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**ORANGE COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICES AGENCY  
CFS OPERATIONS MANUAL**

**Effective Date: July 1, 1987**  
**Revised: September 24, 2009**  
**Revised: September 16, 2011**  
**Revised: October 7, 2014**

**Number: M-0106**

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**Voluntary Family Services (VFS)  
and Informal Supervision**

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**Purpose** To provide guidelines for the referral and provision of voluntary family maintenance and Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC) Section (§) 301 informal supervision services.

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**Approved** This policy was approved by Gary Taylor, CFS Director, on October 7, 2014. *Signature on file.*

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**Most Recent Revision** This revision of the Policy and Procedure (P&P) incorporates:

- A revised referral process for Emergency Response (ER) and Differential Response (DR)
- References to legal statutes and authorizations
- Additional case closure circumstances

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**Background** As mandated by [California Department of Social Services \(CDSS\), Manual of Policies and Procedures \(MPP\), Division 31-005](#), Children and Family Services (CFS) provides pre-placement preventive services for children and families. Preventive services are time-limited and designed to prevent or remedy abuse or neglect for the purpose of maintaining children with their families.

Within CFS, Family Maintenance Collaborative Services (FMCS) provides preventive services as well as Specialized Family Services (SFS), which includes a preventive services component for children with special health care needs.

As defined in CDSS [All County Letter \(ACL\) 07-48](#) and [ACL 14-36](#),

candidates for preventive services must include a child at serious risk of removal from the home and placement into foster care.

Two types of preventive services offered by CFS are:

- Voluntary Family Services (VFS)
- Program of Informal Supervision (WIC § 301)

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**Definitions** None.

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## **POLICY**

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**Protective Intervention Considerations** Pursuant to CFS policy, during the course of a child abuse or neglect investigation, Senior Social Worker (SSW) staff will consider the least restrictive intervention that supports the child's safety and physical and emotional well being, which may include VFS or WIC § 301. Further, staff will consider protective interventions that will not disrupt the family unnecessarily. See CFS P&P [Abuse Investigations—Protective Interventions \(A-0414\)](#).

**Service Criteria** Pursuant to CDSS ACL 07-48 and MPP Division 31-086, VFS and WIC § 301 services may be provided when each of the following criteria have been met:

- A. Family (case plan participants) resides in Orange County.
- B. A substantiated allegation.
- C. Safe for the child to remain in the home only with the provision of services.
- D. Parent is willing to participate in services and is advised that if the preventive services are not effective, Juvenile Court intervention will be necessary to ensure the child's safety.
- E. One of the following applies:
  - At least one child in the home is at serious risk of removal and placement into foster care
  - After investigation of the filing of an *Application for Petition (F063-28-43)*, a program of informal supervision per WIC § 301 is offered in lieu of filing a petition (see CFS P&P [Dependency Intake \(A-0502\)](#))
  - A petition has been filed and the Court subsequently

dismissed the petition pursuant to WIC § 301

**Note:** WIC § 360(b) provides that Juvenile Court may, without adjudicating the child a dependent, order services to keep the family together and place the family under child welfare supervision for a time period consistent with WIC § 301. CFS processes orders for WIC § 360(b) services the same as for WIC § 301 services.

**Additional WIC § 301 Requirement:**

Per WIC § 301(c) if the parent is a dependent of the Juvenile Court, WIC § 301 services cannot begin until the dependent parent has consulted with his or her counsel (if one has been appointed).

**Approvals and  
Actions Prior to  
Offer of Service**

As indicated in CDSS MPP Division 31-086, prior to offering VFS or WIC § 301 services, the referring SSW (i.e., SSW assigned to Emergency Response [ER], Differential Response [DR], Dependency Intake, Dependency Investigations, or Intake and Investigations within SFS) will consult with a Senior Social Services Supervisor (SSSS) to determine appropriateness of offering the service to the family. As needed, the referring SSSS will consult with an ER Program Manager (PM) and/or VFS SSSS or VFS PM to assist in the determination of the appropriateness of offering VFS to a family.

