

NEST

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Introduction and background

Continuum of Care Reform (CCR) efforts throughout the State mandated all county children's centers in California to transition to Temporary Shelter Care Facilities effective January 1, 2017.

As a result, Polinsky Children's Center (PCC) is only available to children when all other placement resources are exhausted and the length of stay at PCC can be no longer than 10 days.

In order to assist meeting this requirement, the specialized Nurturing Evaluation Stabilization Team (NEST) Program was developed, replacing the Emergency Shelter Care Unit (ESCU). The NEST Program consists of the NEST Family Homes Specialized Program Pilot. The NEST rate replaces the Emergency Shelter Care Rate (ESC) and is only available to NEST Family Homes.

The vision and purpose of the NEST program is to assist in providing a nurturing family environment for children in temporary shelter care or who are at risk of coming into shelter care that includes stabilization services and family support.

The NEST Unit monitors NEST Family homes, which consist of resource families who are part of a specialized program that receive specialized training and support. Children at PCC or at risk of entering PCC are eligible for placement in a NEST home after all placement resources have been exhausted.

This supports SET [Value 2](#) and the guiding principle to provide cutting edge training and supportive services to kinship and resource families, and the agency practice to keep safety, permanency, and well-being of children/youth at the forefront.

Policy

Effective July 1, 2018, the NEST unit will assist in determining the most appropriate level of emergency care for all children in care for the first time who are at PCC or who are at risk of coming into shelter care. Every child taken into protective custody at PCC is assigned a social worker in the NEST Unit.

Policy (cont.)

When a child needs a placement, and all placement options have been exhausted by Regional Placement staff and the SW, the SW will call the NEST Unit for assistance. All Regions are assigned specific NEST PSW liaisons.

If the Regional Placement SW or SW wants to request a NEST home for a child or youth after all other placement resources have been exhausted, the NEST SW assigned to that region should be contacted. If the assigned NEST worker is not available, contact PCC Reception at (858) 514-4600 and ask to speak to the NEST Duty Worker.

NEST Unit

The NEST Unit provides the following services:

- Resource Family (RF) home placement services for children placed on a Hospital Hold
 - Assessment for appropriate level of emergency care
 - Search for a RF home and/or for field placements, thereby diverting entry into PCC
 - Screen children for placement in NEST homes
 - Monitor of NEST homes
 - Coordinate the Virtual Assessment Team (VAT) Meetings
 - Track placements in the Out-of-Placement database
 - Move children from shelter care into family like settings
 - Placement Services for children temporarily assigned to the PCC Assessment Center (AC).
 - Enter the results of the meeting in the Out of Placement database the same day of the VAT Meeting
 - Function as liaison to specific Regions as well as Residential and Adoptions
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NEST Specialized Program Pilot

The specialized program pilot, NEST (Nurturing Evaluation & Stabilization Team), will include up to 25 resource families that will receive specialized training, support services, and an incentive rate. Children can stay in the NEST home for up to 60 days while awaiting placement with a relative, other placement, or become a long-term placement, if available, in the NEST home. The NEST Unit will have oversight of the program, authorizing all placements and tracking time frames. Quality Parenting Initiative (QPI) Values are woven throughout the program.

Children placed in NEST homes benefit:

- as they move from shelter care into a family like setting in a timely manner.
 - while they are placed in the home, children have the opportunity to have their needs evaluated; this assists in helping the children find the best long term placement match, including placement with relatives and NREFMs.
 - as it allows more time to prepare relative caregivers and NREFMs for placement of the child.
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NEST Family Homes-description

NEST Families must meet established criteria and go through an application process. There will be an established Application Review Committee that will review applications and determine eligibility for the program. The NEST Unit will oversee the program, track placements and monitor the NEST homes.

The NEST program will include families that are willing to care for children that are non-ambulatory, have medical needs, teens, and other children with trauma related needs.

**NEST Family Homes-
description (cont.)**

NEST Families are selected based on the following criteria:

- A foster home or approved resource family in good standing and free of frequent complaint and hold histories. (Any complaint history will require NEST and RFA Manager Approvals).
- Ability to meet special needs of children with challenging needs, i.e. medical, behavioral and/or displaying signs of emotional trauma.
- Ability to work with challenging family members.
- Knowledge of and acceptance of additional resources when needed for a child.
- Have been a licensed foster home or approved resource family for a least one year.
- Have actively cared for foster children in the past year and/or have provided permanency to former foster children through guardianship, adoption or kinship care.
- Willing to convert from a licensed foster home to an approved resource family.
- Willing to dedicate at least 1 bed to the NEST program, preferably 2.
- If a two parent family, both parents willing to be approved under the Resource Family Approval (RFA) and NEST family processes.

