



## Resource Family Approval and the Transition to Adoption

*Family-friendly and child-centered caregiver approval process*

### Resource Family Approval

- ▶ Statewide implementation as of January 1, 2017
- ▶ Unified approval standards for those seeking to foster, adopt, and/or provide legal guardianship
  - ❖ No further approval of family necessary for legal guardianship/adoption
- ▶ It is a comprehensive assessment of the home and family which includes interviews and a final written report
- ▶ Assesses a family's ability to support a permanency plan for a child
- ▶ Prepares families to better meet needs of vulnerable children through required training



## RFA Overview



### ▶ Home Environment Assessment

- Home Health & Safety Assessment
- Background Checks

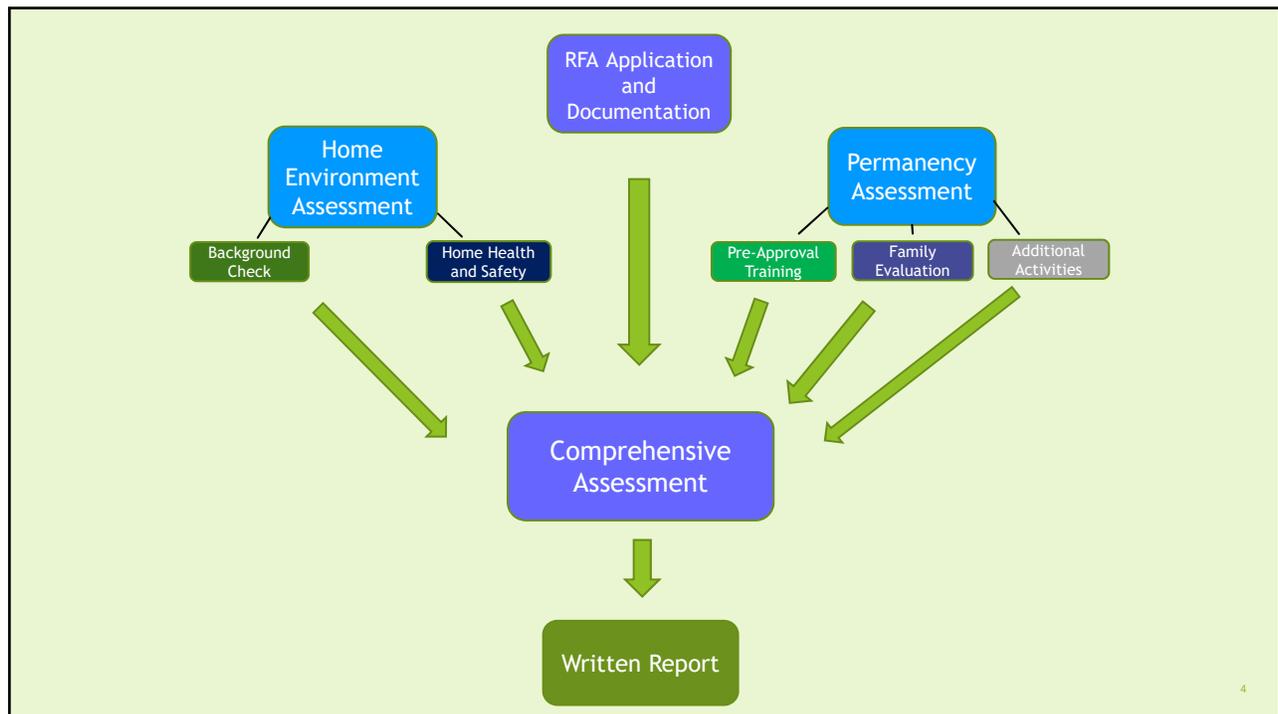


### ▶ Permanency Assessment

- Family Evaluation
- Pre-Approval Training



- ▶ Written Report (WR sufficiently meets written assessment requirements for adoptive applicants)
- ▶ Updates/Post-Approval Training



## Placements Prior to Approval (PPA)

### Emergency Placements - WIC 309 or 361.45

- Must be with relative or non-related extended family member(NREFM)
- Requires WIC 361.4 assessment
  - CLETS/CACI/Brief Home Inspection
  - Livescan within 10 days of CLETS check or 5 days of placement
  - RFA Application within 5 days
  - RFA completed within 90 days **or** good cause for delay documented

### Compelling Reason Placements - WIC 16519.5(e)

- Based on needs of the child
- After home environment assessment completed
- Permanency assessment to be completed within 90 days unless documented good cause exists

*\*AFDC-FC funding is not available to families until full approval has been achieved **BUT** families should receive Emergency Caregiver Funding from date of placement for up to 120 days or up to 365 days if delay is due to good cause outside direct control of the county for FY19/20. (WIC 11461.36, ACL 19-84)*

## Confidentiality of the Written Report (WIC 16519.555)

- ▶ May only be released to following individuals:
  - Applicant/Resource Family
  - Tribal agency
  - County child welfare/county probation department
  - State Department of Social Services
  - Licensed Foster Family Agency
  - County Adoption Agency
  - For placement decisions with another state seeking to place a child with a Resource Family
- ▶ Written Report shall not be further disseminated by the receiving individual beyond those listed

## How is Necessary Information about the Resource Family (Applicant) Shared with the Juvenile Court?

- ▶ First, important to acknowledge an approved Resource Family **IS** approved for foster care, adoption and/or legal guardianship
- ▶ No other approval of the *family* is necessary or authorized
- ▶ Information in a Written Report may be included in any social study prepared for the court to assist the juvenile court in determining whether placement with a relative is appropriate pursuant to WIC 361.3
  - Information that is otherwise confidential and not specifically required by WIC 361.3 shall not be included in the social study

An RFA approved home  
is approved to adopt.

