



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ) FOR AGENCY STAFF

GENERAL

What is Resource Family Approval?

Resource Family Approval – also known as RFA – is a method of approving caregivers to foster, adopt, or provide legal guardianship for the care and supervision of children, youth, and young adults in the child welfare and probation systems. Mandated by California state statute, RFA creates a platform for all Resource Families to receive the same information, training, and opportunity for support.

What is a Resource Family?

A Resource Family has undergone a streamlined approval process that combines elements of prior approval or licensing processes that were once separated out, including foster care licensing, relative approval, and adoption approval requirements. A Resource Family, whether they are related to a child, youth, or young adult in foster care or not, is considered to be approved to provide care for a court dependent or ward for a short term basis (foster care) or permanent basis (adoption or legal guardianship), depending on the Resource Family's interest and the child's case plan. There is no longer a need to undergo any additional approval processes. Approval of a Resource Family does not guarantee placement of a child. Placement decisions are still based on a child's best interests.

TRAINING

Is there specialized training?

Yes. Pre-approval training is provided, and all Resource Family applicants are required to attend. CPR and First Aid are also required. In addition to pre-approval training, post-approval training is also required of all Resource Families. Training is required to maintain current knowledge and encourage growth as a caregiver. Topics and hours required are determined by the county, though RFA Written Directives do mandate some topics to be addressed in the pre-approval training.

BENEFITS

What do Resource Families receive with RFA?

In addition to the benefits of providing a loving home and committed relationship to a child, youth, or young adult, Resource Families receive:

- Monthly financial assistance
- Agency sponsored resources

- Monthly home visits from the child’s, youth’s, or young adult’s social worker
- Ongoing trainings and classes

APPLICANT REQUIREMENTS

What documents are required for proof of identity?

Please be advised that “proof of identity” is not defined in the Written Directives (Section 05-03). Accordingly, counties have the discretion to determine what acceptable proof of identity is. Best practice has suggested that acceptable proof of identity may include, but is not limited to:

- Valid U.S. photo driver license or photo ID card
- Original or Certified Birth Certificate
- Foreign birth certificates, not issued in English, must be translated and accompanied by a Certificate of Accurate Translation.
- Valid Military Identification
- Valid, Unexpired United States Passport
- Valid, Unexpired Foreign Passport
- United States Citizenship and Immigration Service Documentation

Please note: All RFA applicants and adults living in the home are subject to a background checks assessment pursuant to Section 06-02 in the Written Directives. Accordingly, they will need to provide acceptable proof of identity to the Live Scan operator to complete the criminal records check.

APPROVAL PROCESS

Do existing caregivers need to be approved as a Resource Family?

No, at this time, if a caregiver is currently licensed for foster care or approved for relative care, he/she will not be required to be assessed as a Resource Family. After statewide implementation has occurred, policies regarding the long term plan for existing licensed foster families and approved relatives will be enacted.

Will Resource Families need to go through multiple approval processes?

No. Once RFA is completed, Resource Families will not need to undergo any additional approval process if they want to move to legal guardianship or adoption, or to care for another child, youth, or young adult (related or unrelated) in the home.

Resource Families are required to have an annual update to their existing approval.

Does RFA affect Probation youth in Placement?

Yes, any new family wishing to provide care to a child or youth through foster care or probation shall go through the RFA process.

Does RFA impact Tribally Approved Homes?

No, RFA does not impact Tribally Approved Homes at this time.

Does RFA impact Foster Family Agencies (FFA) homes?

No, not at this time, however in 2017, all FFAs must implement RFA into their standards of practice. Some FFAs may choose to be an Early Implementer of RFA in 2016.

REQUIREMENTS

Can child welfare and probation agencies continue to use their current process or must they comply with RFA?

For staff or families working within a RFA county, RFA is not optional. On January 1, 2017 all counties are mandated to implement RFA.

What is required of a Resource Family?

Resource Families are required to maintain standards, attend post-approval training, and participate in an annual update, which includes a home visit as described in the RFA Written Directives.

PLACEMENTS PRIOR TO APPROVAL

Can a child, youth or young adult be placed with a caregiver prior to their approval as a Resource Family?

Yes, a county may place a child with a caregiver prior to approval in two circumstances:

- Emergency placement with relatives and non-relative extended family members (NREFM)
- Placement of a child based on a compelling reason

Please be advised AFDC-FC funding for an eligible child cannot be authorized until approval as a Resource Family has occurred. Please review Section 7 of the Written Directives for more information as the requirements for an emergency placement and a compelling reason placement are different.

After an emergency placement has occurred, what must the caregiver agree to do to complete Resource Family Approval?

If the caregiver wishes to continue with placement of the child beyond the emergency basis, then he/she must, within five business days of placement, submit a RFA application and supporting documentation, participate in face-to-face interviews conducted by the county, and permit the county to perform a home environment assessment. Within ten business days of placement, the applicant and all adults residing in the home must comply with the background checks assessment requirements. The applicant and all persons residing in the home must also participate in the permanency assessment, so the county can complete the assessment within 90 days of placement.

SOCIAL WORKER (SW) AND PROBATION OFFICER (PO) ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

What is the SW and PO role/responsibility during an emergency placement?

Before leaving a child, youth, or young adult in a home as an emergency placement pending RFA completion, the SW/PO must complete criminal records checks on all adults in the home via California Law Enforcement Telecommunications System and Child Abuse Child Index, and inspect the homes and grounds to determine whether they are free of conditions that may pose an undue risk to the health and safety of a child, youth or young adult.

After a child, youth, or young adult has been placed; the designated agency representative will support the family through completion of RFA.

ADOPTION

After a RFA has been granted and a family completes an adoption, will the adult family members have to live scan again for a subsequent adoption?

Adult family members would not have to live scan again unless the family had not maintained their approval as a Resource Family.

However, for as long as a Resource Family maintains approval, any new adult family members living in the home would need to be live scanned, including the family's own children living in the home who have reached majority age.

WRITTEN DIRECTIVES

At what point are the Written Directives given to the family?

There is no specific requirement that the families need to be given the Written Directives. It is, however, encouraged that families become familiar with the Written Directives so they can maintain continual compliance.

If a RFA application is denied, does the applicant receive a copy of the written assessment? Yes, the family should always be provided a copy of the written assessment regardless of approval or denial.

If a RFA application is denied, what procedures should the county follow?

If an application is denied or a Resource Family approval is rescinded, the county shall provide the applicant with written notice of the basis of the denial or rescission and of the right to appeal pursuant to Section 11 of the Written Directives.

What are the timeline/timeframe/deadlines for the Health Screening?

A health screening completed by a licensed health professional must not be older than 180 days from the date of the RFA application and a test for tuberculosis must not be more than one year old.