Bringing Families Home (BFH) Program

FACT SHEET

The BFH Program was created by Assembly Bill (AB) 1603 (Chapter 25, Statutes of 2016) and updated by Senate Bill (SB) 80 (Chapter 27, Statutes 2019) to reduce the number of families in the child welfare system experiencing or at risk of homelessness, to increase the number of families reunifying, and to prevent foster care placement.

Program Overview

• BFH is a state-funded program in which participating counties or tribes provide housing-related supports to eligible families experiencing homelessness within the child welfare system.

• BFH offers financial assistance and housing-related wrap-around supportive services, including, but not limited to: rental assistance, housing outreach and navigation, case management, security deposits, utility payments, moving costs, hotel and motel vouchers, landlord recruitment, legal services, and credit repair.

• BFH follows a Housing First model and uses evidence-based housing interventions, including Rapid Rehousing and Permanent Supportive Housing. The type of housing intervention provided is determined by the family's level of need. BFH Programs provide services and assistance as needed, on a voluntary basis; housing is not contingent upon participation in services.

• Grantees operating a BFH must work in collaboration and coordination with the greater homelessness response system and participate in their local homeless Continuum of Care (CoC) and Coordinated Entry (CE) System.

• The 2019-20 Budget Act included $25 million General Fund (one-time) for BFH, available over three-year period, from July 2019 through June 2020. The program requires a dollar-for-dollar grantee match, bringing the total program budget to $50 million.

Early Learnings and Program Accomplishments

• BFH has supported systems change within communities by helping build partnerships between child welfare systems and the local housing and greater homelessness response system, resulting in more streamlined, efficient, and effective service provision.

• Grantees have reported that the core components of BFH have supported families in addressing barriers to housing (credit, rental history, legal issues, arrears, and more) in a way that most families could not have done alone while experiencing homelessness.

• BFH has increased use of homeless data tracking by utilizing the Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS) and collaboration with the local homelessness Coordinated Entry System.

March 2020
Through the first cycle of the program (FY 2016-17 through 2018-19), BFH grantees permanently housed 728 families. BFH data will be evaluated by third party researchers to more formally assess program outcomes and effectiveness. In the interim, BFH grantees have anecdotally reported that BFH families appear to be reunifying faster and with greater success.

Technical Assistance and Support

The CDSS Housing and Homelessness Branch provides regular and targeted technical assistance to grantees operating BFH Programs, including but not limited to:

- Monthly conference calls with participation from all grantees to provide an opportunity for peer-sharing and targeted support from CDSS.
- Individualized grantee-specific support including regular and ongoing telephone and email correspondence as well as in-person site visits and meetings to problem solve grantee-specific challenges and gather information on lessons learned.
- Ongoing support to help grantees procure or expand housing opportunities for families, including securing federal Family Unification Program (FUP) vouchers and connecting to their local homelessness Continuum of Care (CoC) and Coordinated Entry (CE) and Assessment System for additional permanent housing options.
- Webinars designed to support grantees in securing housing, Housing First, successful budgeting strategies, and using data to continuously improve the program.
- In-person Learning Forums which include trainings from national, state, and local experts in housing and homelessness on programmatic best practices, including facilitating collaboration among the child welfare and housing and homelessness response systems, evidence-based housing interventions, utilizing a Housing First approach in Rapid Rehousing and Permanent Supportive Housing and more.
- Promoting opportunities to attend national and statewide housing and homelessness conferences to share strategies and hear lessons learned.

The CDSS allocated Fiscal Year 2019-2020 through 2021-2022 BFH funds to the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grantee</th>
<th>Allocation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Butte</td>
<td>$ 256,000</td>
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<td>Fresno</td>
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<td>Yuba</td>
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The CDSS Housing and Homelessness Branch can be contacted at 916.651.5155 or housing@dss.ca.gov.