



CDSS

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DIRECTOR

STATE OF CALIFORNIA—HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY  
**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

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EDMUND G. BROWN JR.  
GOVERNOR

October 25, 2013

ALL COUNTY LETTER NO. 13-86

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS  
ALL CHILD WELFARE SERVICES PROGRAM MANAGERS  
ALL CHIEF PROBATION OFFICERS  
TITLE IV-E AGREEMENT TRIBES

SUBJECT: ASSESSING YOUTH RESIDING IN GROUP CARE LONGER THAN ONE YEAR

REFERENCE: WELFARE AND INSTITUTIONS CODE (W&IC) SECTIONS 11467(c)(2) AND 16010.8; W&IC SECTION 361.2, 16501.1(c)(1); ASSEMBLY BILL (AB) 74 (CHAPTER 21, STATUTES OF 2013); ALL COUNTY LETTER 13-73; ALL COUNTY LETTER 13-87

REASON FOR THIS TRANSMITTAL

- State Law Change
- Federal Law or Regulation Change
- Court Order
- Clarification Requested by One or More Counties
- Initiated by CDSS

In September 2012 the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) began working with stakeholders to reform the state’s congregate care system, emphasizing that children and families are best served when children live with a committed, permanent, and nurturing family. Congregate care, when necessary, is best used as a short-term, high-quality intervention that is part of a continuum of care for children and youth. Congregate care in California is no longer a destination, rather, an intervention tailored to meet the needs of the individual child being served.

To date, this work has resulted in two significant statutory changes regarding foster youth placed in group care. Specifically, the 2011 Realignment Trailer Bill added W&IC section 11467(c)(2) requiring CDSS to work with stakeholders to develop a procedure for identifying youth who have been in group care for one year or longer to determine the reason for the continued stay and to develop a plan for each child to transition to a family-like setting as appropriate. In addition, AB 74 (Chapter 21, Statutes of 2013), added W&IC section 16010.8 requiring CDSS to report to the legislature on the outcomes of the assessment of each youth in group care for longer than one year and the outcomes of transitions or plans to transition each youth to family settings.

The CDSS, in collaboration with the staff at the University of California Berkeley, Center for Social Services Research, has identified two methodologies for identifying the population of youth in group care for one year or longer based upon information contained within the Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS). The lists will include children and youth who are placed in all group home levels with Rate Classification Levels 4-14.

The first methodology identifies children/youth that currently have an open foster care episode who have been living in the same group home for over 365 consecutive days.

The second methodology identifies children/youth that have been in group home placements with breaks in placement (e.g., AWOLs) and returned to group home placements within the same placement episode for a total stay of 365 days or more when added together.

The CDSS will distribute lists semi-annually to each county. Using both methodologies above, the lists will identify children/youth who have been in group care longer than one year and will be stratified by the placing agency (Child Welfare or Probation) and will include the Client IDs and Case IDs, and for second methodology, the Total Days in Care and Total Group Home Placements for all children/youth identified. The CDSS will place these lists on the department's secure website. Each county child welfare and probation agency will use a unique password to access the information. When the lists are developed, CDSS will notify all county child welfare directors, chief probation officers and supervising probation officers via e-mail and provide instruction on how to access their county lists.

Counties are asked to reassess each individual identified on the lists and determine whether or not their placement in group care remains suitable and appropriate based upon their identified needs and strengths. For the purpose of this activity, counties are encouraged to utilize their existing assessment tools to identify the child's current service needs and strengths. Based upon the outcome of the reassessment, the county placing agencies should determine if the child's needs, when matched with the specialized services offered in the group home, continue to support this level of placement. If the reassessment determines that the child no longer requires a residential placement setting, the placing agency is encouraged to develop a plan of transition to a more family-based setting best suited to meet the child's needs. Existing statute specifies the placement priorities as placement with relatives, non-relative extended family members, tribal members, foster family home, licensed community care facility, group home and residential treatment [W&IC section 361.2, 16501.1(c)(1)].

