



DCFS at Work Investing in Los Angeles County families every day

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Roxanne De Silva, a social worker with DCFS' Post Adoption Services, recently participated in her first successful reunion case.

Stored in a case file for decades, a mother's loving reflections may finally reach her son

When difficult circumstances made it infeasible for a young mother and child to remain together, the boy entered the county's child welfare system. Year after year, for more than a decade, she poured her heart into handwritten notes inside greeting cards intended for the child, with a deep longing that one day he might seek her out or simply want to know more about her.

Each of those messages was thoughtfully placed in her son's case file in the office of Post Adoption Services

(PAS) at the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). Over the years, the case file grew thick with the mother's letters waiting to be retrieved, evidence of her enduring love.

This month, after a lifetime apart, that son, now in his 50s, is about to meet his birth mother for the very first time. In anticipation of their reunion, she recently reached out to DCFS to retrieve those cards, hoping to hand them to him in person as a bridge between their long-separated lives.

"My biggest sense of satisfaction is something like this; reuniting a family or getting to be a part of it," said Roxanne De Silva, a PAS social worker for eight years who returned the letters to the mom. "Even though we don't have face-to-face contact with the clients, we form connections."

For more than 40 years, the PAS unit has amassed thousands of case files on adoptees, many containing letters from birth relatives and other key pieces of family history. Now stored in archives, each file represents more than just a paper trail; it holds the potential to spark reconnection, deepen identity and promote healing.

PAS supports adoptive families and adoptees through a range of services tied to the department's Adoption Assistance Program, including referrals, information access and reunion coordination.



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Roxanne, now in her 30th year with DCFS, is one of 17 PAS social workers whose role includes helping adoptees seeking out details about their biological roots and, in some cases, facilitating reunions among the core family unit. The team — which Roxanne characterizes as “incredibly knowledgeable, kind and supportive, both to each other and the families we serve” — collectively handles around 20 cases a month. Last year, PAS processed 223 requests for individuals seeking information related to their adoption.

Reunions are infrequent. Most staff with fewer than five years on the team have yet to work on one. California law protects adoption privacy, and reunions are only possible when there’s a notarized Consent for Contact form in the adoptee’s case file (signed by the adoptee, a birth parent or a sibling; the only parties eligible to initiate direct communication), signaling that it’s okay to reach out.



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In the past year, of 136 people requesting consent forms, the unit received eight completed forms back.

“That form is so important,” Roxanne said. “It’s our green light if down the road the adoptee calls; then we can reunite them with their birth parent or a sibling.”

In October, Roxanne experienced her first reunion as part of PAS. Judith, an adoptive mother and registered nurse, supported her daughter, Nevaeh, now 13, in connecting with two of her birth siblings — both adopted through DCFS before Nevaeh was born. They had only learned of the siblings’ existence three years ago.

“When I found out about them, I was shocked and emotional; I was crying,” recalled Nevaeh, an 8th grader who loves going to the beach, hanging out with friends, and participating in competitive cheer. The three siblings now regularly text and plan to continue seeing each other in person.

“That first meeting was like closure for them,” said Judith, who adopted Nevaeh in 2017 through Riverside County. “I told Roxanne, if it wasn’t for her, it might not have ever happened. She made it easy; knowing I can pick up the phone and call adoption assistance for whatever reason, at whatever time, and they’ll help me.”