**Note:** If a child has a chronic or serious health condition, or requires the use of medical equipment, or if a child has a special developmental need, the SSSS will consult with a SFS SSSS regarding the appropriateness of the referral to SFS. See [Attachment 1—Guidelines for Case Transfer of SFS of CFS P&P Special Medical Placements \(K-0801\)](#).

Per CFS policy, additional actions for ER/DR include:

- A. Team Decision Making (TDM): Following SSSS approval, the referring ER/DR SSW will schedule a TDM meeting with the family. In addition, a VFS SSW or VFS SSSS will be invited and attend the TDM meeting. See CFS P&P [Team Decision Making \(D-0308\)](#).

**Note:** If VFS had not been considered, yet is identified as an appropriate intervention during a TDM meeting, the VFS SSSS Officer-of-the-Day (OD) will be contacted to join the TDM discussion.

The VFS SSW (or designee) that attended the TDM meeting will complete the case plan with the family. However, if VFS did not participate in the TDM meeting, the referring ER/DR SSW will complete the case plan. With parents' permission, SSW staff may take notes or use *My Action Plan (MAP)* (F063-25-746) during the meeting to record proposed case plan activities.

The SSW which develops and signs the case plan with the family will also complete the following:

- Family Strengths and Needs Assessment per CFS P&P [Structured Decision Making \(D-0311\)](#)
- *Emergency Assistance Application for Child Welfare Services* (F063-25-367) as outlined in CFS P&P [Emergency Assistance Program \(EAP\) \(H-0105\)](#)

**Note:** Per CDSS MPP Division 31-215, the case plan will be reviewed and signed by the family within 30 calendar days of the initial face-to-face contact completed by the ER/DR SSW.

- B. Documentation: In addition to documentation and cross reporting requirements outlined in CFS P&P [Abuse Investigations—Findings, Documentation, and Cross Reporting \(A-0305\)](#), include in the:
1. Investigation Narrative “Placement Prevention Efforts” section: *“The child is/children are at serious risk of removal and placement into foster care. Voluntary Family Services are being offered in an effort to maintain the child/children in their home. If these pre-placement preventative services are not effective, Juvenile Court intervention will be necessary to ensure the child(ren)’s safety.”*
  2. *Orange County Safety Plan (F063-25-453): “Participate in Voluntary Family Services (VFS).”* See CFS P&P [Structured Decision Making \(D-0311\)](#).

**Initial Case Plan Development**

Per CFS policy, social work staff will follow the guidelines for case plan development, including timeframes, advisements, and participant review and signature as outlined in CFS P&P [Case Plans \(D-0101\)](#).

Per CDSS MPP Division 31-201, 31-310, 31-215, and 31-086, VFS or WIC § 301 initial case plans will also include:

- A “Family Maintenance” service component, see [CWS/CMS Data Entry Standards—Case Service Component Instructions](#)
- A goal of “Remain Home”
- Mandatory candidacy language, see [Attachment 1—VFS/WIC § 301 Candidacy Language](#)
- Signature of case plan participants and SSW
- Signature of approval by SSW's SSSS
- Relevant Service Objectives to address the medical needs of a child with special health care needs (e.g., medical appointments, medication regime, equipment needs, etc.)

**Note:** The date the SSW's SSSS signs the case plan is the effective date for the start of VFS.

#### **Case Transfer**

Per CFS policy, the referring SSW will prepare and transfer the case, to include following established contact guidelines, casework responsibilities, and transfer timeframes as outlined in [CFS P&P Case Transfers \(D-0302\)](#).

**Note:** The voluntary program will provide email notification to the referring SSW and SSSS when the case has been electronically assigned to a VFS SSW.

#### **Provision of Voluntary Services**

Per CFS policy, upon assignment of a case, the VFS SSW will review the family's Permanent Record, as defined in [CFS P&P Referral and Case Filing \(E-0102\)](#). As needed, the VFS SSW will contact the referring SSW to confer on issues related to the case.

**Note:** When creating a VFS case file, VFS unit clerks will contact an ER Clerical Supervisor to request a copy of any ER history.

