



CDSS

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REASON FOR THIS TRANSMITTAL

- State Law Change
- Federal Law or Regulation Change
- Court Order
- Clarification Requested by One or More Counties
- Initiated by CDSS

January 10, 2017

ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS LETTER

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS

FROM: GREGORY E. ROSE
Deputy Director
Children and Family Services Division

SUBJECT: BRINGING FAMILIES HOME (BFH) PROGRAM

REFERENCES: ASSEMBLY BILL (AB) 1603, CHAPTER 25, STATUTES OF 2016;
WELFARE AND INSTITUTIONS CODE (WIC) SECTION 16523.

The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) recently received authority, established by AB 1603 (Stats. 2016. Ch. 25) to launch a new program for homeless families involved with the child welfare system. The BFH Program is a new state funded program, with a county-match requirement in which participating counties will provide housing-related supports to eligible families served by the child welfare agency, to support in the reunification of homeless families in the child welfare system. The CDSS is seeking initial program concept papers from Child Welfare Services (CWS) agencies interested in participating in the BFH Program.

The goal of the BFH Program is to significantly reduce the number of families in the child welfare system experiencing homelessness, increase the number of families reunifying and prevent foster care placement. The CWS agencies operating BFH programs will be required to utilize two evidence-based housing models and practices, [rapid re-housing](#) and [supportive housing](#), to support homeless families in the child welfare system.

The California State Budget for Fiscal Year 2016-17 appropriated \$10 million General Fund (one-time) to fund the new program over a three-year period beginning July 1, 2016 through June 30, 2019. The legislation requires counties to match, on a dollar-for-dollar basis, any funding provided under the BFH Program. Funding must supplement, and not supplant, existing county funding for these purposes. Additional information regarding acceptable county match funding is included as Attachment B.

COORDINATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Coordination and engagement are integral to the BFH Program. The CWS agencies are highly encouraged to have strong and established relationships with their homeless Continuum of Care (CoC) and other community-based organizations that provide housing or homelessness related services. Counties should also have established coordinated entry/access systems to housing and link services to homeless families. Additionally, an established connection with the justice system is highly encouraged – the local dependency court system will be central to the program’s effectiveness. Some potential strategies may include having an assigned court room or judge to all BFH participants, engaging judges and attorneys in program development, and on-going program implementation meetings with the dependency court.

BRINGING FAMILIES HOME MATCHING REQUIREMENTS

Please see Attachment B for details on BFH Program fund matching requirements.

BRINGING FAMILIES HOME APPLICATION PROCESS

The CWS agencies interested in requesting BFH program funding must submit a two-page program concept paper, and a letter of support from the local housing authority and/or CoC illustrating the intent to work together. The program concept paper must identify the following: how your agency will identify families eligible for this program; the CWS agency’s capacity to partner with homeless CoC to assess housing needs and help participants move into housing; and how the county intends to match the state funding. Refer to Attachment A for program concept requirements.

Program concept papers must be submitted electronically to the Housing and Disability Advocacy Branch at Housing@dss.ca.gov no later than February 10, 2017.

Due to the time limited AB 1603 funding, the CWS agencies are strongly encouraged to critically self-assess the county's capacity to implement a BFH Program promptly. The CDSS will evaluate program concept papers to determine CWS agencies with the greatest capacity to implement a successful BFH program at this time. Only those CWS agencies that meet the program requirements and sufficiently demonstrate the capacity to implement the BFH Program will be invited to continue in the BFH Program application process.

The CDSS looks forward to partnering with CWS agencies to help reduce the number of families in the child welfare system experiencing homelessness and successfully reunify families.

Questions regarding housing programs should be directed to the Housing and Disability Advocacy Branch, at (916) 654-1450. Questions regarding child welfare, family reunification, and family maintenance services should be directed to the Child Welfare Policy and Program Development Bureau, at (916) 651-6160.

