

# FOR YOUR INFORMATION

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Issue 20-08 (REV)

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## Verification of Foster Care Status to Facilitate Foster Youth Access to Cell Phones to Mitigate the Impacts of COVID-19

Pursuant to the authority in the Governor's April 17, 2020 [Executive Order N-53-20 \(EO N-53-20\)](#), the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) issued an All County Information Notice ([ACIN I-32-20](#)) in order to provide former and current foster youth to access cellphones, as eligible, through the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) iFoster pilot program during the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) state of emergency.

### **Phones for Foster Youth Program: Application and Verification Process**

The iFoster and Boost Mobile 'Phones for Foster Youth' pilot program provides a free smartphone with unlimited voice, text, and data to current and former foster youth residing in California.

- To be eligible for this program, a person must be a current or former foster youth between the ages of 13 and 26 who was in foster care on their 13th birthday or later and who resides in California.
- This pilot is part of a larger federal program and is administered by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC).

Additionally, to ensure that foster youth can still connect with their support networks, the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) has partnered with iFoster to provide a free smartphone with 3 months' worth of unlimited voice, text, high speed data, and hotspot capability for current California foster youth aged 5-12 inclusive and their caregivers to ensure they can do e-visitation with their families, communicate with their social workers, therapists, attorneys, and others, and utilize the Internet capability for school work. Please refer to the [iFoster Frequently Asked Questions](#) for specific details regarding the program.

- To be eligible for this program, an applicant must be a current California foster youth between the ages of 5 and 12 inclusive.
- A completed [application](#) requires Caregiver signed approval.



If you have any questions regarding this release, please e-mail your question to:

[Policy@dcfs.lacounty.gov](mailto:Policy@dcfs.lacounty.gov)

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## Application Process

In order to obtain a cell phone through the Phones for Foster Youth pilot program, youth must fill out an application and email the application to [phone@ifoster.org](mailto:phone@ifoster.org) or upload to their personal Digital Locker at [www.ifoster.org](http://www.ifoster.org), along with providing verification of their dependency or ward status and foster care placement.

The process for activation of phones is outlined in the [iFoster Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#), which also addresses the ability to apply parental controls, suspension and reactivation of the service, and the iFoster digital literacy course.

## Temporary Verification Process

- Under existing law, CDSS may issue foster care verification for former dependents and wards for the purpose of accessing programs or services whose eligibility is tied to former foster care status. County child welfare agencies, Title IV-E Agreement tribes, and probation departments may provide verification directly to a current or former foster youth.
- To issue foster care verification for current dependents and wards to entities not entitled to the information under WIC section 827, a court order is generally required. However, as courts are handling only urgent and due process sensitive matters during this COVID-19 pandemic, obtaining a court order would unnecessarily delay a foster youth's access to a cell phone.
- The verification should be in writing and address only the information necessary to verify eligibility and enable iFoster to process requests. The verification should be provided by fax, email, or U.S. mail.

The Office of the Foster Care Ombudsman (OFCO), within CDSS, serves as the foster care verification entity.

- Current or former foster youth may request a verification letter from the OFCO by calling the OFCO hotline, toll free at 1-877-846-1602.
- Initial requests need to be received by telephone so that the OFCO may verify the youth's identity, ask any clarifying questions to find the youth's case in the Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS).
- All requests for a verification letter will be completed by the OFCO as soon as feasibly possible, but in no case later than five (5) calendar days after the request is made. Completed verification letters will be provided to the youth, DCFS, applicable Title IV-E tribe(s), and iFoster by fax, email, or U.S. mail.



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Youth Development Services Division is collecting information for all youth ages 13-26 who are in need of cell phones and/or laptops.

- Please contact CSA II Jill Franklin via email at [frankj@dcfs.lacounty.gov](mailto:frankj@dcfs.lacounty.gov) and provide the full name, DOB, CSW, SCSW and DCFS office and indicate if youth is requesting a [cell phone](#), [laptop](#) or both.
- For foster youth enrolled in any type of post-secondary education (Career/Technical Education, Community College, 4-Year college) free access to technology is available via iFoster Youth can call or email iFoster directly at: 1-855-936-7837 or [phone@ifoster.org](mailto:phone@ifoster.org).

### Effective Period of this Guidance

The EO N-53-20 foster care verification flexibilities, as outlined in [ACIN I-32-20](#), shall expire on June 30, 2020, unless extended.



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