Counties are being requested to document the reassessment by entering the following information into the Contact Notebook in CWS/CMS for each individual on the list:

- (1) Enter the appropriate start date and end date for the contact.
- (2) Contact method should be “in-person”. (Note: This activity can take place during the monthly caseworker visit.)
- (3) For the Contact Purpose select “conduct client evaluation” from the drop down menu,
- (4) For “On Behalf of Child” select the child/youth identified on this list.
- (5) Contact Party Type – select Staff Person/Child
- (6) In the Narrative dialog box document the following:
  - a) Begin the narrative with the phrase - “Reassessment of a child/youth in group care”.
  - b) For those youth whom it is determined that group care continues to be suitable and appropriate, include information supporting the continued placement needs of the child/youth. This would include information as to why continuation in a group home placement is the best alternative available to meet the special needs of the child and what strategies are being considered to transition the child to a less restrictive level of care.
  - c) For those youth whose reassessment has determined that group care is no longer suitable or appropriate, include information regarding the plan for transition being sure to include information about when it is expected that the child/youth will transition and where the child/youth will transition to (relative, parent or Foster Family Agency with In Home Behavioral Services, Therapeutic Foster Care services).
- (7) If a transitional plan is developed or changed, then the case plan should be updated as necessary to reflect any changes in services and case plan goals.

Enclosure A includes CWS/CMS screen shots to assist counties with recording the necessary information on the reassessment of each youth as described above. Completion of these fields will allow CDSS to compile necessary information about these children/youth for legislative reporting. Enclosure B provides the detail for each of the two methodologies used to develop the county lists.

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While some of the activities are related in terms of reporting on the status of various target populations, please note that the Katie A. semi-annual progress reports required by ACL 13-73 is not an acceptable substitute for the requirements outlined above.

If you have any questions regarding this policy, please contact the Continuum of Care Unit at (916) 651-9152. Questions regarding the data may be directed to the Child Welfare Data Analysis Bureau at [CWSdata@dss.ca.gov](mailto:CWSdata@dss.ca.gov).

