

Senate Bill (SB) 855: Housing Support Program Orange County Application

Submitted by: Orange County

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Topic: Senate Bill (SB) 855: Housing Support Program

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

A recent Family Options Study conducted by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development found that nearly 60 percent of eligible homeless families did not participate in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. The Office of Family Assistance and the Administration for Children and Families have placed an increased emphasis on partnering with homeless services agencies to serve families more comprehensively and to leverage TANF funds. Homelessness is a significant challenge when working with low income families. This issue is amplified in Orange County given the scarcity of available low-income housing and the overall complexity of serving homeless families with diverse financial, health, and employment barriers. Consequently access and conducting outreach to these families has been historically challenging.

According to the 2010 Census, Orange County represents 3,010,232 of California's 37,253,959 population base, making it the third most populous county in California. According to the Census estimates, from 2010 to 2013 Orange County's population growth (3.5%) has outpaced California's rate of growth (2.9%). California Housing Partnership Corporation released a report in February 2014, How California's Housing Market Is Failing to Meet the Needs of Low-Income Families, ranking Orange County among the most difficult markets for low-income renters due to an unrelenting rise in rents in recent years, second only to Los Angeles County and comparable to San Diego County. The report further cites that there are only 18 affordable units available for every 100 extremely low-income renters in Orange County. The County's three largest cities, Anaheim, Santa Ana, and Irvine, each have populations exceeding 200,000. Population density combined with scarcity of affordable housing options for low-income families in Orange County amplifies the need for expansion of housing support for CalWORKs families.

Current program offerings of once-in-a-lifetime Temporary Homelessness and Permanent Homeless Assistance fall significantly short towards meeting the needs of our customers. Specifically, Temporary Homeless Assistance is only available for 16 consecutive day period and is exhausted at the end of this period even if payments for all 16 days are not authorized. Additionally, Permanent Homeless Assistance is available to pay for last month rent and security deposits to secure a residence or up to two months of rent arrearages when a reasonable condition of preventing eviction exists. Orange County's CalWORKs

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Program data (CA 237 HA), from January 2014 through June 2014, demonstrates that on average 71 new temporary and permanent housing assistance requests are received each month. Additionally, during the same period, on average 190 requests for assistance carry over from prior months and on average 69 are approved. Housing Support Program offered through SB 855 CalWORKs Housing Support Program will provide Orange County an opportunity to expand invaluable housing support services to additional families whose needs are currently not being sufficiently met and/or hindered by the current program regulations.

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?

As a priority, Orange County intends to target the currently homeless population within the CalWORKs eligible families. Analysis of our data, retrieved through our SAWS system, demonstrates that each month approximately 170 CalWORKs families in Orange County are identified as homeless. Specifically, we have identified approximately 42 CalWORKs families that are presently utilizing an SSA office address, indicating a need for targeted services to exit homelessness.

Given that 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, Orange County plans to serve families who are facing housing instability or are at imminent risk of losing their housing. During application and case maintenance processes, CalWORKs eligibility caseworkers will identify families facing housing instability or at imminent risk of losing their housing and send referrals to the Housing Support Program for services. Upon award, Orange County intends to implement the grant utilizing the Rapid Rehousing and targeted homelessness prevention programs that have been implemented nationwide as cost effective strategies to help families exit or avoid homelessness and retain permanent housing. Orange County Social Services Agency (SSA) will partner with Orange County Community Resources (OCCR) for the purposes of assisting CalWORKs families in quickly obtaining permanent housing and providing wrap-around supports to families to foster housing retention within the approved budget. OCCR is planning to utilize prior Board of Supervisors authority to amend an existing contract with a current service provider for this grant.

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A program referral will be designed to identify what type of housing instability the given family is facing and will be referred for Housing Support services. Services to be provided by the service provider will include, but will not be limited to:

- Housing Identification
 - 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.
- Case Management Services
 - Helping families address issues that may impede access to housing.
 - Making appropriate and time-limited services and supports available to families to allow them to quickly stabilize in permanent housing.

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.**

Yes, Orange County SSA intends to partner with OCCR for the purposes of assisting CalWORKs families quickly obtaining permanent housing and provide wrap-around supports to families to foster housing retention within the approved budget. The grant will be implemented utilizing the Rapid Rehousing and targeted homelessness prevention programs that have been implemented nationwide as cost effective strategies to help families exit or avoid homelessness and retain permanent housing. Housing support in the CalWORKs program will further assist families working towards achieving self-sufficiency.

