SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY PROBATION DEPARTMENT
ADMINISTRATIVE MANUAL

TO: ALL STAFF                                    BULLETIN #: 237

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CHIEF PROBATION OFFICER

REPLACES: 11/28/2011

ISSUE DATE: 7/24/18

SUBJECT: FAMILY FINDER

POLICY

Section 628 of the California Welfare and Institutions Code requires that when a child is removed from their home, relatives should be located, contacted and told about the child’s removal and how the relative can choose to help the child during this difficult time. This process is known as Family Finder.

PROCEDURES

A. General Guidelines

1. A child is at imminent risk of removal from the home because of one of the following issues which are impacting the safety and well-being of the child and family:
   a. The child has placement orders and has been removed from his or her family
   b. The child has an open 300 WIC Dependency order for foster care or services
   c. The Probation Officer determines that the child/family needs specified services in order for the child to safely remain in his/her home.

2. A child deemed to be an imminent risk of removal from his/her home is defined as a “Reasonable Candidate”.

3. A child shall be reviewed for his/her “Reasonable Candidate” status every six months with his/her case plan review.

4. The Probation Officer shall complete the Assessment of Imminent Risk and Documentation of Reasonable Candidate form (Attachment A).

B. In Custody Intake

1. Upon the submittal of a Detention Report, the Intake Probation Officer shall run a Family Finder search through LexisNexis on all youth who are deemed “Reasonable Candidates” to determine all possible relatives that may be a potential placement for the youth.
2. All possible relatives discovered through Family Finder shall be included in the Detention Report.

3. If a youth is eligible for release from Juvenile Hall; however, a parent and/or guardian is not available, the Intake Probation Officer shall run a Family Finder search to attempt to locate a suitable relative for the immediate release of the youth.

C. Assessments Unit

1. Upon the submittal of an Affidavit on an out-of-custody citation, the Assessment Probation Officer shall run a Family Finder search on all youth who are deemed “Reasonable Candidates” to determine all possible relatives that may be a potential placement for the youth.

2. When unable to contact the youth’s parent and/or guardian because a lack of current information, the Assessment Probation Officer shall run a Family Finder search in an attempt to locate the youth’s parent and/or guardian.

3. If a youth fails to attend an Assessment intake appointment, the Assessment Probation Officer shall run a Family Finder search to locate additional contact information.

D. Investigations Unit

1. During the investigation process of youth who are deemed “Reasonable Candidates”, the Investigations Probation Officer shall determine all possible relatives and send a Family Finder letter within 30 days of the receipt or assignment of the social history report. (Attachment B)

2. All possible relatives discovered through Family Finder shall be included in the social history report.

3. The Investigations Probation Officer shall consider all potential relatives found in Family Finder as possible placement alternatives before making an out-of-home placement recommendation.

E. Supervision Units

1. Prior to recommending out-of-home placement for a Violation of Probation or a Modification of Probation on a youth who had been deemed a “Reasonable Candidate”, the Supervising Probation Officer shall run a Family Finder search for and utilize previously gathered information to determine all potential relatives for the possible placement of the youth.

2. The Probation Officer shall make contact with possible relatives to determine if they are interested in being a relative caregiver prior to making an out-of-home
placement recommendation.

**Placement**

1. All youth who are ordered to out-of-home placements are considered “Reasonable Candidates.”

2. Upon receiving general placement orders, the Placement Probation Officer shall run a Family Finder search to determine all potential relatives for the possible placement of the youth.

3. The Placement Probation Officer shall consider all previous Family Finder efforts to determine suitable placements when appropriate and necessary.
# Evaluation of Imminent Risk and Reasonable Candidacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>DOB:</th>
<th>J:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
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The minor is under the age of 18 ☐-Yes ☐-No. If no, stop here; the child is not a candidate for foster care. The minor is the subject of a §602 petition ☐-Yes ☐-No. If no, stop here; the child is not a candidate for foster care.

Delinquency, substance abuse, criminal behaviors are not in or of themselves a reason the child is at imminent risk of foster care placement.

