



# COUNTY OF VENTURA HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY

Barry L. Zimmerman  
Director

August 14, 2014

Todd R. Bland  
Deputy Director  
Welfare to Work Division  
CA. Department of Social Services  
744 P Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Deputy Director Bland:

We are pleased to submit for funding consideration the enclosed application for the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) Housing Support Program.

We believe that with the assistance available through this program and our high success rate of moving people into permanent housing, we will be able to provide crucial rapid re-housing and homeless prevention services to 120 CalWORKs clients who are presently homeless or those who are at-risk of homelessness. Our existing data collection and reporting system (HMIS) will enable us to provide consistent and timely client tracking and performance information.

We look forward to your partnership with us in our mission of ending homelessness in Ventura County. If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Paul Bujold, Senior Program Manager, Community Services Department at 805-477-5370.

Sincerely,

Barry L. Zimmerman  
Director

Enclosure

c. Kellie Adair

**County of Ventura  
Human Services Agency**

**Ventura County CalWORKs Housing Support Program**

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

The Ventura County 2014 Homeless Count and subpopulation survey conducted by the Ventura County Continuum of Care Alliance (VCCoC) on January 28, 2014 found that there were 1,449 adults and children who were homeless during the point-in-time count. This number does not represent every person who experienced homelessness throughout the year. According to the same report, historical trends indicate that the number of homeless in 2014 ranges from approximately 6,000 to 8,000 in Ventura County.

During the County's operation of the federal Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP) we assisted 116 homeless and at-risk CalWORKs families obtain and retain housing from 2012-2014 through the resources provided by federal department of Housing and Urban Development and other sources. By utilizing resources provided under this new CalWORKs Housing Support Program we will expand and strengthen the linkages between our HPRP and CalWORKs programs to increase the number of CalWORKs clients that attain housing stability.

From 2012-2014 there was an average total caseload of 6,620 CalWORKs households in Ventura County, of which approximately 530 suffered from short term or recurring homelessness. This estimate is based on the number of payments made for the Temporary Housing and Permanent Housing Fund.

For the CalWORKs population, being homeless or at imminent risk of being homeless is a serious challenge and a barrier to achieving self-sufficiency. Homelessness impacts the well-being of children and their ability to attend and succeed in school. The CalWORKs Housing Support Program (HSP) will help families overcome these barriers with the goal of strengthening families that ultimately leads to family well-being, employment stability and self-sufficiency.

**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?**

This program will be operated by the County of Ventura-Human Services Agency (HSA) which currently oversees both the CalWORKs program and the HPRP program noted above. Although federal funding for the HPRP program was exhausted in 2013, the County committed additional federal and County funds to allow us to continue to serve eligible homeless clients throughout Ventura County. HSA's extensive experience over the past five years operating a successful HPRP program will enable us to quickly ramp up to serve these additional CalWORKs clients in need of assistance.

We will utilize our current definition of "homeless" and "at imminent risk of homelessness" under the HEARTH Act as provided by federal Housing and Urban Development to ensure the consistency and integrity of program operation. We use Category I in HUD's "At Risk of Homelessness" definition. Documentation of "at-risk" status will be collected, certified by the HSP social worker and added to the applicant case file. These documents may include written Third Party Verification or a Self Declaration of Housing Status. Eligibility criteria will include such factors as: the family will lose their primary residence within 21 days; no subsequent residence has been identified and the family lacks resources or support networks needed to obtain permanent housing.

The Ventura County Housing Support Program will utilize a rapid re-housing approach to secure permanent housing for 120 CalWORKs households who are currently homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness.

The following selection criteria will be utilized to determine who will be able to participate in the program:

- Active status as a CalWORKs recipient verified via CALWIN;
- Current resident of Ventura County
- Homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness
- CalWORKs Welfare-to-Work (WTW) registered households
- CalWORKs employed households who are not Welfare-to-Work registered
- CalWORKs households who are receiving any other source of income
- Employed or access to alternative forms of income
- Ability and willingness to engage in employment or other means of securing income, e.g., disability payments
- Willingness to engage in a Housing Stability Services Plan

**3. Describe how your county will structure the 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, this program will link to the County's existing HPRP program. The County of Ventura Human Services Agency - Homeless Services Program has been a major contributor to ending homelessness throughout Ventura County for the last 18 years. HSP provides the only mobile countywide outreach and case management services for homeless and at-risk persons throughout Ventura County. We have utilized HUD "Best Practices" in operating HPRP programs and have been providing Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing services for the past five years. The program serves Ventura County residents in all 10 cities and throughout the unincorporated areas of the county.

