

**COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA  
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS POLICY**

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**Purpose**

To establish a policy for the provision of out-of-home placement whenever a child cannot remain in the home of a parent, custodial relative, or legal guardian.

**Background**

Out-of-home placement refers to any arrangement made by one of the County's placing agencies for a child to live apart from his/her parent or legal guardian in an approved relative or non-related extended family member's home, in a licensed or certified home, or in a licensed residential facility on a 24-hour basis. The County of San Diego's placing agencies, the Probation Department and the Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA), are authorized to provide placement services by State law and do so through one of these organizational units:

**JUVENILE DIVISION (PROBATION DEPARTMENT):**

Out-of-home placement services are provided to children adjudicated as delinquent wards of the Court pursuant to Section 602 of the Welfare and Institutions Code.

**CHILD WELFARE SERVICES (HHSA):**

Out-of-home placement services are provided to children adjudicated as dependents of the Court pursuant to Section 300 of the Welfare and Institutions Code.

Voluntary out-of-home placement services may be provided to children pursuant to Section 16500 of the Welfare and Institutions Code.

**ADOPTIONS (HHSA):**

Out-of-home placement services are provided to children pending relinquishment and adoptive placement, and may include residential care when the need arises pursuant to Section 8704 of the Family Code and Section 1500 of the Health and Safety Code.

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Policy

It is the policy of the Board of Supervisors that County placing agencies will focus on strengthening families, and thereby place children in out-of-home care only when all available resources for providing necessary services in-home have been utilized or the level of risk is too high for the child to be maintained in his/her own home or that of relatives, extended family members, or guardians. The primary criteria to be used in the evaluation for placement will be the individual needs of the child based upon a thorough assessment of risk and needs. This policy supports *Live Well San Diego* by promoting healthy, safe and thriving communities by ensuring that children who must be placed out-of-home will be placed in the most family-like setting possible, thereby supporting the child's safety and addressing their overall well-being.

Guidelines

1. The decision to place a child in out-of-home care will be made only after a thorough, professional review of the child's and family's circumstances and the development of a case plan.
2. Children in need of placement will be evaluated in terms of their needs and the level of care available. Children shall be placed in the least restrictive placement that provides the minimum level of care required.
3. The suitability of each placement will be reviewed and evaluated on an ongoing basis, as specified by State regulations.
4. In-county placements are generally preferred to out-of-county placements so that children can maintain ties to their families and communities.
5. The out-of-home placement of children will follow best practice guidelines, in this order of priority: relative; family known to child ("nonrelative extended family member"); licensed foster home within the community from which the child was removed; other licensed foster home; foster family agency home; group home.
6. Whenever more than one suitable out-of-home care placement/program is available with an equal quality of service delivery, preference will be given to the most effective placement/program meeting the needs of the child.
7. The goal of out-of-home care is the timely, safe and successful return of the child to his/her family and/or community. If it is not possible to return the child to the parent, relative, or guardian, then a permanent plan for a stable family life through adoption, guardianship, or other long-term plan will be implemented in a timely manner, as specified by law.
8. Children shall be placed in out-of-home care placements that are certified, licensed, or approved by HHSA in accordance with standards as referenced in Welfare and Institutions Code 309(d); and that are regularly inspected.

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9. Consistent with a continuum of care, development of additional facilities for children and adolescents with special needs is required through an integrated effort of the County placing agencies and the California Health and Human Services Agency, by addressing licensing, regulatory, and funding resources.

**Funding**

The cost of placement services is shared by a wide variety of funding sources, primarily: Federal Aid to Families with Dependent Children - Foster Care (AFDC-FC), State AFDC-FC, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Emergency Assistance (EA), and County General Funds. In certain situations, parental contributions, private or third party coverage, and even special public school funding may offset or supplement the primary funding sources.

**Definitions**

The out-of-home programs for children represent a continuum in the level of care ranging from less restrictive, less intensive foster care, to more restrictive, more therapeutic residential care. The cost of care increases according to the higher level of care:

**RELATIVE OR NON-RELATED EXTENDED FAMILY MEMBER:**

The placement of a child into the home of a relative or a non-related adult caregiver who has an established familial relationship with a relative of the child, as defined in paragraph (2) of subdivision (c) of Section 361.3, or a familial or mentoring relationship with the child, when circumstances exist that make it unsafe for the child to remain in the home of his/her parent or guardian. The caregiver must be "approved" by HHSA or the Probation Department through a formal process, including in-home safety inspection and criminal and child abuse history clearances, before a child is placed in the home.

(Funding Source: AFDC-FC, EA, SSI, County General Funds)

**LICENSED FOSTER HOME:**

The placement of a child into a foster home, licensed by the State (contracted to Foster Home Licensing - HHSA), when circumstances exist that make it unsafe for the child to remain in the home of his/her parent or guardian. (Funding Source: AFDC-FC, EA, SSI, County General Funds)

**FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY SUPPORTED FOSTER CARE:**

The placement of a child into treatment-level Foster Family Agency certified homes, in which foster parents receive additional training, support services and financial incentives to support children who present with unusual difficulties due to emotional disturbances and/or behavioral dysfunction, and are therefore unable to benefit from placement in

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regular, County-licensed foster homes. (Funding Source: AFDC-FC, EA, SSI, County General Funds)

**RESIDENTIAL CARE:**

The placement of children who are in need of professional treatment and supervision related to developmental disability, serious emotional disturbance, delinquent behavior, etc., and who are at risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation, into professionally-staffed, State-licensed facilities commonly referred to as group homes or residential treatment facilities/centers. The programs range from private facilities that are contracted with the County of San Diego to out-of-county and out-of-state programs. (Funding Source: AFDC-FC, EA, SSI, County General Funds)

**TEMPORARY CARE PROGRAMS:**

The placement of children into these programs may be made by a placing agency, but can also be made by self-referral. The needs of temporary shelter and crisis intervention in a community-based setting are met in these programs. This includes subsidized foster care, and Emergency Shelter care. (Funding Source: Runaway and Homeless Youth Act Funds, AFDC-FC, EA)

**Sunset Date**

This policy will be reviewed for continuance by 12-31-21.

**Board Action**

7-1-80 (30)  
11-13-84 (8)  
3-3-88 (24)  
6-15-93 (41)  
12-5-95 (36)  
12-3-02 (8)  
10-24-07 (5)  
01-06-15 (5)

**CAO Reference**

1. Health and Human Services Agency
2. Probation Department