- **Parent or guardian in need of support services to ensure effective care and control of child in the home**
  - ☐ Parent is physically or mentally unable to provide adequate care without preventative services
  - ☐ Parent is unwilling to have the minor remain in the home without preventative services
  - ☐ Parent is unable to provide adequate care because of criminal conduct, minimizes child’s behavior, periodic or prolonged absence, or incarceration
  - ☐ Parent has another child in foster care
  - Other: ☐
  - Does not apply

- **Family has recent (within 6 months) or current involvement with a Social Services agency**
  - ☐ Child is a dependent of the Court
  - ☐Parents/guardians currently participating in a Family Maintenance, Family Preservation or another voluntary program
  - ☐ Child had a recent Foster Care placement as a dependent or voluntary placement
  - Other: ☐
  - Does not apply

- **Current pattern of repeated or increasing uncontrollable behavior**
  - ☐ Child has great difficulty being safely maintained in a community placement environment such as school setting, community intervention program, or day program
  - ☐ Child has demonstrated a pattern of engaging in delinquent behaviors or has increased participation in such behaviors despite the use of community intervention
  - Other: ☐
  - Does not apply

- **Deterioration in family relations**
  - ☐ Child isolates self from others and does not engage family members
  - ☐ Family home environment is characterized by frequent conflict or violence
  - ☐ Minor dissociates self from family members and prefers association of peers
  - Other: ☐
  - Does not apply

- **Nature of offense indicates risk to self or others**
  - ☐ Victim resides in the same home as the child
  - ☐ Access to victim remains likely
  - ☐ Offense indicates risk of future self-harm
  - Other: ☐
  - Does not apply

- **Recent (within 6 months) runaway or beyond control behavior in the home setting**
  - ☐ Child has left home regularly without permission and engaged in risky behavior
  - ☐ Consequences for poor behavior have little or no effect
  - Other: ☐
  - Does not apply

Attachment A
Recent (within 6 months) or current drug use/abuse by minor or parent (alone is not sufficient for imminent risk must be accompanied by another risk factor)
- Substance abuse by parent(s)
- Substance abuse by minor
- Other: 
- Does not apply

Other current or recent (within 6 months) indicators of imminent risk. Supervisor review and approval needed
- Yes
- No
- Explain:

Additional Comments: 

The child is not or is no longer at imminent risk of removal to foster care for the following reason(s): If no, stop here.
The child is/remain at imminent risk of removal to foster care.

Preliminary review indicates the child/family may need the following services in order for the child to remain safely in his/her home:

- Medical services
- Education services
- Substance Abuse services
- Gang education/intervention
- Abuse counseling/services
- Family conflict services
- Juvenile Justice Accountability
- Mental Health services
- Independent Living Program
- Anger management services
- Parenting classes
- Sex offender therapy
- Social/Life Skills services
- Other:

A complete assessment and case plan are being done by the Probation Officer to further clarify issues and refine identified needed services for the minor to remain safely in his/her home. Absent the effectiveness of these services, the plan is to remove the child from their home for a suitable foster care placement.

**SOURCE DOCUMENTS**
- Delinquency records on Minor
- Criminal records on Parent/Guardian
- Child Welfare records
- School Information: Attendance
- Grades
- Behavior
- Other (please describe): 

Probation Officer

Supervisor

Attachment A
Type date here

Name of relative
Address
City, State ZIP

Re: __________________________
F#: ______________________

Dear: 

I am a Probation Officer for ______________ in San Joaquin County. I am sending you this letter to let you know that proceedings may be started to remove ______________ from his/her parent/guardian and ______________ may be has been temporarily placed in foster care.

______________ has been removed from his/her home.

California law requires that when a child is removed from their home, relatives should be located, contacted and told about the child’s removal and how the relative can choose to help the child during this difficult time. Because you are related to ______________, I am sending you information about ways you can be of help, if you choose to, and how you can contact me about that. A few of the ways that you can help include being involved with helping ______________ get back together with her/his parent, letting me know about other relatives who may want to help, visiting ______________ at his/her foster care home, or having ______________ live with you. You may have other ideas about how you can help that we can talk about.

I would be very pleased to speak with you and answer any questions you have. Your reply to this letter does not obligate you in any way. But, please know that this may be the only notification you receive, and failure to respond may result in the child’s placement and care without your input. Please contact me or my supervisor at the numbers listed below as soon as you can.

Sincerely,

______________________________
Proibation Officer
(209) Telephone #
Email Address@sjgov.org

______________________________
Supervisor’s Name
(209) Telephone #
Email Address@sjgov.org
Important Information for Relatives

Q1: I am the relative of a child who is being removed from his or her home. What should I do?
A1: If you want to be involved in helping the child or family, please contact the child’s social worker, probation officer or their supervisor.

