

DSS Policy and Procedure Guide

Division 03: Child Welfare

Chapter 10: Services

Item 015: Bringing Families Home

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

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References: [Assembly Bill 1603](#); [Senate Bill 80](#);
[ACWDL 2-11-22](#)

Revisions in red

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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 housing related services to families receiving Child Welfare services, increase the number of families reunifying, and prevent foster care placement.

Purpose

To describe the eligibility requirements, referral process and services provided through the Bringing Families Home (BFH) housing program.

Introduction

The BFH program was established by Assembly Bill 1603 and updated by Senate Bill (SB) 80 to reduce the number of families in the child welfare system experiencing or at risk of homelessness, to increase family reunification, and to prevent foster care placement. Fresno County DSS applied for and was granted funding under BFH to provide evidence-based housing interventions to support homeless families in the child welfare system. The BFH program uses a Housing First model, which is based on the concept that a homeless individual or household's first and primary need is to obtain stable housing, and that other issues that may affect the household can and should be addressed once housing is obtained.

BFH targets families involved with the child welfare system who are experiencing homelessness. For BFH, homelessness is defined in the [Welfare and Institutions Code \(W&IC\) 16523](#). Among those who are eligible, funded programs should first prioritize child welfare involved families who are literally homeless followed by those who will imminently lose their housing. BFH is a voluntary

program and services may be in place, on a case-by-case basis, until each family achieves housing stability, up to a maximum of 24 months. For child welfare families who choose to participate in BFH, the services may continue, on a case-by-case basis, even after the child welfare case has closed.

BFH Eligibility

The BFH eligibility is broadly defined in W&IC Section 16523(c) as families or individuals who meet all three conditions:

1. Receive child welfare services at the time eligibility is determined,
2. Are homeless, at risk of homelessness, or in a living situation that cannot accommodate the child or multiple children in the home, including individuals who have not received an eviction notice; and,
3. Voluntarily agree to participate in the program.

Program Eligibility Related to Child Welfare Services

In order to be eligible for BFH, an individual or family, including but not limited to biological parents, guardians, or kinship guardians (e.g. applicable grandparents), must receive child welfare services at the time eligibility is determined. The child welfare service component types for BFH eligible families may include but are not limited to Family Reunification, Court-Ordered Family Maintenance, Voluntary Family Maintenance, or Emergency Response services.

Program Eligibility Requirements Regarding Housing Status

The BFH eligibility requires that the family is either:

- a. Homeless;
- b. At-risk of homelessness or;
- c. In a situation that cannot accommodate a child or multiple children in the home.

Definitions

Homeless – The BFH definition of homelessness broadly includes unsheltered homelessness, families living in shelters or temporary living situations, and those who are imminently homeless due to a residence being lost within 14 days. The updated BFH definition of homelessness as reflected in W&IC Section 16523(d).

At-risk of Homelessness – For the purposes of BFH, a family is considered “at risk of homelessness” if they **meet all three of the following requirements:**

1. They are experiencing housing instability, defined as, housing instability that places them at risk of becoming homeless including those who have not yet received an eviction notice;
2. They have no subsequent permanent residence secured; and
3. They lack resources or support networks needed to stabilize their unique housing situation and secure subsequent permanent housing.

Living Situation that Cannot Accommodate a Child – A living situation cannot accommodate a child or multiple children if it **meets all three of the following requirements:**

1. The parent or guardian’s nighttime residence would not be an adequate or appropriate long term housing placement for a child or children due to living situations that jeopardize the physical health, mental health, safety and/or wellbeing of the child, as well as situations where a lease, living arrangement, or because tenancy would be terminated for the family if the child or children were to live in the home;
2. They have no subsequent permanent residence secured; and
3. They lack resources or support networks needed to stabilize their unique housing situation and secure subsequent permanent housing.

BFH Service Components

BFH core services components include:

- Housing-Related Case Management
- Housing Navigation
- Housing-Related Direct Financial Assistance
- Housing Stabilization

Procedure

Referrals BFH

When a DSS Child Welfare Social Worker (SW) identifies a family, who is the subject of an open child welfare case and has a housing need they may refer the family to **the BFH program. The family should have progressed to liberal visitation, at a minimum, before a referral is made to the BFH program.** The DSS SW will submit an email to the **CWS Bringing Families Home** mailbox with the following information:

- SW name
- SW phone number
- Case name
- Case number

- Parent's contact number
- Brief summary the family's housing needs

The BFH mailbox is monitored by the assigned DSS **BFH** SW. The **BFH** SW will contact the DSS SW and Eligibility Worker (EW), if needed, to gather additional information about the family. The **BFH** SW will determine if the family is eligible for the BFH program based on the information collected.

If the family is eligible for the BFH program, the **BFH** SW will refer the family to Centro La Familia Advocacy (CLFA) services for case management services.

If the family is not eligible for BFH, the **BFH** SW will **provide** the family **with information for CalWORKS Homeless Assistance and Access sites**. Access sites are **housing resource centers that can help to connect to** homeless services and resources. The **BFH** SW will contact one of the following Access sites and facilitate the referral process:

- MAP Point at Poverello House, 412 F St., Fresno, CA 93706, (559) 512-6777, ext. 1
- Fresno HOME, 2250 W. Clinton Avenue Unit 213, Fresno, CA 93705, (559) 403-5001
- Clinica Sierra Vista, 302 Fresno Street Ste 106, Fresno, CA 93706, (559) 457-5960

Intake Process

CLFA is contracted with Fresno County to provide BFH services. BFH services include:

- Rapid re-housing
- Supportive housing resources
- Case management

Once a family has been accepted into the BFH program, the CLFA case manager will contact the family within one business day from receipt of the referral. The CLFA case manager will provide an overview of the program and services and schedule the initial intake appointment. The family will be advised of any required documents they will need to bring to the intake appointment.

The CLFA case manager will contact the DSS SW to discuss the child welfare case plan and goals relevant to the development of the family's housing plan. The CLFA case manager will schedule an intake appointment for the family within three days of the initial contact, the DSS SW is also encouraged to attend. At the intake appointment the CLFA case manager will:

- Assess the family's needs
- Request any additional documentation from the family and/or DSS SW
- Obtain a Release of Information (CWS 0094) from the family
- Enter the family's data into HMIS

The CLFA case manager will then follow-up with the DSS SW regarding the housing plan proposal and next steps for the family. The CLFA case manager will schedule a follow-up appointment with

the family within three days from the intake appointment, the DSS SW is also encouraged to attend. At the follow-up appointment the CLFA case manager will:

- Discuss financials and expectations with the family
- Make referrals to other resources, as appropriate

Ongoing Services

Housing plans will be tailored to the specific needs of each family based on their goals, needs and other factors. The CLFA case manager will conduct a monthly evaluation of each family's housing plan in order to identify and address any barriers to permanent housing. While providing ongoing services, the CLFA case manager will:

- Remain in contact with the family every three days
- Have monthly meetings with the DSS SW or more frequently, as needed

Upon exiting BFH services the CLFA case manager will assist the family in connecting to additional resources that may be needed. The CLFA case manager will also perform at least two case management home visits with the family after financial exit from the program at three months and six months.