



CDSS

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July 18, 2014

ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS LETTER

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS

FROM: TODD R. BLAND
Deputy Director
Welfare to Work Division

SUBJECT: CALIFORNIA WORK OPPORTUNITY AND RESPONSIBILITY TO KIDS
(CalWORKs) HOUSING SUPPORT PROGRAM

REASON FOR THIS TRANSMITTAL

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

The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) recently received authority to launch a new housing support program. CDSS is seeking proposals from County Welfare Departments CWDs interested in implementing or expanding a housing support program in their county.

Per Senate Bill (SB) 855 (Chapter 29, Statutes of 2014), housing support in the CalWORKs program is necessary to assist families working towards achieving self-sufficiency. Homelessness and housing instability in the CalWORKs program is a challenging problem that impacts children’s well-being and parents’ ability to engage in employment. One longitudinal study found that over a three year period, one in four families receiving TANF assistance had experienced homelessness, and that nearly half had moved into a shared housing situation in order to manage housing expenses.

The California Legislature and the Governor, recognizing the critical importance of stable housing, appropriated \$20 million from the General Fund to address homelessness and housing instability in the CalWORKs program as part of the 2014-15 State Budget. This money will be used to support projects that use evidence-based models including those reflected in the Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Rehousing Program at the county level.

The objective of the CalWORKs Housing Support Program will be to promote housing stability for families in the CalWORKs program. While CalWORKs offers its participants both temporary and permanent Homeless Assistance under certain circumstances, this Housing Support program differs. All CalWORKs families are able eligible to receive Housing Support regardless of their asset or income levels. In addition, individuals are

not precluded from participating in the Housing Support Program if they have received homeless assistance benefits previously. Counties are encouraged to partner with county and local community-based organizations that are experienced in providing housing services.

Housing Support Program Application Process

Please refer to the following attachments for further information and instructions on the application process and evaluation criteria.

CDSS instructs counties to note the following timeline:

- County Proposals Due August 15, 2014
- Award Letters Granted Week of September 1, 2014

Applications must be sent electronically to Kelle.Adair@dss.ca.gov . Late applications will not be accepted.

Data collection, progress monitoring and outcome recording will be essential elements of participation in this program. CDSS will issue forms and tracking instruction under subsequent and separate cover.

The CalWORKs Housing Support Program is an ongoing program enacted by the Legislature. However, program funding is contingent upon annual appropriation in the Budget Act. Funding shall be awarded annually.

If you have any questions regarding the CalWORKs Housing Support Program or the application process, please contact the CalWORKs Eligibility Bureau at (916) 654-1322.

Attachments

ATTACHMENT 1

CaWORKs HOUSING SUPPORT PROGRAM

The California Department of Social Services is seeking counties to implement a program to prevent and resolve homelessness. SB 855 (Chapter 29, Statutes of 2014) established the CaWORKs Housing Support program. It states, in part, that “it is the intent of the Legislature that housing supports provided pursuant to this article utilize evidence-based models, including those established in the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Homeless Prevention and Rapid Rehousing Program” (HPRP). More information and additional applicant resources can be located online:

- HUD’s Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Rehousing Program (<http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/recovery/programs/homelessness>),
- National Alliance to End Homelessness (<http://www.endhomelessness.org/pages/prevention-and-rapid-re-housing>),
- The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) (<http://www.va.gov/homeless/ssvf/index.asp>).

Housing Support Program Overview

Rapid Rehousing and targeted homelessness prevention programs have been implemented nationwide as cost effective strategies to help families exit or avoid homelessness and retain permanent housing. The program’s goal is to assist families in quickly obtaining permanent housing and provide wrap-around supports to families to foster housing retention.

The core components of a successful Rapid Rehousing Program include comprehensive and coordinated entry with community partners along a continuum of care, housing identification, rent and moving assistance, focused case management, and services based on individual participant needs. Services could include, but are not limited to, landlord outreach and engagement, housing search and placement, housing barrier assessment, legal services, and credit repair.

The National Alliance to End Homeless, together with the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the Department of Veterans Affairs, describe the core components of Rapid Rehousing as:

Housing Identification

- Landlord recruitment and engagement.
- Addressing potential barriers to landlord participation.
- Assisting households to find and secure appropriate rental housing.

Rent and Moving Assistance

- Provision of financial assistance to cover move-in costs, deposits, and the rental and/or utility assistance necessary to allow individuals and families to move immediately into permanent housing. These costs can also include, as appropriate, lot rent for an RV or manufactured home; application fees; credit check fees; legal fees and fines.

