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PRESS RELEASE

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New Project to Streamline Adoption Process and Improve Safety of Children Earns Support of Foster Parent Association

A new Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) project designed to streamline assessments of foster care and adoptive homes, improve safety of foster children and shorten the timelines for a child to have a permanent home has gained the support of the Foster Parent Association. The Consolidated Home Study Project combines the foster care and adoption assessment process to provide training, support and approvals of home studies simultaneously for both foster and adoptive parents.

Previously, separate orientations, trainings and approvals were conducted for foster parents and adoptive parents. Under the new plan, all foster parents and adoptive parents will be assessed at the highest level, or adoption level. The first joint orientations and trainings took place in March.

DCFS initiated the project to streamline the process for a child to be adopted, noting that many foster parents end up adopting the foster children in their homes. Now, when the foster family is ready to adopt, most of the paperwork and approvals have already been done and will just need to be updated. Under the new project, the foster family will no longer have to begin a new assessment process in order to adopt. By making these homes compliant at the adoption level from the beginning, the process for assessing a home for adoption will be sped up to approximately 120 days as opposed to the current average of nine to 12 months.

“This project will streamline the foster care and adoption process and improve timelines to permanency for children,” said Dr. David Sanders, DCFS Director. “It will also increase safety for children because assessments will be done at a higher standard. Finding permanent and stable homes for children and ensuring their safety are two of the Department’s main goals and this new endeavor will help us meet those goals.”

Part of the inducement to initiate the project also came from the Department's recently developed Adoption Initiative that created the Department's new Permanency Resource Division. All recruitment, orientation and training for foster care and adoption is now conducted through one central section within the Department.

To become foster or adoptive parents, families attend an orientation session, meet with a social worker and complete 33 hours of training called "Permanency and Safety: Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting." In this training, the need for permanency for children is stressed. Foster parents are urged to create permanent homes for children and are told that this is the goal of the Department when children cannot return home.

"We need families who are fully committed to the children," said Karen Sims, DCFS Assistant Regional Administrator over the Recruitment and Home Study Section. After the family is approved, a home study is conducted on either the foster parent or adoptive home. The Department's goal, said Trish Ploehn, Deputy Director of Adoptions, is to eventually include relative caregivers in this streamlined training and approval process. "Our goal is to ensure that every child who cannot safely remain in or return to their own family is placed in a home where they can grow up safe, secure, healthy and happy."

DCFS has many children that need a temporary or permanent home. For more information on how to become a foster or adoptive parent, call (888) 811-1121.

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