The County's Homeless Services Program assists homeless and at-risk persons to move from crisis or chronic homelessness situations to permanent housing. The program is situated within the Human Services Agency Adult and Family Services Department with 12 service centers located throughout Ventura County with administrative offices in the City of Ventura.

In November 2009, the County's Human Services Agency, through its Homeless Services Program launched the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program (HPRP). With three year ARRA funding from the City of Oxnard and the County of Ventura amounting to approximately \$1.9 million, the Homeless Services Program provided homelessness prevention, rapid re-housing and housing relocation and stabilization assistance to 1,858 persons comprising 678 households who otherwise would become homeless or remain in homelessness. Eighty percent (80%) of assisted clients remained stable in their housing at the six month check point.

Recognizing the success of the program model and in response to the continuing need, the County Board of Supervisors authorized using \$750,000 of County General Fund and other federal dollars to continue HPRP-like assistance over the next few years. At present, HSP continues to provide homeless prevention and rapid-re-housing to eligible beneficiaries with funds from Emergency Solutions Grant, Continuum of Care, Community Development Block Grant and Board of Supervisors HPRP Fund. Over-all housing stability rate at six months after case management support ends is 80% for this program.

This new **Ventura County CalWORKs Housing Support Program** will link with the County's existing HPRP program. The Homeless Services Program currently has a mobile team of five Social Workers. Funding under this grant will allow us to serve more clients by increasing staff resources dedicated to locating appropriate housing resources for CalWORKs clients and providing

the necessary “progressive engagement” to ensure their stability and self-sufficiency. Short term direct financial assistance will be used to address funding gaps for security deposits, rent gaps and related move-in expenses.

The County of Ventura Community Services Department offers a Family Stabilization Services (FSS) program for ongoing CalWORKs families identified as having special needs. Families who participate in the FSS program are those currently experiencing an identified crisis situation that puts them in need of additional support to overcome the crisis in order to achieve self-sufficiency. The Family Stabilization Services program offers intensive case management service in collaboration with partners such as HSP, Public Health, Behavioral Health, and Children & Family Services.

Assistance is provided in specific problem areas, such as Homelessness, substance abuse, mental health, and domestic violence. FSS and WTW-eligible families are evaluated for needed services and referred to local partners for linked services that will help them overcome these barriers to self-sufficiency.

The CalWORKs Homeless Support Program will play a vital role by providing the necessary case management support to assist clients in obtaining and stabilizing permanent housing as well as preventing homelessness.

**B. What is your county’s strategy for implementing housing identification services?**

**(i) How do you propose to manage landlord recruitment and engagement?**

Housing search services are provided to help households find appropriate rental housing in the community. Fostering effective landlord partnerships is an integral component of the program. The Homeless Services Program staff has been providing sheltering and housing assistance to the homeless population in Ventura County for over 18 years. Over these years HSP staff have developed productive working relationships with property management companies, the five local Housing Authorities and over 20 private landlords countywide. These parties have come to trust the supportive services our Social Workers provide to the tenants we refer. Each Social Worker has a list of landlord contacts they can call for rentals in an affordable price range. The program also utilizes the services of a Housing Locator, a recently established position within the county’s Continuum of Care Alliance.

In order to further enhance support and engagement of landlords to the Ventura County CalWORKs Housing Support Program, program staff will provide continuous outreach, program and technical training as needed and

support to the landlords through site visits and phone calls. Our recurring message to these partners is that they are major stakeholders in promoting the overall success of the program, increasing the economic stability of our community and that they are valuable partners in the process of ending homelessness for children and their families.

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

The Human Services Agency has established relationships with many local landlords and local realtors. We will continue to work with them as well as with our local housing authorities to identify and access available rental space. In addition, we will utilize the services of the VCCoC Alliance Housing Locator to coordinate this process with other local partners.

Further, the program will ensure that an on-site inspection is conducted prior to provision of financial assistance for a CalWORKs client moving into a new unit. A housing unit inspection is not required however for participants provided homelessness prevention assistance.

HSP Social Workers follow HUD's "best practice" of conducting Housing Habitability Inspections using the Program Habitability Standard Checklist. The Social Workers are certified lead-based paint inspectors. They are familiar with the standards and process of reporting housing code violations. All staff is current in the required training provided by the Housing Rights Center and are HUD certified Visual Assessors.

**(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.**

Working in collaboration with the Community Services Department CalWORKs Program, the HSP team will serve those CalWORKs clients referred to them who are at imminent risk of becoming homeless as well as those currently homeless. CSD program representatives/caseworkers will be trained in soliciting information from prospective Housing Support Program clients to identify, document and refer via a "warm hand-off" to the HSP team to further identify the housing instability challenges and develop an appropriate Service Plan.

