

DSS Policy and Procedure Guide

Division 03: Child Welfare

Chapter 10: Services

Item 014: El Puente Transitional Housing

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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) is committed to providing homeless families with housing that meets short term or emergency needs and the provision of services to those families.

Purpose

To describe the referral process and services provided at El Puente Transitional Housing (El Puente). In addition, to describe the on-site DSS staff's role and responsibilities.

Introduction

El Puente provides short-term or emergency housing. The facility is designed for families in need of shelter who are homeless and have an open voluntary or court-ordered Child Welfare Services (CWS) case. The primary purpose of the shelter is to allow families to save enough money to obtain suitable permanent housing.

El Puente has operated since 1974 under the auspices of the Housing Authority (HA) of the City and County of Fresno and DSS. El Puente has provided shelter for families awaiting public assistance and who need help temporarily in order to stabilize and obtain their own housing needs.

El Puente is located at 937 Klette Avenue, Fresno, CA 93706.

Procedure

Referral Process

Referrals for housing are exclusive to DSS Child Welfare clients only in order to prevent children from entering foster care or to expedite their return to families. The assigned Child Welfare Social

Worker (SW) shall email the [El Puente Referral](#) to DSS El Puente. All of the following information must be included:

- Case Name.
- Names of the parents and children who will be living at El Puente.
- Dates of birth of parents and children who will be living at El Puente.
- Names and dates of birth for any other cleared adult(s).
- What service component the family is in [i.e., Voluntary Family Maintenance (VFM), Court-Ordered Family Maintenance (FM), Family Reunification, etc.].
- What service(s) the family has been referred to and their progress (i.e., domestic violence, drug testing, etc.).
 - If anyone in the family has tested positive for alcohol and or drugs in the past 90 days.
- Any family dynamics that El Puente staff should be aware of (i.e., restraining orders, etc).
- If the assigned SW knows the family is receiving public assistance, include this information as well.

The pending referral at El Puente must be updated every thirty days, in-person by the applicant; or by telephone or e-mail from the referring party.

The DSS on-site staff assigned to El Puente uses these referrals to designate appropriate timeframes for the housing of the families in the center.

All families electing to enter El Puente are subject to on site rules and policies that were developed through collaboration between DSS and HA. The on-site staff reviews the rules and policies with the applicant:

- Families that are accepted into the program sign an agreement that they will save money in order to obtain regular housing for their family. All families are required to save 75% of all income in a personal checking or saving account and provide proof of savings to DSS El Puente staff on a monthly basis.
 - DSS staff shall advise families how much money they need to save each month.
- Families are housed in a unit comparable to family size. They have their own kitchen facilities and must provide their own housewares, pots, pans, dishes, sheets, towels and

blankets. There are laundry facilities on-site. The units come with two beds in each bedroom, a table and chairs, a couch, stove, refrigerator, heater and air conditioning.

- Guests may need to vacate El Puente upon reaching the savings limit of \$2000 or a period of 90 days residency, depending on the family's compliance with El Puente policies.
 - Guests are reassessed at three-month intervals.
 - When guests have saved \$1800 and/or resided at El Puente for two months, on-site staff shall contact the referring party in order to advise that the family will have to move soon.
- Guests are required to maintain their units in good repair and cleanliness, and agree to regular monthly inspections, or more often as needed, by DSS staff or El Puente maintenance staff.
- Guests must notify El Puente staff in advance if any household member will be returning after 9:00 p.m.
- Guests are not allowed **to have visitors at the property.**
- Guests must check in at the El Puente office each weekday morning between 8:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m., and again when Security knocks on their door at 9:00 p.m.
- Guests are not allowed to use controlled substances **or alcohol** of any kind anywhere on El Puente grounds.
- Guests must supervise their own children at all times. Guests are not allowed to babysit any other children, including the children of other guests.

The referring party is not authorized to override, change, or exclude their clients from any rules.

Guests receive a violation notice each time they disregard an El Puente policy. This notice can be given by the on-site DSS or HA staff. The third time an infraction occurs the resident is called into the El Puente office by the on-site DSS staff to discuss the violations and they may be asked to leave El Puente within 24 hours. When the infraction is serious, such as not saving funds or use of illegal drugs, the resident could be required to leave El Puente immediately.

The referring party shall maintain regular contact with El Puente staff in order to assess the continued appropriateness of the family residing at El Puente.

Programs and Services

There are a number of services and programs offered to guests of El Puente, including:

- Access to on-site food and clothing resources, when available through donations.

- Free laundry facilities.
- Assistance with looking for appropriate housing and contacting other county resources.
- One unit has been reserved for use as a resource room.
- A security officer is onsite at night from 8:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m.
- HA supplies a maintenance officer and an office receptionist to meet consumer needs.

In addition, guests may be referred to the Neighborhood Resource Center located at Centro La Familia for additional community services and support.

Dependency Court Ordered Visitation at El Puente

El Puente has units available for liberal visitation for those families who have progressed to liberal visitation but are unable to provide a safe and appropriate environment for the visitation to occur.

Requests for liberal visits at El Puente shall be emailed to DSS El Puente. The email shall contain the same information as when making a referral for housing (see page 2), as well as which days are needed for the visit. Units for liberal visits are available Friday through Monday or Tuesday through Thursday.

Parents utilizing El Puente for visits shall pick up and leave the keys to the unit where the visits will take place at the El Puente office Monday through Friday, during the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. The assigned SW can make other arrangements, as needed, with El Puente staff.

The assigned SW shall maintain regular contact with El Puente staff in order to assess the continued appropriateness of the family visiting at El Puente.

El Puente DSS Staff Responsibilities

When the on-site DSS staff has become aware that a unit is not being maintained appropriately, staff will walk through the unit and determine if it impacts the health and safety of minors residing in the unit. If necessary, staff shall make a [Suspected Child Abuse Report](#) to the Child Welfare Hotline at (559) 600-8320.

El Puente DSS staff makes contacts with families and children in ongoing Child Welfare cases. Staff records these contacts appropriately in CWS/CMS or emails the contact to the assigned SW.

NOTE: Contacts made by El Puente staff do not replace the mandatory contacts required by the assigned SW, unless prior arrangements were made between by DSS El Puente staff and the assigned SW.