OCCR is in current contract with Mercy House, an independent nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization, to provide Rapid Rehousing services to homeless individuals and families throughout Orange County including those who are literally homeless or exiting from the County's emergency shelter system. The County will amend its current contract with Mercy House to become the housing and supportive services provider of the Orange County CalWORKs Housing Support Program.

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- b. What is your county's strategy for implementing housing identification services?**
i. How do you propose to manage landlord recruitment and engagement?

OCCR will contract with Mercy House to provide appropriate personnel to manage landlord recruitment and engagement. Mercy House will provide a Housing Advocate to fulfill these duties. The Housing Advocate is responsible for assisting homeless and at risk families obtain and/ or sustain stable housing. As a current provider of Rapid Rehousing services for homeless families, Mercy House will leverage existing relationships with local landlords and property management companies to seek housing placements for CalWORKs assisted families. The Housing Advocate will also look to develop relationships with new properties. Potential new partners will be identified through online housing resources, local realtors, Housing Authority announcements as well as general geographic canvassing for housing vacancies.

A key component of successful housing placements for families is the development of landlord relationships. Mercy House will utilize marketing tools and rental subsidies as incentives for engaging landlords to rent to households with barriers to housing stability. Landlords will have direct access to a support phone line and a dedicated point person (Housing Advocate) responsive to their concerns and needs, and can expect prompt intervention with tenants when requested.

Overall the duties of the Housing Advocate as it relates to assisting households obtain and/ or sustain stable housing include, but are not limited to:

- Develop an understanding of the County's housing market, develop strong business relationships in the private housing market (real estate owners, developers, brokers, and property managers) and the supportive housing community.
- Develop and maintain a list of potential housing opportunities for homeless and at risk of homelessness clients.
- Assist homeless families secure decent, affordable housing, and those families at-risk with maintaining their housing or relocating to more suitable housing.
- Maintain effective relationships with the landlords and/or property managers by resolving conflicts and providing necessary emergency support.

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- Answer and respond to landlord phone queries, making referrals as needed.
- Oversee housing inspections and rent reasonability standards.
- Assist with the application and financial assistance of at risk households.
- Assist with the collection of documentation and coaching support of clients when necessary.
- Assist with 3 day notices and client related legal issues.

ii. With whom will you work to identify potential housing units and ensure participants are accessing housing that meets habitability and safety standards?

OCCR will contract with Mercy House to provide housing search and placement services to the program and ensure that habitability and safety standards are assessed (including lead-based paint assessments) before eligible families are placed in housing units. The Housing Advocate will also be responsible for performing housing and safety inspections and has been certified as a visual assessor in accordance with HUD's Housing Quality 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.

The Orange County CalWORKs Housing Support Program will work with eligible families facing housing instability or at imminent risk of losing housing. As part of its, County-wide "[Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness](#)" the County of Orange has adopted nationally recognized "Homeless Prevention" strategies as a premier goal of its plan. These strategies include the support and development of community resources that provide housing retention and homeless prevention assistance such as: anti-eviction services, rental and utility supports, credit counseling, debt management, tangible goods, emergency assistance, employment services, conflict resolution and relationship building.

As the contracted housing and supportive services provider to the Orange County CalWORKs Housing Support Program, Mercy House has over 15 years' experience operating a successful Homeless Prevention Program.

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Mercy House's Homeless Prevention Programs provides short term financial assistance and housing counseling and case management to households with an imminent housing crisis. Case management services include but are not limited to household budget creation, tenant-landlord mediation, and resource referral. After assistance is expended, follow-up case management is provided at the 30, 60, 90-day intervals for up to one year.

During the history of the program Mercy House has served 1,862 households. Over 90% of those served remained in stable housing for at least one year after assistance was expended. With years of experience and a history of quality service, Mercy House is uniquely qualified and experienced to carry out these services in the Orange County community.

- 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.**

The CalWORKs Housing Support Program aims to address the needs of homeless individuals and families or those at imminent risk of homelessness in the County of Orange by providing them with rental assistance that will allow them to quickly move from off the streets or prevent the household from becoming homeless. Financial assistance services would be determined on a need basis by each client household and will include short-term to medium-term rental subsidies, rental application fees, security deposits, utility deposits, utility payments, and moving costs. A gap analysis assessment (comparison of household income and financial assistance need) is used such that a "lightest touch" in services ensures effective use of resources.