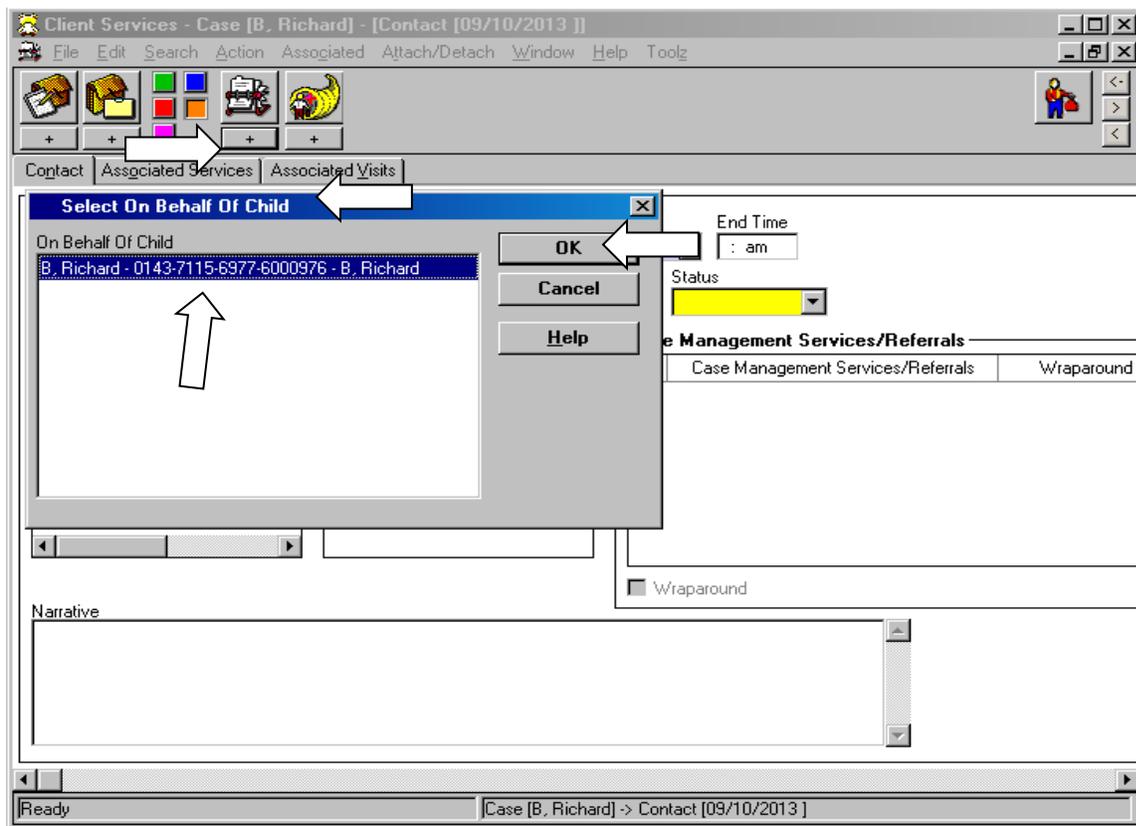
Sincerely,

***Original Document Signed By:***

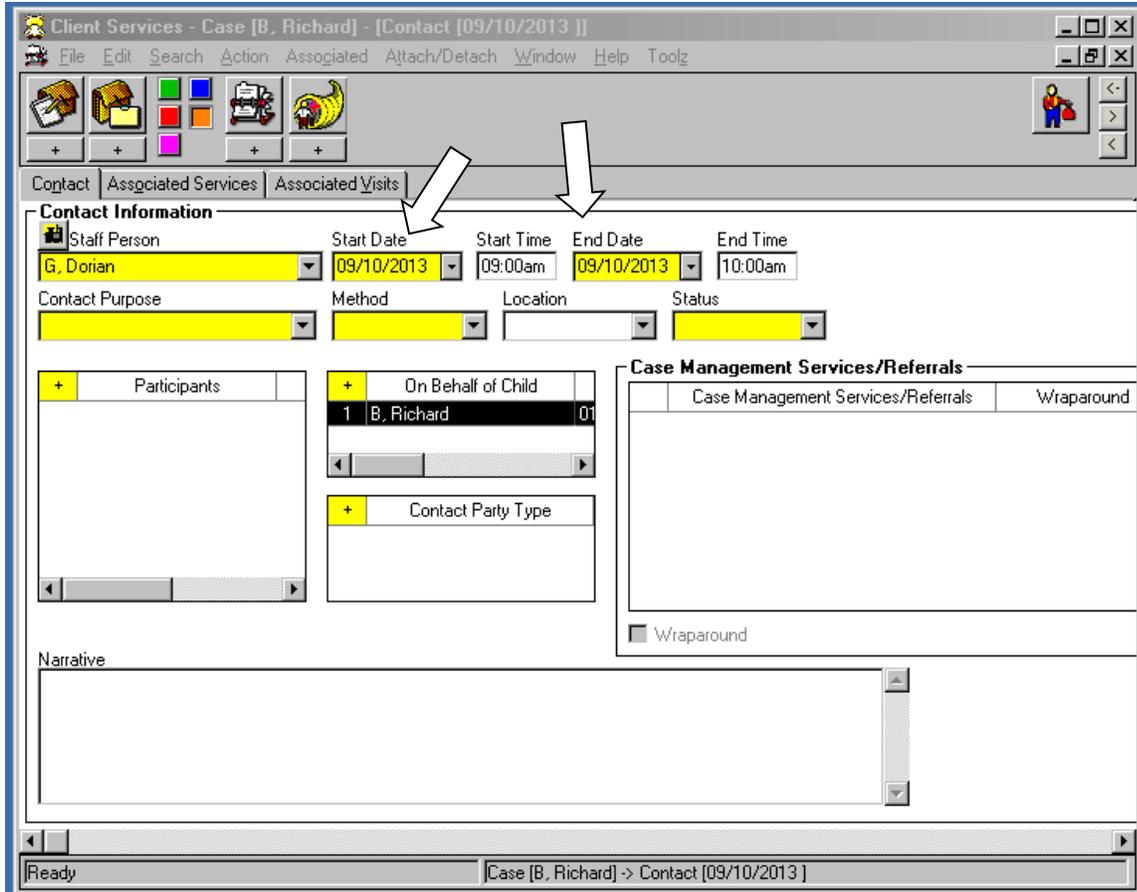
GREGORY E. ROSE  
Deputy Director  
Children and Family Division