The HSP track record of 80% housing stability for previous clients served is a reflection of the respectful, relationship-based personalized Services Plan developed with each program participant. The plan is built on an

assessment of each family's barriers, strengths and goals. Specific actions and benchmark dates are noted. Following housing placement (or eviction prevention), the social worker documents issues for follow-up in the Housing Stability Plan. A minimum of monthly face to face home visits provide the opportunity for direction and support. Mutual problem solving of issues that remain or arise provides the opportunity to address issues which could derail the household's stability. The social workers' goal is to build habits and problem solving skills that empower the family to enjoy long-term housing stability.

The success of the program depends not only on the ability to locate appropriate housing relative to the household's budget, but also on the ability to provide adequate support so clients can maintain stable housing for the long-term. Case management support is provided via a combination of phone calls, email contacts and home visits. All contacts are recorded in the client's case file. The worker reviews and notes progress made on the goals in the client's Service Plan. Case management support extends for up to six months after housing placement.

Our "best practice" includes follow-up and after-care which has been developed utilizing a Housing Stability Follow-Up process that focuses both the worker and the client on particular stability indicators (i.e., condition of the yard and house; is rent paid timely; has income remained stable or increased or decreased; health & mental health issues, etc.) Home visits are conducted at 30, 60, and 90 day intervals and then more or less frequently as needed. At the six month point, a final home visit documents the housing stability and provides the opportunity for any additional referrals. If a major issue remains unresolved at the six month point, we keep the case open and remain engaged in an effort to resolve it. Our clients, new and old, come to know that our broader Homeless Services Program is available to them, or their neighbors, if needed in the future.

This process of progressive engagement will help ensure long-term housing stability and lead to the ultimate goal of economic self-sufficiency and family well-being for the CalWORKs household.

**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 Ventura County CalWORKs Housing Support Program service model is based on our successful HPRP program. We will provide Homeless Prevention services to at-risk CalWORKs families and Rapid Re-Housing for those families who are currently homeless.

**(1) Services will include the following:**

- Assessment of barriers and strengths;
- Development of a mutually agreed upon Services Plan;
- Procurement of vital documents needed to apply for employment and/or public benefits;
- Procurement and review of a comprehensive credit and eviction report (A current contract is in place with National Credit Reporting);
- Housing search assistance and tenant/landlord negotiation;
- Transportation as needed via bus passes or use of County vehicle;
- Housing habitability inspections and title search for proof of property ownership;
- Issuance of direct to vendor checks, as appropriate, for deposit, rent, rental arrears, utility arrears/deposit, storage unit rent, local moving costs, and housing related application fees;
- Distribution of basic household items when available through community donations for furniture or other household goods as needed;
- On-going coordination with the CalWORKs partners for appropriate support, including referral to childcare, job training, assistance with job search and placement, mental health services and related barriers to self-sufficiency. Supportive services shall be coordinated to ensure clients receive the necessary assistance to remove any barriers to self-sufficiency.

**(2) Service Delivery**

The primary responsibility for the delivery of HSP services will be carried out by Homeless Services Social Workers who will employ the Rapid Re-Housing model as a best practice to quickly move clients into permanent housing. They will maintain communication with the family's CalWORKs worker to ensure coordination between the clients' employment and housing stability plans. The process of referral will begin with the CalWORKs worker who will complete an Informed Referral (IF) form, having screened

the client for unmet housing needs and general program eligibility as noted above in section 2. The IF is sent to the Homeless Services Program Supervisor who assigns the referral to the HS Social Worker who initiates a face-to-face intake and assessment interview and begins the Services Plan as described above. Post- housing stability services will continue via phone and home visits to ensure that the household has become stable in permanent housing.

Ongoing case management shall be a collaborative effort between CSD and Homeless Services Program staff. CSD will continue to be responsible for managing the CalWORKs ongoing case by staying in frequent contact with the client, providing necessary supportive services and making any other necessary referrals to partner agencies. Once the family's situation has been stabilized, CSD shall communicate with partners as needed to ensure that the family continues receiving any supportive services to prevent a housing crisis from reoccurring.

**(3) Program Participants**

Based on research of recent data in our CalWIN and HMIS databases, we project serving 120 households in the first program year.

**(4) Duration of Services**

The projected duration of case management services to support household stability ranges from 3-6 months, with an average of 4 months. Each household is expected to achieve six months of housing stability with support by this program. Direct financial assistance to support rent, utilities and other costs will be capped at \$3,000 per household but may increase to no more than \$5,000 with approval from a Senior Manager.