Clients determined eligible for financial assistance will also receive housing search and placement services. The Housing Advocate will serve as a liason between tenants and landlords to help manage some of the challenges and housing barriers homeless families face in finding affordable housing.

Additionally, clients will receive on-going case management by qualified Mercy House Progress Coaches to help clients meet their employment, budgeting, financial, and overall life skills goals as well as ensure their housing stabilization and self-sufficiency after financial assistance is expended. Case management sessions will be held at the client's place of residence or at Mercy House program

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offices on a weekly basis or as needed. After assistance is expended, follow-up case management is provided at the 30, 60, 90-day intervals for up to one year.

Based on past experience and an anticipation of client needs, it is estimated that the proposed Orange County CalWORKs Housing Support Program will serve 55 households (approximately 160 individuals) with housing support assistance, including the following:

- 18 households with Short Term (1 month assistance)
- 25 households with Short Term (up to 3 months assistance)
- 12 households with Medium Term (up to 6 months assistance)

d. What are your selection criteria for families to participate in the program? How will participants be identified?

Initial selection criteria will be based on the currently homeless population within the CalWORKs eligible families. CalWORKs families that are presently utilizing the County's Regional office addresses, requiring targeted services to exit homelessness, will be referred for Housing Support Program services. Additional families will be identified and selected on a first-come-first served basis, within allowable funding. CalWORKs eligibility caseworkers will identify families facing housing instability or at imminent risk of losing their housing and send referrals to the Housing Support Program for services.

e. How will you assess a family's housing needs and barriers?

SSA staff will provide an initial assessment of an eligible family's needs. Once a determination of homelessness or imminent housing instability is made, SSA staff will make a referral to Mercy House for housing support services. Mercy House Progress Coaches will schedule a face-to-face intake meeting with the client. During that meeting Mercy House will further evaluate the family's housing needs and barriers. Key indicators for housing support will include: 1) employment history and ability to obtain employment income; 2) history of housing evictions; 3) family composition and support resources; 4) credit history, 5) income to debt ratio; 6) criminal history; 7) number of homeless episodes; 8) mental health; and 9) disabilities.

With this information the Progress Coach will determine whether or not the family has exhausted all other resources or if there are other diversion strategies

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that can be employed. If no other resources are identified, the client will enter the program and meet weekly with the Progress Coach to set goals aimed at reducing the family's barriers in order to become self-sufficient once assistance has been expended. SSA will increase its use of Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) meetings to engage clients in a discussion focused on the client's strengths and priority needs. MDT meetings will be scheduled to assess the family's barriers and determine additional services and/or needs. The strength-based MDT meetings will be attended by the client, a meeting facilitator, SSA, Mercy House, and/or other partners.

- 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.**

The length of rental assistance is determined by the number of housing barriers the family is facing and the perceived ability to obtain employment or increase household income within a set amount of time. Utilizing a philosophy of "the lightest touch possible" to maximize resources and serve the greatest number of families, the typical range of assistance will be short-term from 1-3 months. We also anticipate serving a number of at-risk families who will require 1 month of current or rental assistance in arrears in order to obtain stable housing.

After 3-months of rental assistance, client households will be reassessed to determine if further financial assistance is needed. Determining factors for continued assistance include: 1) whether or not the household still meets CalWORKs program eligibility; 2) determination of continuing need; 3) anticipation of employment opportunity or increased income in the prospective future; 4) program compliance; and 5) active participation in case management and progress toward housing goals.

- g. Describe your capacity to collect data about your program and its effect on clients. This may include administrative and/or qualitative data.**

SSA currently utilizes various methods for collecting administrative and/or qualitative data, including but not limited to manual statistics and administrative data from its SAWS systems, CalWIN. For the purposes of administration of this grant, Orange County SSA will establish a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with OCCR. The primary quantitative outcomes are as follows:

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- 100% of clients referred will be assessed for Housing Support Program.
- 80% of clients served in the Program will remain housed after one year from the date of original intervention.

Note: Additional Outcome measures will be explored and established during the MOU development stage, upon approval of funding.

SSA will be responsible for identifying and meeting with participants, prior to referral to explain the Housing Support Program. SSA will gather statistics for participants referred to OCCR for Housing Support Program services, per SSA policy. SSA will consult with OCCR staff for each participant referral regarding appropriateness of Housing Support services. SSA and OCCR will participate in meetings, at least quarterly, to address service delivery issues.