As indicated in WIC § 16501, the case plan is the guiding principle in the provision of services. The VFS SSW will provide or coordinate services that are consistent with the specified case plan service objectives.

In accordance with CDSS MPP Division 31-310, the VFS SSW will:

- A. Assist parent or guardian and each child, as age appropriate, to understand the reason for providing services.

- B. Assess and monitor each child's safety, physical, and emotional well being.
- C. Take action as necessary to ascertain each child's protective needs (e.g., safety, physical, medical, emotional well-being, etc.) continue to be met. Provide parent or guardian with resources and assistance in accessing resources, when needed.
- D. Assist parent or guardian to understand CFS procedures and arrangements between CFS and other agencies.
- E. Advise parent or guardian that Juvenile Court action may be initiated, which could result in removal of the child from the home, if the case plan objectives are not achieved and the child remains at imminent risk of abuse or neglect.

**Additional WIC § 301 Circumstance:**

If the family has refused to cooperate with the services being provided, an application for petition (with or without the removal of the child) may be filed with the Juvenile Court.

As outlined in CDSS MPP Division 31-315, service funded activities include yet are not limited to:

- Case management
- Counseling/Mental health treatment
- Substance abuse treatment
- Domestic abuse services
- Parenting education
- Teaching and demonstrating homemakers
- Transportation
- Basic needs
- Childcare
- Housing referrals/emergency shelter assistance
- Respite care (see CFS P&P [Respite Care \[K-0212\]](#))
- Linkages to community based resources (e.g., Family Resource Centers [FRCs])
- Linkages to appropriate medical resources

**Collaboration with CalWORKs**

Per CFS policy, if the family also receives California Work Opportunity and Responsibility for Kids (CalWORKs) services, the VFS SSW will maintain ongoing communication with the appropriate CalWORKs worker or, if applicable, the assigned Domestic Abuse Services Unit (DASU) worker to coordinate and

enhance service delivery to mutual clients. See CFS P&P [CalWORKs–CFS Collaboration \(D-0502\)](#).

**Contact Guidelines**

Per CFS policy, the VFS SSW will complete required contacts, to include individuals, frequency, location, and documentation pursuant to CFS P&P [Case Compliance Contacts and Documentation \(E-0105\)](#).

**Note:** Per CFS policy, the home environment and child safety will be assessed and documented on a monthly basis. A monthly compliance contact with either the child or the parent/legal guardian will occur in the home.

**SDM**

Per CFS policy, the VFS SSW will complete required Structured Decision Making (SDM) tools pursuant to CFS P&P [Structured Decision Making \(D-0311\)](#).

**Service Time and Extensions**

Per WIC § 16506, VFS and WIC § 301 services will be limited to six months. Extensions may be considered in six-month increments if the objectives of the case plan can be achieved within the extended time frame and, per CFS policy, each of the following criteria are met:

- The referring situation has not stabilized
- Not extending services would lead to serious risk of removal
- Imminent Risk TDM meeting completed and consensus for continued services obtained
- SSSS and PM approval

**Note:** Requests for extensions will be emailed to SSSS 30 days prior to the initial case plan end date.

**Case Plan Updates**

Pursuant to CDSS MPP Division 31-235, the VFS SSW will complete a case plan update as often as the circumstances of the family dictate, yet no less than once every six months, and if:

- The service objectives do not meet the family's current needs
- The extension of services has been approved

Per CFS policy, the VFS SSW will follow the guidelines for development of a case plan update as outlined in CFS P&P [Case Plans \(D-0101\)](#).

**SSSS Case Reviews**

Per CFS policy, the VFS SSSS will hold case conferences with each unit SSW to discuss case management activities, including contact verification and case reviews pursuant to CFS P&P [Quality Assurance of Cases—Supervisory Responsibilities \(D-0304\)](#).

**Emergency Response Referral on Open Case**

In accordance with Penal Code (PC) § 11165.7, if the VFS SSW observes or receives information that suggests the child may be the victim of new allegations of abuse or neglect, a child abuse report will be filed pursuant to SSA Administrative P&P [Mandated Suspected Abuse Reporting \(D 16\)](#).

