

March 30, 2020

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**ALL COUNTY LETTER NO. 20-31**

This All County Letter provides county child welfare social workers and juvenile probation officers updated instructions regarding documenting of contacts completed with children and families through videoconferencing during the declared Coronavirus (COVID-19) State of Emergency.



**KIM JOHNSON**  
DIRECTOR

STATE OF CALIFORNIA—HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY  
**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES**  
744 P Street • Sacramento, CA 95814 • [www.cdss.ca.gov](http://www.cdss.ca.gov)



**GAVIN NEWSOM**  
GOVERNOR

March 30, 2020

ALL COUNTY LETTER NO. 20-31

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS  
ALL CHIEF PROBATION OFFICERS  
ALL INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAM MANAGERS  
ALL INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAM COORDINATORS  
ALL FOSTER CARE MANAGERS  
ALL TITLE IV-E AGREEMENT TRIBES  
ALL TRANSITIONAL HOUSING COORDINATORS  
ALL COUNTY RFA AND ADOPTION PROGRAM MANAGERS  
ALL CDSS ADOPTION REGIONAL OFFICES

SUBJECT: DOCUMENTING CHILD WELFARE AND PROBATION  
CONTACTS BY ALTERNATE MEANS TO CHILDREN AND  
FAMILIES DURING NOVEL CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)  
CALIFORNIA STATE OF EMERGENCY

REFERENCE: PROVIDING OPTIMAL CHILD WELFARE AND PROBATION  
SERVICES TO CHILDREN AND FAMILIES DURING COVID-19  
CALIFORNIA STATE OF EMERGENCY [ALL COUNTY LETTER  
\(ACL\) 20-25; CHILD WELFARE POLICY MANUAL SECTION 7.3  
TITLE IV-B, PROGRAMMATIC REQUIREMENTS, QUESTION #8;  
42 U.S.C. 622\(b\)\(17\); GOVERNOR'S PROCLAMATION OF A  
STATE OF EMERGENCY, MARCH 4, 2020](#)


The purpose of this letter is to provide county child welfare agencies and juvenile probation departments with guidance on how to document monthly caseworker visits or investigatory contacts that occurred via videoconferencing in the Child Welfare Services Case Management System (CWS/CMS), consistent with the guidance stated in ACL 20-25 as it relates to the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) state of emergency in California. Any form of communication with child(ren), nonminor dependent (NMD), parent(s), and providers must be documented within CWS/CMS. It is recommended that all of these contacts be in the contact notes and include the method through which the visit was conducted (e.g. videoconferencing).

## **BACKGROUND**

Children in foster care placements are required to receive monthly caseworker visits.<sup>1</sup> Generally, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) has considered only face-to-face visitation to count towards this requirement. However, ACF has issued recent guidance through the Child Welfare Policy Manual<sup>2</sup> permitting Title IV-B<sup>3</sup> agencies to waive the in-person aspect of the monthly caseworker visits and allow them to instead be accomplished through videoconferencing when an emergency prohibits or strongly discourages face-to-face contact for a public health reason or other similar public or individual health challenges. The determination that it is appropriate to accomplish a required monthly face-to-face through videoconferencing during this public health crisis must be made on a case-by-case basis, and under limited, specified circumstances, as outlined in ACL 20-25. Additionally, caseworkers must conduct the videoconference in accordance with existing timeframes established in Title IV-B of the Social Security Act, and must closely assess the child's safety during each conference.

## **DOCUMENTING VIDEOCONFERENCING CONTACT IN CWS/CMS**

To document a videoconference contact in the identified child/NMD's case:

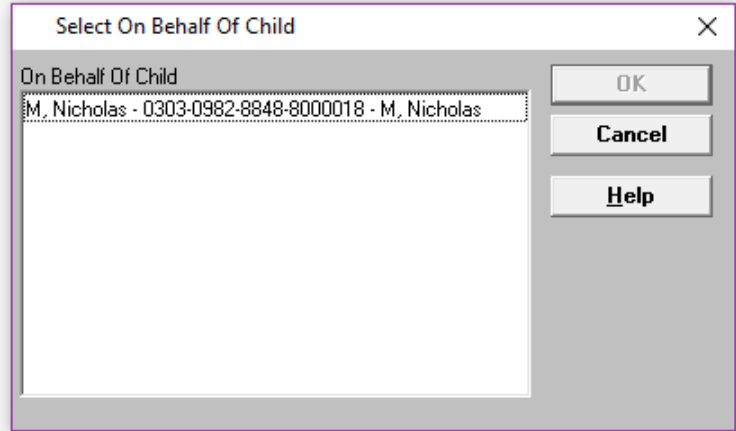
<p>1. Click the <b>Service Management Section</b>. Click the <b>Create New Contact '+'</b>.</p>	 <p>The screenshot shows the 'Service Management Section' interface. On the left, there is a label 'Service Management Section' with an orange square icon. An arrow points to a grid of icons. The grid contains several icons: a folder with a document, a folder with a document, a green square, a blue square, a red square, an orange square, a pink square, and a document with a red ribbon. The bottom-right icon, which is a plus sign inside a square, is circled in red.</p>
---	--