Attachment:

- A. Program Scope/Concept Paper
- B. Match Requirements

**Bringing Families Home Program
Program Scope Certification and Request for New Funding (2016-19)**

This form is to be completed by CWS agencies who are requesting BFH funding for 2016-19.

County Name: _____

Indicate the primary CWS agency contact regarding the BFH request for new funding.

Contact Name and Title: _____

Address: _____

Email Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

I. PROGRAM CONCEPT PAPER

Attach a description of your proposed BFH Program, in two pages or less, and include the following:

- a. Program goals, including the identified local need;
- b. How your CWS agency plans to match state BFH Program funding per requirements in Attachment B;
- c. A description of any working relationships with the local homelessness Continuum of Care (CoC) and the local legal system (e.g. relationships with judges and/or lawyers). Include a letter of support from the CoC and, if possible, a letter of support from the relevant court.

II. BUDGET DETAIL

- a. Indicate the amount of funding the county is requesting: _____
- b. Number of potential participating families experiencing homelessness who are either participating in family reunification or receiving services and are at risk of foster placement that the county intends to house in permanent housing with the BFH Program: _____

III. COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTOR'S CERTIFICATION

I certify that the County will administer the Bringing Families Home Program pursuant to the conditions set forth by the California Department of Social Services. I certify that the information completed above and attached is true and correct.

Director's Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

BRINGING FAMILIES HOME
County Match Funding Guidelines

Counties in receipt of Bringing Families Home (BFH) funding are required to match the state BFH funding on a dollar-for-dollar basis. This document summarizes the county match guidelines associated with BFH and outlines the general match provisions, how in-kind funding may be used as a match, and defines the items prohibited from being claimed as a match.

In accordance with [Welfare and Institution Code \(WIC\) section 16523.1](#), counties in receipt of funds provided for BFH shall supplement and not supplant current county funding for these purposes.

General Match Requirements

Provisions

County matching funds must follow the following provisions:

- Are verifiable from the County Welfare Department's records.
- Are necessary and reasonable for accomplishment of the project or program objectives.
- Are allowable under the cost principles outlined in [subpart E of 2 CFR 200](#).

In-Kind Matches

In-kind matches may be allowable for the BFH county match requirement. In-kind donations must be substantiated with written documentation provided on the source agency's letterhead, signed, and dated by an authorized representative. Documentation must include:

- Description and value of the donated goods.
- Specific date (fiscal year) for which the goods will be contributed.
- The method used to determine the value of the donation.
- A memorandum of understanding (MOU) for in-kind services must be in place prior to provision of the service. The MOU must contain the following elements:
 - An unconditional commitment to provide the service(s).
 - A description of the specific service(s) to be provided.
 - The profession of the persons providing the service(s) and hourly cost of the service(s).
 - The timeframe in which the service(s) will be provided.
 - The system that will be used to document the actual level and value of the service(s) as provided.

ATTACHMENT B

The following are examples of in-kind contributions counting towards the county's match.

- Example 1: A non-profit provides a coordinator to assist with seeking housing; the services of the coordinator can be reasonably calculated and included as part of the county's match.
- Example 2: The county's housing authority agrees to set aside or establish a preference for BFH participants accessing turn-over Housing Choice or Family Unification Program vouchers. The fair market rent of these vouchers can reasonably be included as part of the county's match.
- Example 3: A low income housing complex agrees to set aside apartments funded through public affordable housing dollars to house BFH participants. The value of the affordable apartments may be counted towards the county's match obligation.

Prohibitions

In general, state funds may not be used towards a county's match requirement in order to draw down BFH funding.

CalWORKs Housing Assistance (HA), Housing Support Program (HSP)/Family Stabilization Program (FSP)

Services, payments and other CalWORKs HA, HSP and FSP supports may not count towards the county's match obligations as those programs are funded with federal and/or state funds and may not be used to fulfill a county's match requirement.

Title IV-E Funding

As a reminder, the costs of social services provided to the child, the child's family or foster family which includes counseling or treatment to ameliorate or remedy personal problems, behaviors or home conditions are not eligible for Title IV-E reimbursement.