But that is not the end of the story.....

## Is the RFA Written Report a Home Study?

- A Written Report for a Resource Family (RF) and any updates to the Written Report, shall be considered sufficient for meeting the requirements of a written assessment of an adoptive applicant.
- A Written Report for a RF, and any updates to the Written Report, may only be used as a substitute for the assessment of an applicant adopting from the foster care system.
- A Written Report should address strengths and concerns, including concerns about the applicant's ability to provide permanency.

## Role of the Adoption Social Worker in Assisting a Resource Family With Adoption

- Ensure that the prospective adoptive family has made a plan for care of the child in the event of death or incapacitation
- Discuss the importance of post-adoption services and contact agreements between adoptive families, birth parents, and other relatives, if in the child's best interest
- If the family does not have an identified child in their care they wish to adopt, provide information about adoption events and activities, including authorizing the release of their Written Report for "matching" purposes
- Complete the Parent-Child Suitability Summary
- Ensure that the Additional Requirements and Documentation (ie: references; marriage/ divorce decrees) are completed in a timely manner
- Work collaboratively with the RFA worker and child's worker to ensure that the needs of the child and family are met

## Parent-Child Suitability Summary

- This summary was created to assist the adoption worker and child's placement worker gather information for the report, as outlined in WIC 366.26
- This summary is child-focused, and based on whether the RF is able to meet the *specific needs* of "this child"
- Preliminary determination of the ability, commitment, motivation, and attachment of the potential adoptive parent to the specific child
- Consults directly with children, ages 12 and up, and with younger children if developmentally appropriate, regarding their feelings about this specific family; and about adoption in general
- Addresses potential adoptive parent's grief and loss issues (ie: infertility issues), as well as those of the child, and how to obtain support

## Parent-Child Suitability Summary (cont.)

- If applicable, the importance of open conversations about race, discrimination, the importance of race and cultural mentors; integrating and celebrating the child's culture within the family
- The life-long nature of adoption that include adopted-related questions, losses, that are usually experienced through different developmental stages and with life milestones (ie: dating; graduation; marriage; birth of child)
- How the potential adoptive parent's feel about post-adoption contact with birth parents, siblings and other relatives of the child
- If being adopted by a relative, navigating their relationships with birth parents and other relatives due to role changes, etc.

## Adoption For Indian Children and Families

- ▶ There are various processes for adopting children who are recognized under the Federal Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA). The public child placing agencies must ensure ICWA is followed for the children in their care.
- ▶ Tribally Approved Homes
  - If traditional adoption is determined to be the appropriate plan for a child in a Tribally Approved Home (TAH), a Parent Child Suitability Summary is required.
  - If the Tribe has chosen to complete a Tribal Customary Adoption (TCA), a tribal customary adoption home study is required as outlined in WIC 366.24.
    - The Tribe may complete the TCA homestudy or designate an adoption agency to complete it.

## Tribal Families and RFA

- ▶ Tribal Families who do not get approved by their Tribe may be approved through the RFA process.
  - The RFA may be used to comply with the requirements for a traditional adoption.
    - If the Tribe chooses to use the RFA for a traditional adoption, the additional requirements to complete the adoption would be the same as those required for all Resource Families.
  - A TCA homestudy is still required for Resource Families to complete a Tribal Customary Adoption.

## Tribally Specified Homes, RFA, and Adoption

- ▶ Tribally Specified Homes are not approved or licensed by the tribe, but are specified by the Tribe as a preference of placement and **must complete** the RFA or TAH process for placement of a child
- ▶ Tribally Specified Homes may adopt and must meet the same requirements as all Resource Families or TAHs

## Resources/References

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- ▶ [CDSS RFA Website](#)
- ▶ [Written Directives, Version 6](#)
- ▶ [All County Letters \(ACL\):](#)
  - [ACL 16-10 Resource Family Approval](#)
  - [ACL 18-142 Clarification of the RFA Written Report and Overview of the Adoption Process for Resource Families](#)
  - [ACL 19-71 Tribally Approved Homes](#)
  - [ACL 19-84 Updated information for Emergency Caregiver Funding and Tribally Approved Homes](#)
- ▶ [Policy Mailboxes:](#)
  - [RFA@dss.ca.gov](mailto:RFA@dss.ca.gov)
  - [APU@dss.ca.gov](mailto:APU@dss.ca.gov)
- ▶ [RFA Statute - Welfare and Institutions Code 16519.5 et seq.](#)

## Roundtable Conversation