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

All currently enrolled CalWORKs participants who are homeless or at imminent risk of becoming homeless will be eligible for referral by their CalWORKs worker to the Housing Support Program for services. A modified screening form from our existing HPRP program will be utilized to provide a preliminary housing needs assessment of referred

CalWORKs households. Primary screening criteria will be as noted above in Section 2.

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

Within 48 hours of being identified by CSD as homeless or at imminent risk of becoming homeless, an HSP referral from the CSD caseworker to HSP will be made.

Once the HSP referral is received from CSD, the Homeless Services Program Case Aide will initiate the first contact via phone or in person to assess the clients' needs, barriers and strengths. Experienced bilingual/bicultural staff will collect additional information to augment the screening form. This form is immediately forwarded to the HS Program Supervisor for review and assignment to a HS Program Social Worker who contacts the family to discuss the CalWORKs HSP program and to schedule a face to face Intake & Assessment Interview.

HSP services are trauma-informed and sensitive to how both past and current experiences can, in themselves, be significant barriers. In a conversational interview format, the Social Worker leads the interviewee through a series of questions designed to collect factual information about their current housing state, past evictions, financial and legal challenges, physical and mental health, family functioning and well being, number and age of children and current employment status. A Barriers Score Sheet is utilized to project the barrier load the family is facing. The barrier score helps to project an initial estimate of the duration of the case. It also helps to identify areas of specific sensitivity and special need. All of this information, together with the client's credit report and eviction history, financial realities, and family composition are coupled together with their own stated housing goals. These shape the individualized Housing Services Plan.

**F. Describe how you 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.**

Based on our experience with the current HPRP program, we will utilize the following assistance parameters:

- "Rent Reasonableness" comparisons within geographic areas will be utilized as the basis to establish monthly rental amounts. Area Fair Market Rents (FMRs) will be referenced, but not determinative, of rental rates relative to bedroom size.

- An operational cap of \$3,000/household and a hard cap of \$5,000/household will apply. Issuance of funds above \$3,000 will require a second review at the Senior Manager level.
- Rental arrears of up to three months or combined deposit and rent assistance of up to three months will be considered. The operational caps stated above apply. Active compliance with the Housing Service Plan is a requirement for any financial assistance beyond the first month. At the discretion of the Social Worker, allowance can be made for unexpected emergencies such as a major medical or mental health event or other circumstances beyond the client's control.
- Duration of the HSP case will be projected at intake based on the Barriers Assessment Score and Service Plan goals. Homeless Services Program case management service support will be provided up to six months of housing stability. No case will remain open with HSP longer than six months.

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

HSA utilizes Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) database under contract with Bowman Systems/Service Point software provider. This system allows for tracking client services, data collection & analysis, as well as to fulfill any reporting requirements from the State. Utilizing the current HMIS system allows us to coordinate this program with the county-wide Continuum of Care effort to end homelessness. HMIS data reports allow us to show the impact of the focused use of HSP funds as well as to track areas of remaining unmet needs. Our countywide HMIS system has been successfully administered internally by HSA for over two years.

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

Existing CalWORKs program staff will be actively engaged in identifying, referring and coordinating a variety of services to the CalWORKs households participating in this HSP, as no cost to the grant. Existing partners will continue to provide related services to the HSP households. Per the 14-15 budget table below, a minimum of ninety percent of grant funds will be used for operations with approximately 58% of total funds dedicated to direct financial assistance with less than 33% of the grant supporting salaries and benefits of a Social Worker III and a Case Aide.

No more than 5% of the grant funds will be devoted to data collection and tracking and the remaining 5% will support for administrative expenses.

<b>Category</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Wages/Benefits: 1FTE Child Welfare Social Worker III and 1 FTE Case Aide II	\$166,408
Direct Financial Assistance (120 @2,500/HH)	\$300,000
Data Collection/Tracking	\$ 23,320
Administration	\$24,487
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$514,215</b>

- I. Describe the anticipated timetable for implementing the program.**  
The proposed timetable below begins upon receipt of Award Letter from the State.

<b>TIMELINE</b>	<b>MILESTONE</b>
September 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification of key performance metrics and data base utilization and reports</li> <li>• Formalize program coordination with CalWORKS and Homeless Services HPRP Program</li> <li>• Develop and implement CalWORKS Housing Support Program tools and forms</li> <li>• Implement training for CalWORKS and Homeless Services HPRP Team members who will be responsible for implementing the Housing Support Program</li> <li>• Finalize program policies and procedures</li> </ul>
October 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program Implementation/Go Live!</li> </ul>
November 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 45 day Program Implementation Review</li> </ul>
December 2014 to June 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program Revisions ( if needed )</li> <li>• On-going Program Implementation</li> <li>• Performance Metrics Reporting &amp; Monitoring</li> </ul>