Q2: What can I do to help?
A2: Connections with relatives and family friends are important for all children, especially for children whose families are in crisis. You can give the family support and encouragement as the parents try to resolve the problems that led to the child being removed from them. You can also help by calling and visiting the child, inviting them to your home for holidays and other occasions, remembering birthdays, etc. You can assist the child’s social worker or probation officer in locating other relatives and family friends who might be able to help the child and family, including those who live out of state. You may also want to consider having the child live with you until the child can safely return home.

Q3: What about the child’s brothers and sisters?
A3: In most cases, the goal is to keep brothers and sisters together, but this is not always possible. Even if brothers and sisters have to live in separate homes, you may be able to help them keep in touch through visits and family events.

Q4: If I want the child to live with me, what do I need to do?
A4: You may request to be approved as a relative caregiver. Consider if you can provide for the child on a long-term basis if the child is not able to return to the home of his or her parents. By law, preferential consideration for placement of the child is given to adult grandparents, aunts, uncles, brothers and sisters. Certain requirements must be met:

- Criminal record clearances are obtained for all adults living in the home;
- All adults are screened for prior child abuse histories;
- The home must meet health and safety standards;
- There must be a demonstrated ability to care for and supervise the child; and,
- The relative must agree to ensure the child's personal rights are protected

Q5: There is someone in my household who has a criminal background. Does that mean the child can’t live with me?
A5: No, you can still be considered. Some crimes may be exempted allowing for placement in your home. Each case is reviewed carefully. The social worker or probation officer will give you detailed options based on the findings of the case.

Attachment B
Important Information for Relatives

Q6: What kind of financial and social support will I receive if I choose to be a caregiver?
A6: Once a child is placed in your home you are eligible to apply for financial support which may be available either through the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids Act (CalWORKs) program or foster care funding. The child’s social worker or probation officer will do the following things:

- Assist you in obtaining financial and medical assistance;
- Work with you to access health and dental care for the child;
- Give you information on what to do and who to call if problems occur;
- Have contact with you and the child at least once a month;
- If eligible, provide a yearly clothing allowance for the child;
- Provide assistance with emergencies; and
- Help arrange parent-child visits, counseling and other services the child may need.

Q7: If my home is approved will the child get to live with me?
A7: Not necessarily. You and other relatives may be assessed and approved. This allows the county to have a group of interested relatives to choose from. Where the child will live will be carefully considered based on many factors. The approved home should meet the child’s best interests without further disrupting the child’s life and activities. Things that must be considered are the child’s proximity to the following:
- Their current school;
- Their friends, brothers and sisters, parents, other relatives; and
- The programs and activities the child currently participates in.

The caregiver’s willingness to work with the social worker and the birth parents with the goal of reuniting the child with the birth family is another important factor when deciding about who will care for the child.

Q8: What about visits between the child and the birth parents? How does that work?
A8: The social worker/probation officer and the court will determine how often the child and parent can visit. Relatives and other caring adults may help in many ways to ensure that visits are safe and productive. They may be able to provide a safe space for visits, transport parents and the child to and from visits, and be a supportive familiar presence for the parent and child.

Q9: What happens if the child cannot return home?
A9: Living with a family permanently is the primary goal. When a child isn’t able to return to the parents, the family the child is living with is usually considered first as a permanent family. You may be asked about becoming the child’s legal guardian or adopting the child. Ongoing financial and medical assistance may be available through the Adoption Assistance Program, the Kinship Guardianship Assistance Payment program or CalWORKs. Information about these programs is available online at http://www.dss.cahealth.gov/cdssweb/entres/forms/English/pub344.pdf and from the child’s social worker or probation officer.

Attachment B
Important Information for Relatives

Q10: I live out of state. How can I get involved?
A10: In some circumstances, a child may be placed with a relative out of state. The social worker or probation officer can discuss this option with you. You can also be supportive by maintaining contacts and visits.

Q11: If the child has American Indian heritage, how can I help the child maintain connections with his or her cultural heritage?
A11: The social worker/probation officer is required to ask all relatives about the child’s connections with American Indian tribes so the child can benefit from any services available to American Indian children. If you can help answer questions about yourself and other relatives who may be enrolled members of American Indian tribes, please let the social worker/probation officer know.

Q12: If I want to give information to the court about the child, how do I do that? A12: You may write a letter to the judge. The letter will also be seen by everyone in the case (parents, social workers, and lawyers). You can tell the court how you know the child, what things you have done with the child, and share your concerns about the child. Beginning in January 2011, there will be a Relative Information Form you can give to the court. You can ask the social worker or probation officer to give you this form, or you can ask for it at the court clerk’s office.

Attachment B