# *ENCLOSURE A*

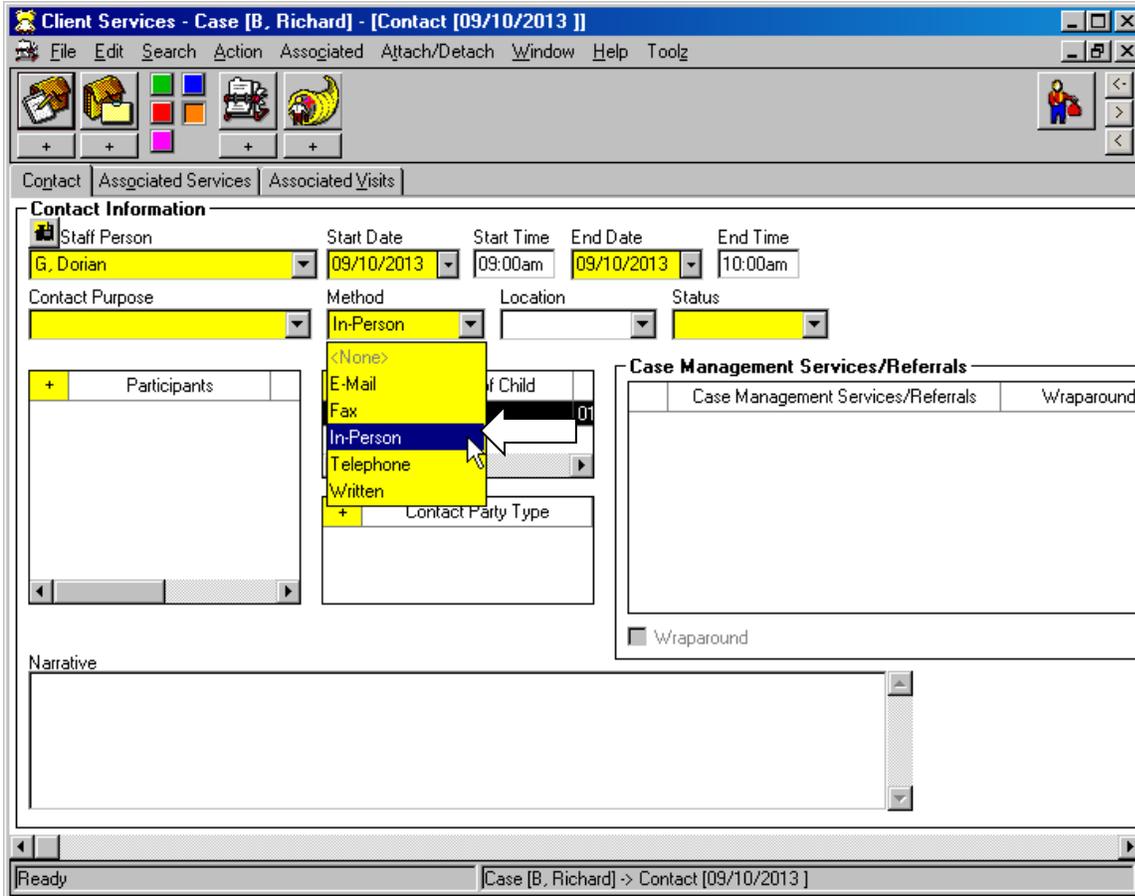
## Assessing Youth Residing in Group Care Longer Than One Year: A Screenshot Assisted Tutorial



