



CDSS

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EDMUND G. BROWN JR.
GOVERNOR

June 25, 2018

ALL COUNTY LETTER (ACL) NO. 18-71

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS
ALL CalWORKs PROGRAM SPECIALISTS
ALL COUNTY CHILD WELFARE DIRECTORS
ALL COUNTY WELFARE-TO-WORK COORDINATORS
ALL CONSORTIA PROJECT MANAGERS

SUBJECT: CALIFORNIA WORK OPPORTUNITY AND RESPONSIBILITY TO KIDS
(CalWORKs): IMPLEMENTATION OF ASSEMBLY BILL (AB) 236
TEMPORARY HOMELESS ASSISTANCE AND FAMILY REUNIFICATION
CASES

REFERENCE: [ASSEMBLY BILL 236 \(CHAPTER 545, STATUTES OF 2017\)](#);
WELFARE AND INSTITUTIONS CODE (WIC) SECTIONS [11203](#),
[11330 - 11330.5](#), [11450](#), AND [16523 – 16523.1](#); MANUAL OF
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES (MPP) [42-211.5](#) AND [82-812.67](#); ALL
COUNTY LETTER NOS. [02-36](#), [11-04](#), AND [16-98](#)

The purpose of this ACL is to inform County Welfare Departments (CWDs) that due to the passage of AB 236, as of January 1, 2018, CalWORKs families receiving Family Reunification (FR) services are now eligible for temporary Homeless Assistance (HA) benefits. AB 236 does not make any changes to the policies or procedures around CalWORKs cases receiving FR services, except to state that these families are now eligible for temporary HA if they are otherwise eligible and the county determines that HA is necessary for reunification to occur.

Background/Current Law

Temporary HA is available to homeless families to help pay for up to 16 consecutive days of temporary shelter, while the family is searching for permanent housing. In order to be eligible for temporary HA payments, the family must be:

- on or apparently eligible for CalWORKs (including meeting income and asset limitations);
- homeless;
- seeking permanent housing; and
- have no more than \$100 in available liquid resources.

Under current law, a family's CalWORKs case can remain open if:

- they are on CalWORKs when their children are removed from the home and placed in out-of-home care due to an order of the juvenile court;
- the parents are ordered to participate in family reunification services; and
- the county determines the services are necessary for family reunification.

For purposes of this letter, these cases will be referred to as CalWORKs FR cases. Parents in these cases are considered CalWORKs recipients and can receive services, including Welfare-to-Work, Mental Health and Substance Abuse, CalWORKs supportive services, and CalWORKs Housing Support Program (HSP) benefits and services to assist with family reunification; however, these cases do not receive a cash grant and are not eligible for special needs payments.

Due to the number of families in California who are involved in both CalWORKs and the Child Welfare system, many counties are part of a coordinated services approach called the Linkages Project, which aims to improve service coordination and case planning; prevent duplication of effort; and maximize funding and resources to better serve clients accessing both systems. Counties are strongly encouraged to utilize these partnerships and collaborate to better serve their shared caseload. [ACL 02-36](#) and [ACL 11-04](#) provide more information about CalWORKs FR cases, including eligibility requirements, the length of time these families may be provided CalWORKs services, and how the county staff determine CalWORKs services are necessary for reunification to occur.

AB 236 Changes

AB 236 established that effective January 1, 2018, CalWORKs FR cases that are experiencing homelessness shall be eligible for temporary HA benefits, if the county determines these benefits are necessary for reunification and the family is otherwise eligible (i.e., they are homeless and have no more than \$100 in available liquid resources). Child Welfare staff making the determination for the need of homeless services in the reunification plan should coordinate closely with the CalWORKs eligibility staff to ensure these families can access temporary HA as appropriate.

Temporary HA is often used as an initial emergency response, but as 16 days of temporary shelter assistance is often not sufficient to solve the crisis of homelessness, counties are strongly encouraged to connect families to any additional housing interventions that are available in their communities in order to help these families permanently stabilize. Other interventions counties should consider using in conjunction with temporary HA include, but are not limited to, CalWORKs Family

Stabilization, the HSP, Bringing Families Home (BFH), or any other housing resources provided via the local Coordinated Entry system in their county. Additionally, once the children are returned to the home and are added back into the CalWORKs assistance unit, the county should consider offering permanent HA, as appropriate.

As an example, consider a family receiving CalWORKs, who has their children placed into foster care, has a court-ordered family reunification plan, and subsequently becomes homeless during the initial stages of their Child Welfare case plan. If the county determines that housing is necessary for reunification to occur, the county should offer temporary HA and consider pairing these benefits with a program like HSP or BFH (if available in their county), which offers housing search assistance, short term rental subsidies, and intensive case management. In other instances, the family may experience homelessness toward the latter stages of their case plan. Presuming they are still a CalWORKs FR case, temporary HA may prove an acceptable interim solution that allows a dependency court judge to safely return the children to the care and custody of the parents, after which time the family may qualify for permanent HA or other interventions.

Separately, AB 236 also requires the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to work with stakeholders, including the County Welfare Directors Association and welfare advocates, to gather information regarding the actual costs of a nightly hotel room, as well as best practices for transitioning families from temporary shelter to permanent housing. CDSS will provide this information to the legislature, as required by statute. CDSS will engage stakeholders to solicit input regarding these matters under separate cover.

Contacts

If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact the Housing and Homelessness Bureau at (916) 651-5155 or housing@dss.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Original Document Signed By

TODD R. BLAND
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Family Engagement and Empowerment Division