
Interim Director

MANAGEMENT DIRECTIVE

SUBJECT: PUBLIC INQUIRY CONTROL SYSTEM (PICS)
(*DCFS Tracking System*)

POLICY#: MD 99-04

EFFECTIVE DATE: NOVEMBER 1999

CANCEL DATE: NONE

File in Children's Services Desk Guide Book Under "P"

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| <p>The Public Inquiry Control System was created in response to the PriceWaterhouseCooper's Management Audit report recommendation #53. This audit recommendation instructed DCFS to develop and implement an automated database system of all case-related public inquiries.</p> |
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1. DEFINITIONS

A. *Bureau/Division Public Inquiry*

A public inquiry received directly by a Bureau, Division or Section.

B. *Executive Office Public Inquiry*

A public inquiry generated by the Director's office, Board of Supervisors, Commission for Children and Families (CCF), elected officials or the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) and controlled by and assigned to the appropriate Bureau, Division or Section by the Executive Office.

C. *Public Inquiry Control System (PICS)*

A centralized, automated database of the public inquiries received by the Department.

D. *Public Inquiry*

A call from a DCFS-served parent, foster parent, child, or relative caregiver; Foster Family Agency (FFA); group home provider; community representative; or child advocate. A Bureau, Division or Section may receive these calls directly or they may come through the Director's office, Board of Supervisors, CCF, elected officials or CDSS.

2. POLICY AND STANDARDS

- A. The protection and safety of a child is always the first priority.
- B. Our primary mission is legal permanency.
- C. DCFS case records are confidential pursuant to Welfare and Institutions Code Sections 827 and 10850. The Los Angeles County Juvenile Court policy on confidentiality sets forth the details of the court's interpretation of these statutory requirements. Failure to follow confidentiality policy may lead to disciplinary action, including discharge and/or civil action. Under the provisions of the statutes, a violation is a basis for criminal prosecution.
- D. The policy and procedures in this release are effective upon release.
- E. Information contained on PICS is confidential and shall not be shared with unauthorized individuals. Unauthorized sharing of information contained on PICS may result in disciplinary action by the Department.
- F. Executive Office public inquiries (see definition) are generated by the Director's office, Board, CCF, elected officials or CDSS and controlled by and assigned to the appropriate Bureau, Division or Section by the Executive Office.
- G. Bureau/Division public inquiries (see definition) are controlled and received directly by a Bureau, Division or Section.

3. PROCEDURES

A. Assignment of all Public Inquiries

1. The Executive Office, Bureaus, Divisions or Sections receiving a public inquiry shall make every attempt to locate a case on CWS/CMS prior to assigning and shall indicate the name of the Children's Social Worker whenever applicable.
2. To avoid duplication, staff shall check PICS prior to initiating a new public inquiry.
3. A new public inquiry shall be generated if the complaint is different or has not been previously resolved.

B. Initiation of PICS Documents

1. Upon receipt of a public inquiry, the receiving Bureau, Division or Section shall input required information on the PICS and print out a hard copy.
2. The public inquiry will be dated on the same day on which the call is received.
3. A hard copy of the public inquiry shall be provided to the assigned Bureau, Division or Section as early as possible but no later than 4:00 p.m. on the same day the call is received.
4. A hard copy of the public inquiry received after 4:00 p.m. can be provided to the appropriate Bureau, Division or Section on the following business day.
5. Public inquiries may be e-mailed to a Bureau, Division or Section's responsible manager; however, a hard copy will also be sent to the Bureau, Division or Section for verification purposes.

C. Responses/Time Frames for Executive Office Public Inquiries

1. The assigned Bureau, Division or Section shall contact the inquiring party by telephone, on all public inquiries assigned to them by the Executive Office, on the same business day on which the public inquiry is received by the Bureau, Division or Section.

2. Public inquiries received by a Bureau, Division or Section after 4:00 p.m. shall be contacted by telephone on the following business day.
3. Documentation of the telephone contact shall be input on PICS within one business day of attempting or completing the contact. If no contacts were completed, indicate on PICS all attempted dates of contacts and applicable background information.
4. The Bureau's, Division's or Section's response to the public inquiry shall address all the issues contained in the inquiry and the resolution, or attempts at resolution.
5. For public inquiries received by a Bureau, Division or Section prior to 12 o'clock noon, written input on PICS and a hard copy of the response is due to the Executive Office within five business days of the date the public inquiry is taken, unless otherwise specified.
6. For public inquiries received by a Bureau, Division or Section after 12 o'clock noon, written input on PICS and a hard copy of the response is due to the Executive Office within six business days, of the date the public inquiry is taken, unless otherwise specified.
7. Deviation from these time frames may occur only at the direction of the Director, Board, CCF or CDSS. Extensions will be considered only if requested prior to the due date. The Executive Office will advise the requesting Bureau, Division or Section whether or not the extension has been granted.
8. The Executive Office will send weekly notices of late public inquiry responses to the appropriate Deputy Director or Senior Division Chief.

D. Responses/Time Frames for Bureau/Division Public Inquiries

1. For public inquiries received directly by a Bureau, Division or Section prior to 12 o'clock noon, written input on PICS and a hard copy of the response is due to the responsible manager within ten business days of the date the public inquiry is taken, unless otherwise specified.

2. The responsible manager will approve extensions. Extensions will be considered only if requested prior to the due date. The responsible manager will advise the requesting staff whether or not the extension has been granted.
3. Each Bureau, Division or Section is responsible for monitoring and controlling its own responses.
4. Each Bureau, Division or Section will notify its managers of late public inquiries by providing them with a weekly log of late responses.