The California Department of Social Services Child Care Programs Bureau has received questions regarding the implementation of the Emergency Child Care Bridge Program for Foster Children (Bridge Program). This document provides responses to those questions. Additional questions regarding the Bridge Program may be sent to: ChildCareBridge@dss.ca.gov. Questions regarding claiming, allocations, or other fiscal issues may be sent to: Fiscal.Systems@dss.ca.gov.

Q1: Is the Bridge Program available to families who are not yet approved as a resource family?

A: Yes. The official scope of eligibility is as follows: resource families and families that have a child placed with them in an emergency or for a compelling reason, licensed foster family homes or certified family homes, approved homes of relatives or nonrelative extended family members, and parents under the jurisdiction of juvenile court, including, but not limited to, non-minor dependent parents who have their child placed with them. That is broadest scope of eligibility. However, counties may develop local priorities and needs.

Q2: What are the allowable administrative costs for the voucher payments?

A: The Bridge Program provides funding for voucher payments, navigator services, and trauma-informed care trainings. The allocations for the navigator services and training components incorporate staffing resources. Therefore, the voucher allocation does not include costs associated with administration of the voucher payments.

Q3: Does the voucher payment go to the child care provider or family?

A: Counties are authorized to disburse child care payments either directly to the family or to the child care provider.

Q4: Is there an age limit in the Bridge Program?

A: Foster children birth through age 12, children with exceptional needs, and severely disabled children up to age 21 are eligible for the Bridge Program.

Q5: Will families be eligible for child care navigator services beyond the six or 12-month period?

A: Yes. Eligibility for navigator services shall not be contingent on a child’s receipt of a child care payment or voucher.
Q6: Can we have some examples of what is considered beyond the scope of ordinary parental duties?

A: For examples of what is considered beyond the scope of ordinary parental duties please see Section 8.3B.1, Question #3 in the Child Welfare Policy Manual: Allowable Costs.

Q7: If a child is placed in child care out-of-state, is a Bridge voucher available to pay for child care?

A: Out-of-state placements are not eligible for the Bridge Program.

Q8: Is the timeframe in the Bridge Program per child or placement?

A: Per placement.

Q9: What is the criteria for extending the child care voucher beyond six months?

A: Eligibility may be extended an additional six-months, not to exceed 12 months, at the discretion of the county, if the family is unable to secure long-term, subsidized child care during the initial six-month period.

Q10: Do counties have the option to limit the child care voucher period?

A: A payment or voucher may be provided for up to six months or until the child is successfully enrolled into long-term child care. Eligibility may be extended an additional six-months, not to exceed 12 months, at the discretion of the county, if the family is unable to secure long-term, subsidized child care during the initial six-month period. While enrolled in the Bridge Program, if the family secures a subsidized child care placement prior to the completion of the initial six-months period (or in the case of an extension for up to the 12-month period), the voucher or payment provided via the Bridge Program shall be terminated. One of the main purposes of the Bridge Program is to ensure that foster children receive high quality child care. Counties should make appropriate use of the limited Bridge Program funds to ensure continuity of care.

Q11: Are license-exempt providers allowed to participate in the Bridge Program? If yes, is TrustLine required?

A: Requirements for License-exempt providers in the Bridge program mirror those in CalWORKs Stage 1, see CalWORKs MPP 47-260.

Q12: When a child is placed in long-term child care, does the Bridge Program cover any application or registration fees?

A: Application or registration fees associated with long-term child care are not covered by the Bridge Program.
Q13: Will license-exempt providers be required to take the trauma-informed training?

A: License-exempt providers are not required to take the trauma-informed training as a condition of receiving a voucher payment. However, trauma-informed training shall be offered to all child care providers working with children and children of parenting youth in foster care.

Q14: What are the specific requirements to leverage federal Title IV-E funding? What activities are eligible for Title IV-E funding?

A: Further direction regarding claiming will be provided in a forthcoming County Fiscal Letter.

Q15: Is the child care voucher payment going to be considered an assistance payment?

A: No, it is not to be considered an assistance payment or income to the child or caregiver. The child care voucher is intended solely to cover the cost of child care when work or school responsibilities preclude the eligible families from being at home when the foster child is not in school or for periods when the family is required to participate, without the child, in activities associated with parenting a child that are beyond the scope of ordinary parental duties, including but not limited to, attendance at administrative or judicial reviews, case conferences, and family training. Please note, however, that for the purposes of claiming, the expenditures related to this program may be referred to as “assistance costs.” Further direction regarding claiming will be provided in a forthcoming County Fiscal Letter.

Q16: If a child in the Bridge Program is placed in child care out of county, which Regional Market Rate (RMR) would be paid?

A: The child care would be paid to the RMR in which the child care is provided.

Q17: Is there a curriculum for the trauma-informed training component that will be provided to participants?

A: The California Resource and Referral Network will develop and coordinate the training curriculum to be used by all participating R&Rs.

Q18: What is the definition of “Emergency Placement” and “Compelling Reason”?

A: To access definitions of these terms, please use the Resource Family Approval Written Directives, version 4.1 document.