Child abuse referrals received on an open VFS or WIC § 301 case will be investigated as indicated in CFS P&P [Abuse Investigations—Open Case \(A-0402\)](#). The SSW investigating the referral will follow guidelines pursuant to the following CFS P&Ps:

- [Abuse Investigations—Protective Interventions \(A-0414\)](#)
- [Abuse Investigations—Practice Guidelines \(A-0412\)](#)
- [Referral Compliance Contacts and Documentation \(A-0415\)](#)
- [Abuse Investigations—Findings, Documentation, and Cross Reporting \(A-0305\)](#)

**Case Closure**

In accordance with CDSS MPP Division 31-086 and CFS policy, a VFS or WIC § 301 case will be closed when at least one of the following circumstances exists:

- Case plan service objectives achieved and/or the child is no longer endangered, see CFS P&P [Structured Decision Making \(D-0311\)](#) for guidance on required tool completion prior to case closure
- The whereabouts of the family are unknown
- The family no longer resides in Orange County
- The child identified in the case plan reaches age 18
- The child identified in the case plan dies, see CFS P&P [Child Fatalities and Near Fatalities \(A-0204\)](#)
- Original (referring) substantiated finding is subsequently changed as a result of an internal CFS review or Child Abuse Central Index (CACI) grievance review, see CFS P&P [Child Abuse Central Index \(CACI\) Grievance Reviews \(A-0301\)](#)

**Note:** Per CFS policy, case closure prior to six months requires PM approval.

Staff will prepare cases for closure as outlined in CFS P&P [Case Closure \(E-0106\)](#).

**Notice of Intended Action**

Pursuant to WIC § 10950, Notices of Intended Action (NOAs) will be given to families receiving voluntary services to inform them of actions CFS will take to:

- Initiate services
- Deny a service request
- Change a case plan
- Terminate services

NOAs also identify the regulatory basis for the action and the family's right to request a state hearing if they disagree with any part of the intended action. See CFS P&P [State Hearings \(B-0122\)](#).

As indicated within CDSS MPP Division 22-072, NOAs will be given 10 days prior to the intended action unless the parent agrees to waive this timeframe via signature on a completed *Waiver of 10-Day Notice Requirement (F063-25-203)*.

Per CFS policy, clerical staff within programs providing VFS or WIC § 301 services will generate a NOA in CWS/CMS (See [CWS/CMS Data Entry Standards—Notice of Action Voluntary Family Services/WIC § 301 Services](#)) and mail to the family:

- Upon receipt of the case
- When a case plan update is created
- At case closure
- When there is a change in the assigned SSW

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## REFERENCES

**Attachments and CWS/CMS Data Entry Standards**

Hyperlinks are provided below to access attachments to this P&P and any CWS/CMS Data Entry Standards that are referenced.

- [Attachment 1—VFS/WIC § 301 Candidacy Language](#)
- [CWS/CMS Data Entry Standards—Case Service Component Instructions](#)
- [CWS/CMS Data Entry Standards—Notice of Action Voluntary Family Services/WIC § 301 Services](#)

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## Hyperlinks

Users accessing this document by computer may create a direct connection to the following references by clicking on the link provided.

