



CWDA

April 1, 2014

To: The Honorable Shirley Weber, Chair
Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 1

Honorable Members, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 1

From: Frank J. Mecca, Executive Director, CWDA

RE: CalWORKs: Family Stabilization, Housing Subsidy

The County Welfare Directors Association (CWDA) respectfully requests clarification regarding an apparent conflict between existing guidance and current law that would undermine the intent of Family Stabilization.

Guidance from the CDSS that existed prior to Family Stabilization places a limitation of four months on housing subsidies in the CalWORKs Welfare-to-Work program. However, it was the intent of the Legislature that counties be granted flexibility within Family Stabilization to provide any services a family is assessed as needing in order to address their crisis situation, and that such services are not limited to those already provided for in existing rules. It would be inconsistent with these concepts to place an arbitrary four month limitation on housing support within this component, particularly when the component itself is limited to six months. Clearly this was not the Legislature's intent in enacting Family Stabilization, and making it crystal clear that the existing four month housing subsidy limit does not apply to families in Family Stabilization will align with Legislative intent to ensure that there are meaningful services available to families in crisis.

Throughout the decades, high housing costs have been cited as a significant barrier to self-sufficiency in California. Researchers suggest that secure housing is at the core of family stability, and that without it, families struggle to be able to attend to non-housing issues. The Legislature recognized the absolute necessity of secure and stable housing when it included "homelessness or imminent risk of homelessness" as one of the criteria for receipt of family stabilization services when it passed AB 74 in 2013.

Given that the intent of the Family Stabilization component is to ensure a basic level of family stability and that a lack of stable housing is a chief deterrent to self-sufficiency, we request that the Legislature provide clarification that the four month limitation does not apply to families participating in the Family Stabilization component of the CalWORKs program.

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