resource Parents

Time-Sensitive Communication

When time-sensitive, non-crisis needs or concerns arise (e.g. visitation changes, travel arrangements, pressing school needs), resource parents are advised to use email to communicate with social workers and other DFCS staff. This will initiate and track the process while expediting a response. Additionally, if the resource parent and social worker have identified text as a good means of communication, the resource parent can also text the social worker to inform them of the need or to get a brief update and

Board of Supervisors: Mike Wasserman, Cindy Chavez, Otto Lee, Susan Ellenberg, S. Joseph Simitian
County Executive: Jeffrey V. Smith

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should follow up with an email. Refer to the enclosed DFCS Roster or call the DFCS Lobby at 408/501-6300 for contact information:

- **Step 1:** Email child's social worker – indicate in the email when a response is needed by. Give the social worker **at least 24-** business hours to respond. - - **If response is needed sooner or no response within 24 business hours - proceed to Step 2;**
- **Step 2:** Forward the original email to the social worker's supervisor and **include the social worker**, the Resource Family Approval (RFA) Social Worker and Cc your resource family support agency:
 - Resource Advocacy Support Services - **RASS** – Seneca – For recruited resource families,
 - Relative/NREFM Support Team – **RST** - Catholic Charities – For relative or Non-Related Extended Family Members (NREFM) resource families,
 - Kinship Adoptive Foster Parent Association – **KAFPA** - For all resource families with a membership (please note the first year membership fee is waived for all newly approved resource families – when resource family enrolls);
- **Steps 3:** If the matter continues to be unresolved, forward the email chain (making sure to include all other team members), to the supervisor's manager and the RFA Manager (see roster).
***If you do not have access to email, please follow the same steps via phone, taking note of who and when you called each party. Please be sure to leave messages detailing the specific needs you are calling for.**

If you need immediate assistance during Business Hours-

San Jose - Call 408-501-6300 & request the Officer Of the Day (OD) for worker's unit. If the case is in Dependency Investigations (DI), call the DI Clerical at 408-501-6400 and ask for a DI manager.

South County – Call 408-758-3440 & request the OD for the worker's unit.

Crisis Support

For crises/emergencies (threats of harm to self or others, threats of running away, severe emotional instability) that need an immediate response, do not wait 24 hours for a response from the social worker. **Use the following resources:**

- Seneca Rapid Response Team – Resource Advocacy Support Services **RASS** – 1-877-529-5720
- Uplift Family Services Mobile Crisis Program 408/379-9085 or toll free 1-877-41-CRISIS
- Alum Rock Mobile Crisis Response & Counseling (MCRC) 408/294-0579
- Family Urgent Response System 1-833-939-FURS (3877)
- After Business Hours – Child Abuse & Neglect Center (CANC) – 1-833-722-5437(KIDS)

***In the event of an immediate life-threatening emergency, call 911.**

Recommendations Specific to Social Workers

Time-Sensitive Communication

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When time-sensitive needs for resource-family response arise, social workers have been advised to **reach out to the resource parent via their preferred means of communication**. The following process has been advised:

- **Step 1:** Contact child's resource parent via their preferred method of communication – give the resource parent **at least** 24-hours to respond. **If a response is needed sooner or no response within 24 business hours - proceed to Step 2;**
- **Step 2:** Email Resource Family Approval (RFA) Social Worker and Cc the resource parent and the appropriate resource family support agency:
 - Resource Advocacy Support Services - **RASS** – Seneca – For recruited resource families,
 - Relative/NREFM Support Team – **RST** - Catholic - Charities – For relative or Non-Related Extended Family Members (NREFM) resource families,
 - Kinship Adoptive Foster Parent Association – **KAFPA** - For all resource families with a membership (please note automatic first year membership for all newly approved resource families);
- **Steps 3:** If the matter continues to be unresolved, forward the email chain (including all other parties), to the RFA Supervisor and Cc your own supervisor;
- **Step 4:** If the matter continues to need attention, forward the email chain to the RFA Manager (including all other parties) and Cc your own manager.

Crisis Response (for Social Workers)

For other crises/emergencies that need an immediate response, do not wait the 24 hours for a response from support agencies or RFA staff. If child abuse is suspected, make a Suspected Child Abuse Report (SCAR) to the Child Abuse and Neglect Center. For other situations such as threats of harm to self or others, threats of running away or general concern about safety or wellbeing use the resources below and/or conduct a home visit.

- Seneca Rapid Response Team – Resource Advocacy Support Services **RASS** – 1-877-529-5720
- Uplift Family Services Mobile Crisis Program 408/379-9085 or toll free 1-877-41CRISIS
- Alum Rock Mobile Crisis Response & Counseling (MCRC) 408/294-0579
- After Business Hours – Child Abuse & Neglect Center (CAN Center) – 1-833-722-5437 (KIDS)
- **In the event of an immediate life-threatening emergency, call 911.**

Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTM) facilitated by a neutral party at DFCS are available as a resource to facilitate partnering and collaboration and co-parenting to avoid placement disruptions. At such a meeting, the Child and Family's Team (CFT - including resource parents, birth parents youth and

services providers) can be gathered to discuss plans, needs and the parenting of youth. CFTMs can be requested through the child's social worker.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. We understand the complexity and emotionally challenging processes within the Child Welfare System. Due to these challenges, effective communication is critical to support productive relationships and everyone's wellbeing. These relationships and communication influence placement stability, reunification and permanency.

If you have any questions or thoughts you would like to share, feel free to call or email the QPI Coordinator, Amber Brandom at (408) 501-6391 or amber.brandom@ssa.sccgov.org.

Sincerely,

The QPI Steering Committee
QPI Work Groups (including social workers and resource parents)
DFCS Executive Management.