Mercy House is currently required by federal, state, and local governments to keep client records and provide accurate reporting. Client data and demographic information is gathered upon entry into the program through a thorough intake form. Information collected on the in-take forms is then entered into a secure database with internal policies to ensure client confidentiality.

Standard demographic information on the head-of-household and household members, including dependent children, will be collected and includes the following:

- First Name
- Last Name
- SSN
- Date of Birth
- Race
- Ethnicity
- Gender
- Veteran Status
- Disabling Condition
- Physical Disability
- Developmental Disability
- Chronic Health Condition
- HIV/AIDS
- Mental Health
- Substance Abuse
- Domestic Violence
- Residence Prior to Entry
- Zip of Last Permanent Address

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Data will be collected through data sets that pertain to housing status and change in income over time. These data sets include:

- Housing Status (at entry)
- Housing Status (at exit)
- Income (at entry)
- Income (at exit)
- Non-Cash Benefits (at entry)
- Non-Cash Benefits (at exit)

Additionally, Financial Assistance and Supportive Services will be tracked including:

- Rental Assistance Payments
- Deposit Assistance Payments
- Case Management Sessions
- Referrals to additional resources

The Mercy House Grant Compliance and Data Director is able to perform critical data analysis on the large volume of data that is being collected to produce timely reports as needed to meet grant conditions and requirements.

Data will be collected and analyzed to determine success of the program as it relates to housing stability of client households. The intended outcomes of the proposed program are that barriers to housing will be reduced allowing the client to more easily find and maintain employment, allow them to reduce debt and save money, and will be able to maintain stabilized permanent housing after the assistance has been expended.

h. Describe strategies you will use to maximize direct services and minimize administrative expenses.

In order to maximize direct services and minimize administrative expenses, Orange County SSA intends to partner with OCCR and leverage the current contract with Mercy House, to provide Rapid Rehousing services to homeless individuals and families throughout Orange County. The grant will be implemented utilizing the Rapid Rehousing and targeted homelessness prevention programs that have been implemented nationwide as cost effective strategies to help families exit or avoid homelessness and retain permanent housing. Mercy House is uniquely qualified and experienced to carry out these services in the Orange County community.

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In following best practices, the proposed program budget will follow a model in which 20 percent of funding is allocated to program administrative budget. These program administrative costs will be shared among Orange County SSA and OCCR. Approximately 15 percent of funding will be applied to costs that include program managers, directors, IT, accounting, benefits, facilities costs, office supplies, equipment, etc. Approximately five percent of funding will be applied to data collection, tracking, analysis, and interpretation which will include staff and time dedicated to these activities, as well as necessary supplies and equipment.

In following best practices, the proposed program budget follows a model in which 80 percent of funding is allocated to program operations and direct financial assistance to eligible households. Program operations will include both the services and financial assistance provided to participating families and the housing location and support services. In addition, program operations costs will include costs specifically attributed to outreach workers and housing locators, case managers, and other direct service personnel, as well as the cost of facilitating 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.

i. Describe the anticipated timetable for implementing the program.

	Days from Execution of Grant Agreement
1. Referral Processes and Procedures Complete	30
2. Operations staff trained and hired	45
3. Service Referrals begin	45
4. Housing Assistance begins	60
5. Supportive Services begin	60

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1. **Referral Processes and Procedures Complete** – Stakeholders have finalized processes and procedures for conducting initial assessments of households and efficiently referring clients for housing support services.
2. **Operations staff trained and hired** – Mercy House has completed hiring and training process for new staff members to begin housing support services for eligible households.
3. **Service Referrals begin** – Social Service Agency begins to assess and refer eligible clients to Mercy House to begin housing support services.
4. **Housing Assistance begins** – Eligible households have been determined for financial assistance. Housing search and placement services have been completed for homeless households and households begin to move into units. Financial assistance begins for either homeless or those at imminent risk of homelessness.
5. **Supportive Services begin** – Weekly follow-up case management and supportive services begin for clients who have received financial assistance.

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

- a. Orange County requests **\$425,000** in funding to launch the Housing Support Program. A high-level break-down of requested funds, in accordance with the “Required Elements” is as follows:

Mercy House: Program Operations Costs (80%)	
Operations & Program Salaries:	\$136,600
Client Services:	\$203,400
Program Operations Costs Subtotal:	\$340,000
Orange County Community Resources (15%)	
Administrative Costs:	\$63,750
Orange County Social Services Agency (5%)	
Reporting and Data Collection:	\$21,250
Administrative and Data Collection Subtotal:	\$85,000
Total:	\$425,000