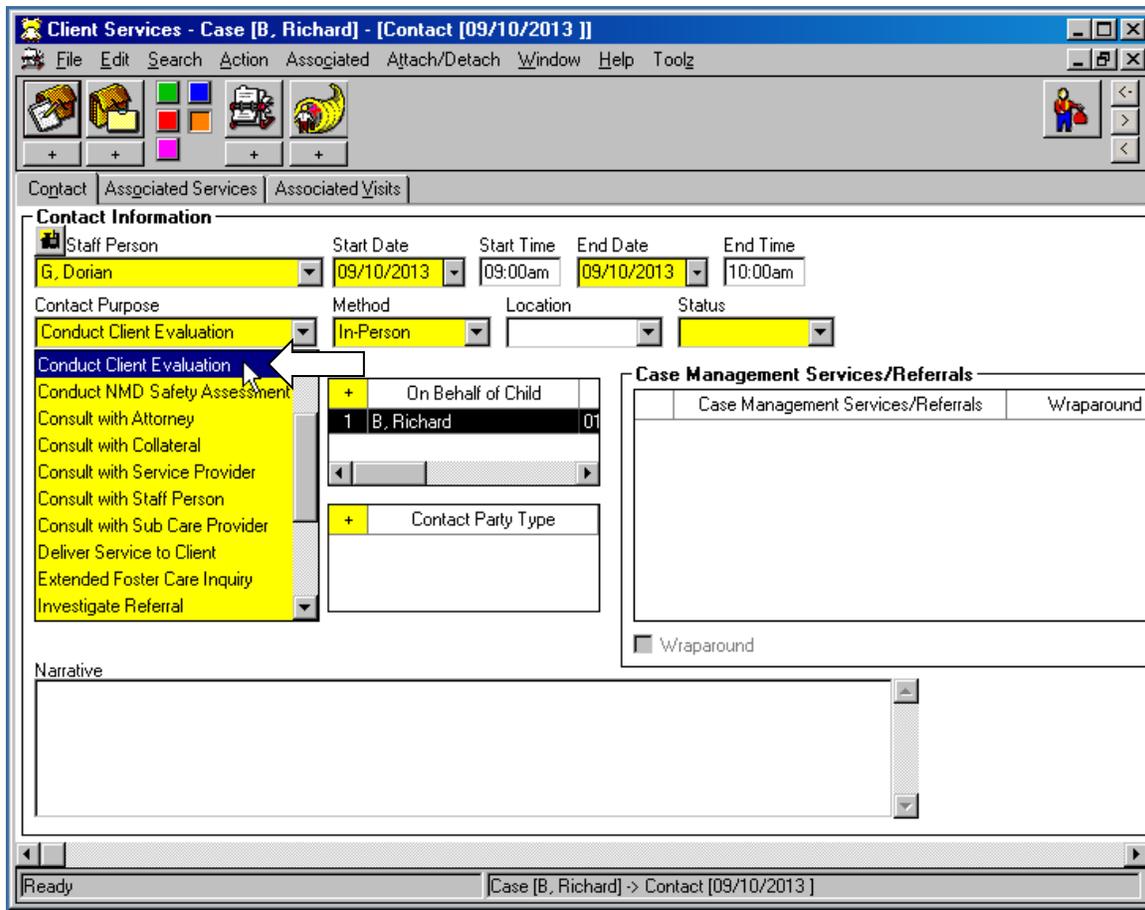
- (1) Click the "+" button to create a new contact from the "Select On Behalf Of Child" Box. Select the child/youth identified on this list. Click the "OK" button.



