

DSS Policy and Procedure Guide

Division 03: Child Welfare

Chapter 10: Services

Item 013: Bridge Program

Suggested changes send to: [DSS PSOA](#) Mailbox

Issued: **December 13, 2019**

References: [ACL 18-73](#); [ACL 19-18](#)

New

Preamble

Child Welfare Policy and Procedure Guides (PPG) are meant to be used as tools to relay best practice and staff expectations. It is understood that specific case scenarios may not always align themselves with the stated practices and that at all times what is of paramount importance is the Safety and Well-being of the children we are charged to protect.

Policy

The Department of Social Services (DSS) will assess relatives and non-related extended family members who have foster children placed in their care for the Emergency Child Care Bridge Program. DSS may provide time-limited emergency child care for foster children placed in out of home care with a relative or non-related extended family members who meet the criteria for the Bridge Program.

Purpose

DSS shall determine eligibility and establish program parameters for children accessing the Bridge Program to increase placement stability for foster children placed with eligible families. One of the primary barriers for recruiting and retaining families who take in a foster child is the lack of access to child care at the time of placement. With funding provided through the Bridge Program, resource families, specifically relatives and non-related extended family members, are eligible for time-limited monthly payment or voucher for child care and access to child care navigator services.

Definition

The Bridge Program consists of three components:

Emergency child care voucher or payment: Eligible families may receive a time-limited child care voucher or payment to help pay for child care costs for foster children birth through age 12, child with exceptional needs, and severely disabled children up to ages 21.

Child care navigator: The Central Valley Children's Services Network (CVCSN) will provide a child care navigator to eligible families. The navigator will assist with finding a child care provider,

securing a subsidized child care placement if eligible, completing child care program applications, and developing a plan for long-term child care appropriate to the child's age and needs.

Trauma-informed care training and coaching: Child care programs participating in the Bridge Program will receive access to trauma-informed care training.

Procedure

Resource families, specifically relatives and non-related extended family members, who have a child placed in their home, may be eligible to receive a time-limited monthly payment or voucher for child care expenses and a child care navigator. A payment or voucher may be issued for up to six months until the child is successfully transitioned into long-term, subsidized child care. If the relative is unable to secure long-term, subsidized child care during the initial six-month period, eligibility may be extended an additional six-months, not to exceed 12 months, at the discretion of the Resource Family Services (RFS) Division Program Manager (PM).

Upon the initial removal of a child and placement with a relative or non-related extended family member, or at any point during the dependency case, the relative has a need for subsidized child care the case managing Social Worker (SW) may submit a request to the DSS Bridge Program Coordinator. The SW will submit the request by emailing the [CWS DIU/Bridge Referrals](#) mailbox with the following information:

- Case name and case number
- Name, address and phone number of the relative care provider
- The relative's relationship to the child(ren)
- The number of children that subsidized child care is being requested for and the age(s)
- Names of adults living in the home who are not employed

The eligibility criteria for the Bridge Program requires that an assessment be completed of all adults living in the home as to their capability to provide child care. For example, if there are two adults living in the household both adults would need to be working and/or attending school and be unable to provide child care in order to qualify under the Bridge Program.

Once a determination of eligibility has been made, it is the responsibility of the case managing SW to notify the Bridge Program Coordinator of any change in circumstance in order to avoid overpayments. Such circumstances may include, but are not limited to, a change in the resource family's household composition, the child returned home to a parent, or a placement change occurred for the child.

DSS Bridge Program Coordinator

The DSS Bridge Program Coordinator will contact the relative care provider in order to determine their eligibility for the program. The Bridge Program Coordinator will complete the Fresno County DSS – Child Care Bridge Program Referral over the phone. If the relative care provider meets the criteria for the Bridge Program, they will forward the application to CVCSN. CVCSN will provide the family with a child care navigator who will assist the care provider in securing subsidized

childcare. The Bridge Program Coordinator shall maintain a log of all eligible and non-eligible Bridge Program applicants.

Requesting an Extension of Subsidized Child Care

If a resource family is unable to secure subsidized child care within the initial six months, an extension may be requested. The case managing SW shall email the [CWS DIU/Bridge Referrals](#) mailbox making the request for an extension. The Bridge Program Coordinator will contact the case managing SW to discuss the needs of the family and if continued child care is necessary. Extensions are granted on a case-by-case basis by the RFS PM only.