



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Administration for  
Children & Families

Refer to:

Region IX  
50 United Nations Plaza  
San Francisco, CA 94102

June 24, 2003

Grantland Johnson, Secretary  
Health and Human Services Agency  
2600 Ninth Street, Room 460  
Sacramento, California 95814

Rita Saenz, Director  
Department of Social Services  
744 P Street  
Sacramento, California 95814

Dear Secretary Johnson and Ms. Saenz:

This is to notify you that the June 11 submittal of California's Child and Family Service Review (CFSR) Program Improvement Plan (PIP), with additional revisions submitted on June 24, to address the findings of the CFSR Final Report issued on January 10 **is hereby approved, effective July 1, 2003 through June 30, 2005**. We note that for items 20 (1) and 28, the State continues to examine the feasibility of different methodologies to measure whether the goals are achieved. If you find that the methodologies you are exploring are preferred, we will expect you to submit a request to re-negotiate the changes by no later than June 30, 2003.

The initial PIP was submitted timely to the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Regional Office on April 10. During our review of the PIP, the ACF Regional Office requested and received additional information from the State that would assist us in determining whether the PIP would be acceptable. A revised PIP was submitted on May 2. It was disapproved by the Regional Office on May 12 because it did not address our request for additional information contained in our April 17 letter and, therefore, did not satisfactorily meet the provisions of 45 CFR 1355.35(a).

We appreciate the amount of time and effort you, your staff, and other partners devoted to developing and revising the PIP and look forward to State and local progress in its implementation to achieve improved outcomes for the State's children and families. The ACF Regional Office, in collaboration with the State, counties, and other partners, will evaluate the State's progress towards achieving the goals of the PIP as follows:

- The ACF Regional Office will monitor the State's progress in completing the provisions of the PIP through the State's written (or electronic) quarterly status reports to be submitted beginning October 30, 2003. All reports will be submitted within 30 days from the end of each quarter. The final reporting quarter ends June 30, 2005; therefore, the last PIP quarterly report is due by July 30, 2005.

- The quarterly reports will include at a minimum the following information: (1) a description of progress made during the reporting period and (2) data about measurable factors and their relationship to the established benchmarks and timeframes. All products and materials that are produced as a result of the implementation of the PIP will be made available to ACF. (We strongly encourage you to use the PIP matrix to prepare the quarterly reports.)
- The ACF Regional Office and the State will jointly evaluate the State's progress in implementing the PIP in collaboration with other members of the Child and Family Services Review Team in November 2003 and November 2004 as part of the Regional Office's joint planning process with the State and in April 2004 and April 2005 as the State begins developing the Annual Progress and Services Report. These face-to face assessments will be based on the measures and methods of evaluation identified in the PIP.
- Action steps and goals included in the PIP will be evaluated for completion according to the manner and expected completion dates specified in the PIP. The ACF Regional Office and the State may jointly determine that action steps have been completed and/or goals achieved before the projected completion dates, based on sufficient evidence/information. When this occurs, the ACF Regional Office and the State will not be required to further evaluate the goal during the remainder of the PIP implementation period.
- In the event that an anticipated barrier prevents the implementation or the delay of an action step, the State will contact the Regional Office immediately for further negotiation. The State will report the status of such action in the quarterly report.

We note that for a number of Action Steps you will initiate a request to the Children's Bureau for approval to make modifications to the automated child welfare system (CWS/CMS). As we explained to your staff during several of our conference calls, the approval of this PIP does not ensure that the approval of your request will be granted.

Penalties are suspended while the State is implementing the PIP. If the Regional Office determines, however, that the State fails to submit quarterly reports or does not make satisfactory progress towards achieving the goals and the action steps in a timely manner, then the suspension of penalties will cease and withholding of Federal funds will begin pursuant to 45 CFR 1355.36(e)(2)(i) & (ii).

While we recognize that the corrective actions outlined in this approved PIP are challenging, the results of their successful implementation will yield positive results for the children and families in California's child welfare system. This PIP establishes the minimum levels of program improvements; we expect the State's performance to surpass these targets.

As the State proceeds with the counties to implement the PIP, we are prepared to work closely with you to build on the collaboration partnership that was established during the PIP's development. We will assist in rolling out the PIP by participating with you in a statewide orientation aimed at informing State staff, the Counties, and other State partners about the PIP. In addition, because Los Angeles County is a major focus in the plan, we are available to travel with you to Los Angeles for a county-specific orientation session. Also, we encourage the State to consider establishing an implementation team to assist and provide advice during the two-year corrective action period of the PIP. As mentioned in the past, technical assistance is available from my staff and the National Resource Centers. Please contact Debra Samples at (415) 437-8626 or Pat Pianko at (415) 437-8462 prior to July 1 to initiate an implementation meeting.

Enclosed are copies of the approved PIP and the signed PIP agreement form. The PIP will be made available to the public by ACF. In addition, we remind you that Federal regulations at 45 CFR 1355.37 require the State to make available for public review and inspection all statewide assessments, reports of findings, and the PIP developed as a result of the CFSR.

If you have questions or comments related to the PIP, please call John Kersey at (415) 437-8415.

Sincerely,

/s/

Sharon M. Fujii  
Regional Administrator

Enclosures

cc: Joan Ohl, ACYF  
Susan Orr, CB  
Jerry Milner, CB  
Agnes Lee, CHHSA  
Sylvia Pizzini, CDSS  
Wes Beers, CDSS