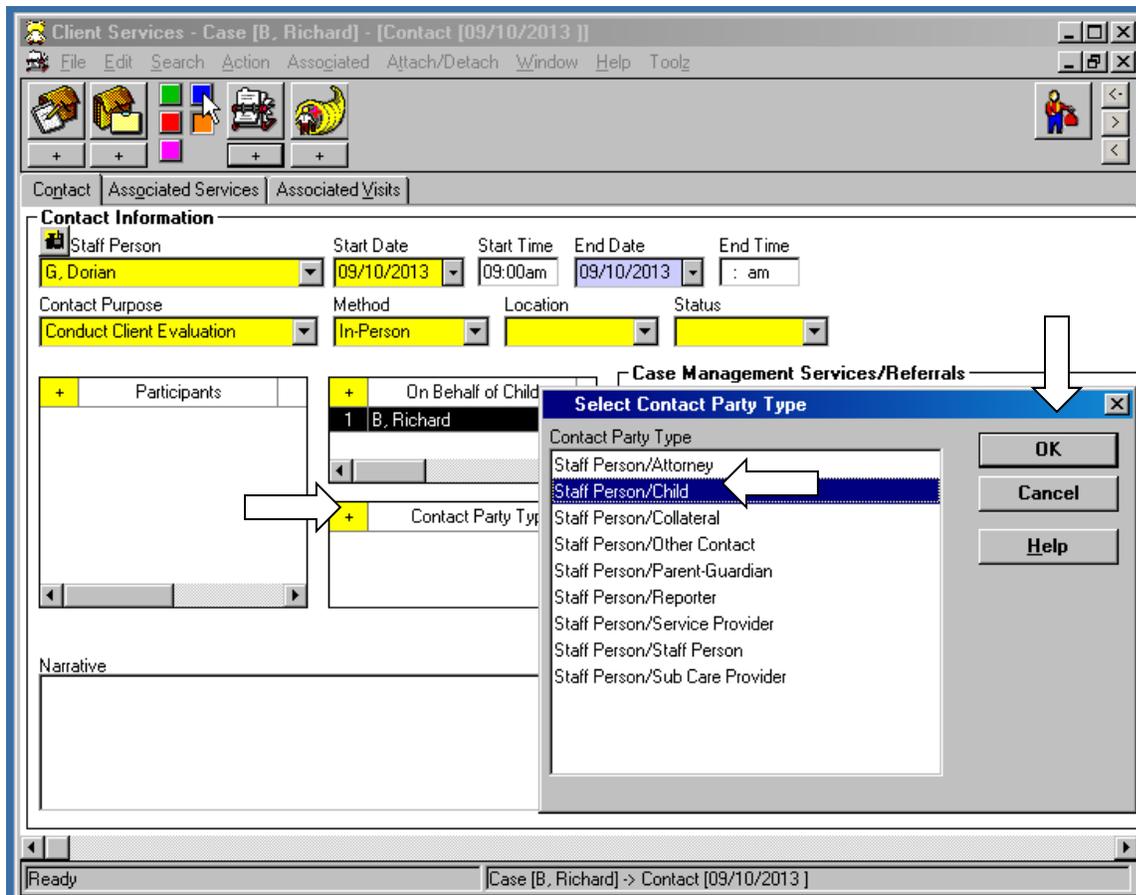
(2) Enter the appropriate **Start Date** and **End Date**.



(3) **Contact Method** should be **"in-Person"**. (Note this activity can take place during the monthly caseworker visit.)



(4) For the **Contact Purpose** select “**Conduct Client Evaluation**”.



- (5) Click the “+” button on the “**Contact Party Type**” grid, select “**Staff Person/Child**”. Click the “**OK**” button.

**Client Services - Case [B. Richard] - [Contact [09/10/2013]]**

File Edit Search Action Associated Attach/Detach Window Help Toolz

Contact Associated Services Associated Visits

**Contact Information**

Staff Person: G. Dorian Start Date: 09/10/2013 Start Time: 09:00am End Date: 09/10/2013 End Time: : am

Contact Purpose: Conduct Client Evaluation Method: In-Person Location: Status:

**Participants**

**On Behalf of Child**

1	B. Richard	01
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**Contact Party Type**

1	Staff Person/Child
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**Case Management Services/Referrals**

Case Management Services/Referrals	Wraparound
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Wraparound

