



Melding Project CWDA Presentation



June 11, 2004

The Mini-Melding Project Team

- ◆ **Sandra Black, CFSD**
- ◆ **Angela Bonner, CCL**
- ◆ **Michael Dean, CWDA**
- ◆ **Karen Gunderson, CFSD**
- ◆ **Elizabeth Sandoval, CDSS Legal**

Jim Brown, Consultant





WHY MELDING?

- ◆ ASFA established “Same standards” requirement for Non-relatives and Relatives
- ◆ Different Licensing and Approval processes undermine “same standards” requirement and create financial liability
- ◆ Critical Adoption Home Study elements come too late for effective Concurrent Planning



WHY MELDING?

- ◆ Building families for children is very different than licensing facilities
- ◆ A consolidated, streamlined process to find, approve and support Resource Families is necessary to meet AB 636 Outcomes for Placement changes and Permanency and avoid fiscal sanctions



Resource Families



- ◆ An inclusive term for adoptive, foster and kinship (related and non-related) families
- ◆ Their role is to provide stability and lifelong connections for children
- ◆ There is a clear and important distinction between approving and supporting Resource Families and licensing facilities



Vision for the Work of the “*Mighty Mini-Melders*”

Vision: A Resource Family approval process that:

- ◆ Is safe and protective.
- ◆ Is family focused.
- ◆ Is expedited.
- ◆ Results in permanent families for children with the absolute minimum number of placements and moves.
- ◆ Honors the child's natural connections in process/decision making.



The Proposal

A unified process of evaluation and preparation for all Resource Families building on our State-supervised, County-administered system and the existing FFA model.

Meldettes Objective



Objective: Develop a conceptual proposal to:

- ◆ Provide Oversight and Accountability
- ◆ Ensure Due Process
- ◆ Integrate & streamline current processes for Foster Care Licensing, Relative Approvals and Adoptions into a single “Approval Model”

Oversight and Accountability

COUNTIES

Authority to:

- ◆ Recruit
- ◆ Train
- ◆ Approve, deny and rescind approval
- ◆ Supervise and support resource family homes

Responsibility to:

- ◆ Investigate child abuse allegations
- ◆ Ensure homes continually meet approval standards
- ◆ Report complaints to CDSS

CDSS

Authority to:

- ◆ Inspect resource family homes and county files
- ◆ Remove home approvals

Responsibility to:

- ◆ Investigate serious incidents and complaints about individual homes
- ◆ Provide appeal process through administrative hearings
- ◆ Ensure county complies with standards for approving homes

Due Process



- ◆ The county approves or denies and rescinds approvals.
- ◆ Appeals from denials are heard at a county grievance review.
- ◆ Appeals from rescissions and from county grievance review on denials are handled through the state administrative hearing process.



Approval Model

- **Phase 1: Home approval**

Placement with compelling reason only (IV-E)

- **Phase 2: Placement approval**

- Concurrent planning assessment
- Training and support
- **Regular placement may occur (IV-E)**

Approval Model: Phase 1



Phase 1: Home Approval

- ✓ CLETS and CWS/CMS reviews subject to current non-exemptibles and immediate submission of fingerprints.
- ✓ Application of “Red Flag” standards to promote safety and permanency
- ✓ Conduct “Home and Grounds” review using “Core Standards”
- ✓ Advisements

Approval Model: Phase 2



Phase 2: Placement Approval

- ◆ Review of the full criminal record including arrests (Rap-backs continue throughout)
- ◆ Concurrent Planning Assessment
- ◆ Completion of mandatory minimum caregiver training



Permanency becomes a Legal Event

Over the life of the case:

- ◆ Permanency planning & preparation occurs
- ◆ Adoption occurs when appropriate and after at least 6 months of successful placement
- ◆ Continued placement approval is subject to periodic reassessment



Advantages and Opportunities

- ◆ Supports CFSR/AB 636 Outcomes
- ◆ Integrates Adoptions into CWS
- ◆ Changes focus from licensing homes to finding and building families for children
- ◆ Provides all Resource Families with a standard and impartial administrative review process



More Advantages and Opportunities

- ◆ Resolves existing financial risks associated with AFSA's "Same Standard" requirement
- ◆ Establishes a clear process for investigating abuse and neglect in out-of-home care