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DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
BUREAU OF CHILDREN AND ADULT LICENSING



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CHILD PLACING AGENCY LETTER 2011– 01

To: Child Placing Agencies and Family Courts that Certify Foster Homes
All Foster Family Homes and Foster Family Group Homes

From: James B. Gale, Director
Bureau of Children and Adult Licensing

Subject:

- Agency addresses in the BCAL data base
- Relationship of foster home address to adoption subsidy payments
- Renewing foster home licenses

The Bureau of Children and Adult Licensing (BCAL) data base is the Bureau Information Tracking System (BITS). The Department has a primary data base known as BRIDGES and a children's services data base, the Service Worker Support System (SWSS). All three of these data bases interact and share some information. Information that is entered into the BITS system by BCAL staff is downloaded on a daily basis to the BRIDGES system. Information from BRIDGES downloads to SWSS on a regular basis.

- **Agency addresses in the BCAL data base**

The BITS system has two fields for addresses for any licensee, the address to which the license is mailed and the address to which everything else is mailed. The address for general mail for an agency in BITS controls the address for the BCAL 3706 and anything generated from BRIDGES and SWSS. This includes payments.

If an individual child placing agency is part of a larger organization, there are two choices related to payments. All payments and 3706's can go to the parent licensee organization (or to a designated mailing address) to be forwarded to the branch offices OR payments for children served by the branch office and BCAL 3706's can be mailed to the branch office and payments forwarded to the parent organization. Each organization must decide what works best for that particular

organization. If the decision of the licensee organization is to have the payments go to the licensee address, branch offices do have the option of designating load numbers on the BCAL 3706 to make it easier to sort the forms for mailing to the appropriate branch. If the mail codes for an entire agency need to be changed, someone who represents the licensee must notify Linda Lee at leel2@michigan.gov or at (517) 335-6068. Having this change made in BCAL central office will ensure that all branches affiliated with a licensee get changed and will avoid confusion regarding which consultant to contact.

- **Relationship of foster home address to adoption subsidy payments**

When a family is actively licensed as a foster home and has adopted children for whom they are receiving adoption subsidy, the address for the foster home license in BITS and the address reported to the adoption subsidy office for adoption subsidy payments must match. If one of these addresses changes and the other one does not, all payments to that licensee/adoptive parent stop until the addresses match. Typically this happens when the family notifies the adoption subsidy office of a change in address and the certifying agency has not been notified.

When an adoptive parent notifies the adoption subsidy office of an address change and the new address does not match the address for the foster home license that BITS has downloaded to BRIDGES/SWSS, BCAL is notified. BCAL notifies the foster home licensing supervisor of the information we have received with a request to follow up. Generally, this is done by email. It is important that the follow up be done as quickly as possible to ensure that timely payments to the foster parent continue to be made. Occasionally, there are problems with the relocation, such as obtaining a health inspection on a private water supply. Please contact the person who notified the agency of the address discrepancy that the address has been changed, the license has been closed, or that there is a problem with the relocation that the agency is attempting to resolve.

- **Renewing foster home licenses**

The exchange of information between systems can also create payment problems related to the renewal of foster home licenses. When a foster home license is renewed after the expiration date, it creates considerable extra work to generate missed payments to both the foster parent and to the child placing agency if the placement is being supervised by a private agency. Approximately 56% of the renewal paperwork that came in during the last quarter came in less than 2 days before expiration or after the license had already expired. There are approximately 7200 active foster homes in the state. Each renewal packet has to be reviewed to ensure that required clearances on adult household members have been completed and the data has to be entered in BITS. There are three support staff who complete all transactions related to foster homes, including review of original packets to make sure the packet is complete, renewal

transactions, modifications, voluntary closures, opening of licenses not related to an original packet, etc.

In an attempt to resolve some of the problems, the following changes are being made:

- Renewal packets should be submitted to BCAL a minimum of 15 days before the expiration date.
- Renewals are being prioritized each day to ensure that they are processed in a timely manner.
- BCAL policy has been changed to allow the renewal of a license up to 6 weeks prior to the expiration date.
- BCAL policy has been changed to allow the renewal of a license when there is an open complaint. A form letter will be sent to the licensee indicating that the license has been renewed to allow payments to continue but that this does not mean the agency cannot find rule violations for actions that occurred prior to the renewal license being issued. The renewal during an open complaint will be to the same status the license is on at the time of the renewal.
- Child placing agencies are encouraged to submit renewal packets as scanned documents. The subject line of the email should say “renewal”. The state is broken into three geographic areas and assigned to a specific central office consultant and a specific support staff person. A chart is attached to this letter showing the assignment of counties and the staff who cover the various counties. The consultant and support person are assigned based on the location of the agency, regardless of where the foster home is located.

When an agency has foster home payment problems, the first step is to verify that either the license has been opened or the license has been renewed. If you do not know how to look up the active licenses for your agencies, refer to the attachment to this letter “Foster Home Contact Information”. Once you have verified that the license is active or has been renewed, payment inquiries are to be addressed to DHS-Provider-Management@michigan.gov. Please be sure to have the license number, the name of the licensee, and, if you know it, the provider ID that is generated by SWSS. BCAL consultants and support staff do not have access to the SWSS data base and cannot look up the SWSS provider number.

We are hopeful that these changes will make the payment process go more efficiently as it relates to renewals. Additional work is being done with staff from information technology to ensure that original licenses are also showing up in SWSS in a timely manner.