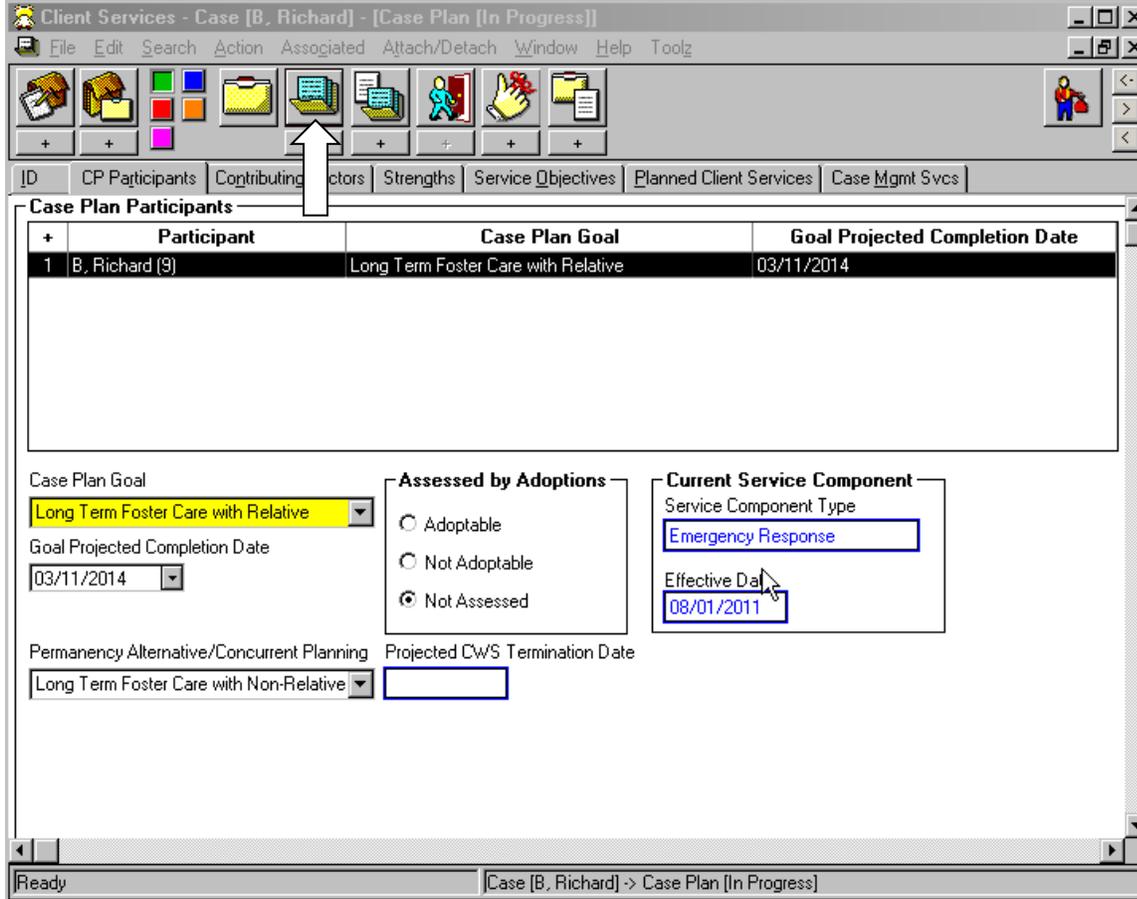
**Narrative**

EXAMPLE:  
a) Reassessment of a Child/Youth in Group care.  
b) Plan to transition Youth to a family like setting, etc.  
c) Youth will be transitioned to a relatives home etc.

Ready Case [B. Richard] -> Contact [09/10/2013]

(6) In the **Narrative dialog box**, document the following:

- a) Begin the narrative with the phrase, "Reassessment of a child/youth in group care".
- b) For those youth for whom it is determined that group care continues to be suitable and appropriate, include information supporting the continued placement needs of the Child/Youth and, if appropriate, the plan to transition youth to a family-like setting.
- c) For those youth whose reassessment has determined that group care is no longer suitable or appropriate, include information regarding the plan for transition being sure to include information about when it is expected that the child/youth will transition and where the child/youth will transition to (relative, parent, Foster Family Agency with In Home Behavioral Services or Therapeutic Foster Care services).



(7) If a transitional plan is developed or changed, then the **Case Plan** should be updated as necessary.

a) Click the **“Existing Case Plan”** button to open and update the **Case Plan**.

***ENCLOSURE B***

Details for each of the two methodologies used to develop the county lists are as follows:

The first methodology identifies youth who currently have an open foster care episode with a group home placement active on June 11, 2013 with the current group home placement stay over 365 concurrent days.

The second methodology identifies youth who have been placed in group home placements with breaks in placement (e.g., AWOLs, lower level of care). It identifies all youth who currently have an open foster care episode with a group home placement active on June 11, 2013, but the current group home placement stay is less than, or equal to, 365 concurrent days, but with prior group home placements within the same episode that when totaled together exceed 365 days.

No less than semi-annually, CDSS will distribute lists to each county that identifies the youth who have been in group care longer than one year. The lists will be stratified by the placing agency (Child Welfare or Probation) and will include the Client IDs and Case IDs and for second methodology, the Total Days in Care and Total Group Home Placements for all youth identified.