<sup>1</sup> Section 422(b)(17) of the Social Security Act

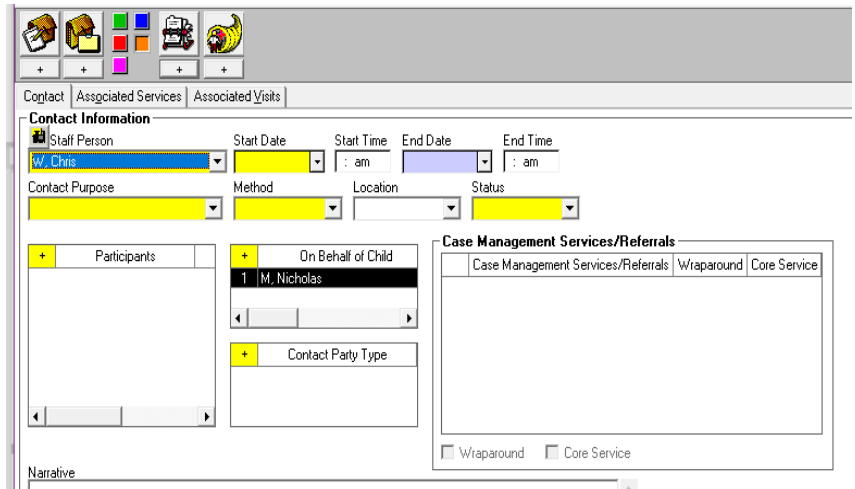
<sup>2</sup> CWPM section 7.3 TITLE IV-B, Programmatic Requirements, Question #8

<sup>3</sup> Title IV-B of the Social Security Act

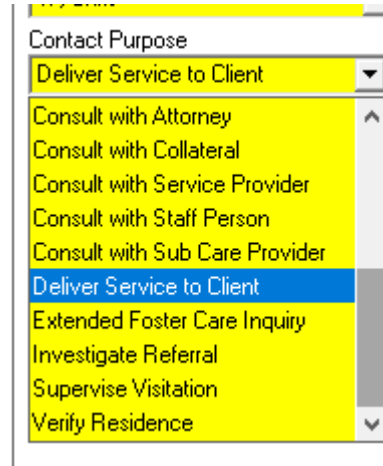
2. The **Select on Behalf of Child** window opens. Highlight the child client and click the **OK** button.



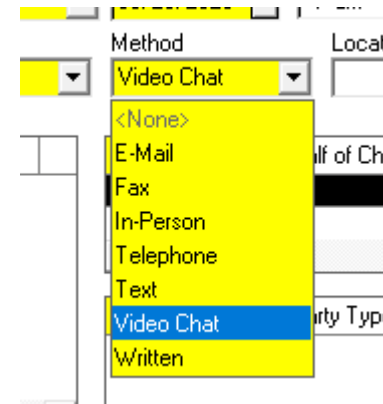
3. Complete the mandatory (yellow) and known fields. 'Start Date' is the date the videoconference occurred.

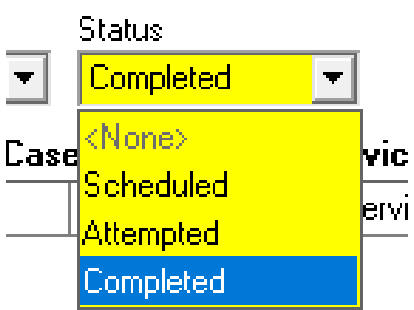



4. For 'Contact Purpose' select 'Deliver Service to Client'.



5. For Method, select 'Video Chat'.



<p>6. For 'Status', select 'Completed'.</p>	 <p>The image shows a screenshot of a web form. At the top, the word "Status" is written above a dropdown menu. The dropdown menu is open, showing a list of options: "Completed" (highlighted in yellow), "&lt;None&gt;", "Scheduled", "Attempted", and "Completed" (highlighted in blue). To the left of the dropdown, the word "Case" is partially visible. To the right, the words "vic" and "ervi" are partially visible.</p>
<p>7. As stated in the Child Welfare policy Manual Clarification, Narratives must include language that indicates how the child's/NMDs safety was closely assessed during each videoconference. In addition, the narrative must include the specific reason for engaging via videoconferencing, rather than the expected face to face contact. It is insufficient to simply reference the COVID-19 public health emergency as a blanket reason for videoconferencing.</p>	 <p>The image shows a screenshot of a web form. The word "Narrative" is written above a large, empty text input field. The input field has a vertical scrollbar on the right side.</p>

Other contacts that are not made face-to-face, such as telephone calls, texts, etc. should continue to be documented as such using the appropriate "Method" selection.

The authorization for required monthly face-to-face caseworker visits to be completed through videoconferencing during the COVID-19 public health crisis, as specified in ACL 20-25 or any subsequent guidance, expires on June 30, 2020, or sooner if determined by the Department, and all prior statutory, regulatory, and written guidance requirements related to required monthly case visits and associated documentation

All County Letter No. 20-31  
Page Six

shall be reinstated. As always, additional contacts during the month may be completed using alternate means as appropriate to the circumstances of the case.

If you have any questions or need additional guidance regarding the information in this letter, please email [CFSD@dss.ca.gov](mailto:CFSD@dss.ca.gov).

Sincerely,

**Original Document Signed By**

GREGORY E. ROSE  
Deputy Director  
Children and Family Services Division