- CFS P&P [Abuse Investigations—Protective Interventions \(A-0414\)](#)
- CFS P&P [Abuse Investigations—Practice Guidelines \(A-0412\)](#)
- CFS P&P [Abuse Investigations—Open Cases \(A-0402\)](#)
- CFS P&P [Referral Compliance Contacts and Documentation \(A-0415\)](#)
- CFS P&P [Abuse Investigations—Findings, Documentation, and Cross Reporting \(A-0305\)](#)
- CFS P&P [Case Plans \(D-0101\)](#)
- CFS P&P [Case Compliance Contacts and Documentation \(E-0105\)](#)
- CFS P&P [CaWORKs—CFS Collaboration \(D-0502\)](#)
- CFS P&P [Dependency Intake \(A-0502\)](#)
- CFS P&P [Structured Decision Making \(D-0311\)](#)
- CFS P&P [Team Decision Making \(D-0308\)](#)
- CFS P&P [Case Transfers \(D-0302\)](#)
- CFS P&P [Quality Assurance of Cases—Supervisory Responsibilities \(D-0304\)](#)
- CFS P&P [State Hearings \(B-0122\)](#)
- CFS P&P [Emergency Assistance Program \(EAP\) \(H-0105\)](#)
- CFS P&P [Child Fatalities and Near Fatalities \(A-0204\)](#)
- CFS P&P [Special Medical Placements \(K-0801\)](#)
- CFS P&P [Referral and Case Filing \(E-0102\)](#)
- CFS P&P [Respite Care \(K-0212\)](#)
- CFS P&P [Child Abuse Central Index \(CACI\) Grievance Reviews \(A-0301\)](#)
- CFS P&P [Case Closure \(E-0106\)](#)
- SSA Administrative P&P [Mandated Suspected Abuse Reporting \(D16\)](#)

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## Other Sources

Other printed references include the following:

None.

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## FORMS

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**Online Forms** Forms listed below may be printed out and completed, or completed online, and may be accessed by clicking on the link provided.

Form Name	Form Number
<a href="#">Application for Petition</a>	F063-28-43

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**Hard Copy Forms** Forms that may be completed in hard copy (including multi-copy NCR forms) are listed below. ***For reference purposes only***, links are provided to view these hard copy forms, where available.

Form Name	Form Number
<a href="#">Waiver of 10-Day Notice Requirement</a>	F063-25-203
<a href="#">Waiver of 10-Day Notice Requirement</a> (Spanish)	F063-25-203Sp
<a href="#">Waiver of 10-Day Notice Requirement</a> (Vietnamese)	F063-25-203VN
<a href="#">Emergency Assistance Application</a>	F063-25-367

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**CWS/CMS Forms** Forms that may **only** be obtained in CWS/CMS are listed below. ***For reference purposes only***, links are provided to view these CWS/CMS forms, where available.

Form Name	Form Number
Notice of Action/Service Plan	NA 981
Notice of Action/Service Plan (Spanish)	NA 981Sp
Notice of Action/Change of Service Plan	NA 982
Notice of Action/Change of Service Plan (Spanish)	NA 982Sp
<a href="#">My Action Plan</a>	F063-25-746
<a href="#">My Action Plan</a> (Spanish)	F063-25-746Sp

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**Brochures** Brochures to distribute in conjunction with this policy may include:

Brochure Name	Brochure Number
None.	

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## LEGAL MANDATES

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[Welfare and Institutions Code \(WIC\) Section \(§\) 16506](#) describes families that qualify for family maintenance services and timeframe for services.

[WIC § 301](#) describes the Program of Supervision (Informal Supervision).

[WIC § 10950](#) describes a parent's or guardian's right to request a state hearing if dissatisfied with any service delivered by a child welfare agency.

[WIC § 16501](#) defines "child welfare services" and "family maintenance services."

[WIC § 360\(b\)](#) provides that Court, without adjudicating a child a dependent, may place the child and parents under the supervision of a social worker for a time period consistent with WIC § 301.

[Penal Code \(PC\) § 11165.7](#) defines "mandated reporter."

[California Department of Social Services \(CDSS\) Manual of Policies and Procedures \(MPP\) Division 31-215](#) describes the case plan time frames and administrative requirements for voluntary services.

[CDSS MPP Division 31-235](#) provides requirements for case plan updates timeframes for voluntary cases.

[CDSS MPP Division 31-201](#) describes the assessment and case planning process.

[CDSS MPP Division 31-310](#) describes the social worker responsibilities for the provision of services.

[CDSS MPP Division 31-315](#) describes service-funded activities that may be provided.

[CDSS MPP Division 31-086](#) lists circumstances under which a case may be identified as receiving family maintenance services.

[CDSS MPP Division 22-072](#) outlines timelines and exemptions for submitting notification of intended actions (NOAs).

CDSS [All County Letter \(ACL\) 07-48](#) and [ACL 14-36](#) define when a child may be considered a candidate for foster care.