**NEST Family Homes
expectations**

NEST Families are held to the following expectations:

- Respond within 2 hours of contact by the NEST unit; if placement will be made, be available to pick up children within 4-8 hours upon initial contact by the NEST Unit, 7 days a week
- Care for children in the home for up to 60 days or until a relative or other placement is found
- Accommodate sibling groups by keeping siblings together in placement or fostering visitation with other caregivers
- Have transportation available to transport the children to their school of origin (if warranted), appointments, and visitation with family members
- Initiate and coordinate assessments and services according to the child's needs
- Utilize NEST beds only for children referred by the NEST Unit
- Clear non-NEST placements with the NEST Unit
- Advise NEST unit of any planned vacations or other unavailable time frames
- Ensure child receives timely dental and medical exams
- Participate in Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTs).

**NEST Family Training
and Support Services**

In addition to the TIPS training required for all Resource Families, initial and on-going training will be required of NEST Families provided by the Grossmont College Foster Adoptive Kinship Care Education Program (FAKCE).

The training curriculum is trauma focused and is designed to assist NEST parents in understanding the trauma to children who have experienced abuse and neglect and are now experiencing separation from their family.

NEST Family Training and Support Services (cont.)

The initial NEST training is 8 hours, and 2 hour monthly trainings will be offered thereafter at the monthly NEST support groups. **NEST Family Training and Support Services include:**

- Specialized Support Groups will be held monthly by the FAKCE program in collaboration with the NEST Unit
 - NEST families are expected to attend at least 6 of 12 support groups per year and receive at least 12 hours of additional NEST training per year.
- All children at PCC over the age of 6 will have mental health assessment. and services that will follow the child in the NEST home until a provider is found
- Developmental services by DSEP within 30 days for children 0-5
- Respite Care
- Additional support, training and services to help caregivers overcome challenges related to children experiencing symptoms of trauma
- Being part of a support system with other resource parents through support groups and shared activities.

NOTE: The 12 NEST training hours are in addition to the 12 hours of TIPS required for approved resource families.

Fiscal support

NEST homes will receive additional financial support during the first 60 days of placement, in addition to the LOC rate.

- The NEST rate is \$20 per day for up to 60 days.

NOTE: A NEST home may receive a special care rate in place of the NEST incentive if the Special Care Rate is determined to be higher than the NEST rate, but cannot receive both. Only the NEST Unit has the authority to authorize the NEST rate.

Monitoring of NEST families

All Resource Families are monitored by the RFA program and will complete the same requirements. However, NEST families will be provided with additional case management by the NEST Unit. A NEST SW will be available for additional support 7 days a week.

NEST placements will be tracked by the NEST unit and will be included in the PCC Daily Placement Calls-Ins for placement progress updates.

NEST homes will be re-evaluated every 6 months to review requests for placements, acceptance and denial of placements and quality of placements through the NEST program. If expectations are not being met, NEST families may be re-evaluated for appropriateness as a NEST family.

All placements in a NEST home, whether NEST or long term, will be authorized by the NEST unit to ensure that NEST beds are being utilized as intended and to monitor the dynamics of the placements in the NEST home.

PCC 23-hour Assessment Center (AC)

Children temporarily assigned to the PCC Assessment Center (AC) receive placement services through the NEST Unit.

**PCC 23-hour
Assessment Center
(AC) (cont.)**

The goal of the AC is to divert entry into PCC by:

- Placing children with:
 - a RF home,
 - a relative/NREFM once emergency cleared for placement,
- or**
- Returning the child to the parents/caretakers within 23-hours of admission.

The 23-hour diversion of children placed from the AC does not statistically count as a placement by the State, as the AC is designated as a non-foster care placement in CWS/CMS.

**Virtual Assessment
Team (VAT)**

A VAT meeting will be conducted on every child entering PCC. The VAT will assist in problem-solving when the SW has exhausted all placement options for the presenting situation. Members of the VAT team will include:

- NEST staff
- Residential Services screening staff
- The assigned SW and PSS
- The Regional Placement Worker.

The VAT is available to staff Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. If a child is brought into custody after hours or on the weekend, the team will be convened on the morning of the next business day. The NEST Unit will:

- Convene the VAT
 - Enter the results of the meeting in the Out of Placement database the same day of the VAT Meeting.
 - Function as liaison to specific Regions as well as Residential and Adoptions.
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**Out-of-Placement
database**

The Out-of-Placement database will be used to track all out of placement children including those who have not had a VAT. Placement workers and the NEST Unit will access the database via a shared drive (S:/ENTERPRISE/Temporary Assigned Bed Folder).