Case Management and Services

- Helping families address issues that may impede access to housing.
- Helping families negotiate manageable and appropriate lease agreements with landlords.
- Making appropriate and time-limited services and supports available to families to allow them to quickly stabilize in permanent housing.
- Ensuring that services provided are client-directed, respectful of individuals' right to self-determination, and voluntary.

Rapid Rehousing and targeted prevention programs are structured to flexibly provide only the financial assistance and service support necessary to secure housing for those without it or to retain housing for those at imminent risk of losing it. Regular reassessments (“progressive engagement”) of household stability are a best practice to ensure households are neither over-nor under-assisted.

Program operations include both the services and financial assistance provided to participating families and the housing location and support services. In addition to the activities described above, program operations also include costs specifically attributed to outreach workers and housing locators, case managers, and other direct service personnel, as well as the cost of administering rental assistance and conducting inspections. It includes activities for the arrangement, coordination, monitoring, and delivery of services related to meeting the housing needs of families and helping them to obtain housing stability. Best practices allow for roughly 80 percent of funding to be allocated to program operations.

Administrative costs, as well as data collection and reporting comprise the two remaining cost categories. Administrative costs are defined as those costs that include program managers, directors, IT, and accounting; benefits; facilities costs; office supplies; and equipment (this list is not exhaustive). Best practices allow for approximately 15 percent of funding to this category. Data collection and tracking includes staff and time dedicated to these activities, as well as necessary supplies and equipment; best practices allocate roughly five percent of funding for this purpose.

ATTACHMENT 2

CaWORKs HOUSING SUPPORT PROGRAM APPLICATION GUIDELINES

A. PURPOSE

The California Department of Social Services is seeking counties to implement a program to address homelessness and housing instability within the CaWORKs program. The program will be funded with monies appropriated in the California State Budget. The goal of the program is to resolve the housing crisis of CaWORKs families who are experiencing homelessness or housing instability through the use of evidence-based models, including, but not limited to, those established as part of HUD's Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program.

B. CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION

The nature of this application is a competitive process. It is possible that counties may not receive funding or may not receive the full amount of their request. In evaluating county requests, the CDSS will give priority to those counties that:

1. Thoroughly and completely provide required response elements listed;
2. Demonstrate local need, including the extent to which families in their CaWORKs program experience homelessness, housing instability or are at imminent risk of homelessness;
3. Demonstrate the capacity to quickly implement a program impactful to community needs including an ability to collaboratively engage local county program partners or stakeholders;
4. Use a rapid re-housing model or other evidence-based approach;
5. Maximize the use of funds for direct services and minimize administration;
6. Demonstrate the ability to collect data and track outcomes.

C. REQUIRED ELEMENTS

To be considered for funding, please thoroughly respond to the items below.

1. Describe the problem of homelessness and housing instability in your CaWORKs program.

2. Identify any possible target populations for your Housing Support Program. Describe your selection criteria and how participants will be identified. If your program plans to serve families who are facing housing instability or at imminent risk of losing their housing, how will this instability or risk be determined and documented?
3. Describe how your county will structure its program:
 - A. Will your county's rapid re-housing program link or supplement any already existing programs or services? If yes, please list any program partners and stakeholders with whom your county will work, including information on whether the partners are in-house or if they will be contracted and to what extent.
 - B. What is your county's strategy for implementing housing identification services?
 - (i) How do you propose to manage landlord recruitment and engagement?
 - (ii) With whom will you work to identify potential housing units and ensure participants are accessing housing that meets habitability and safety standards?
 - (iii) If your program will work with families facing housing instability or at imminent risk of losing housing, describe your county's housing retention strategies.
 - C. With respect to service array, please describe: (1) what services will be delivered, (2) how services will be delivered, (3) the approximate number of participants to whom services will be delivered if your county receives the level of funding requested, and (4) the anticipated duration of each service.
 - D. What are your selection criteria for families to participate in the program? How will participants be identified?
 - E. How will you assess a family's housing needs and barriers?
 - F. Describe how your program will determine the duration and amount of rental assistance, along with any criteria your program will use to evaluate continued participation in, or renewal of, assistance.
 - G. Describe your capacity to collect data about your program and its effect on clients. This may include administrative and/or qualitative data.
 - H. Describe strategies you will use to maximize direct services and minimize administrative expenses.
 - I. Describe the anticipated timetable for implementing the program.

4. What is the amount of funding that you are requesting?

D. TIMEFRAMES

Proposals must be submitted electronically no later than close of business on Friday, August 15, 2014 to Kelle Adair at Kelle.Adair@dss.ca.gov.

During September 2014, CDSS anticipates convening a mandatory technical assistance conference for awardees to review best practices for program implementation and evaluation.