



**Tuolumne County**  
**Health and Human Services Agency**

REBECCA ESPINO  
Director

STEVE BOYACK  
Assistant Director

WENDY HOFFMAN-BRADY  
Assistant Director

20075 Cedar Road North  
Sonora, CA 95370  
(209) 533-5711  
Fax: (209) 533-5714  
[www.tuolumnecounty.ca.gov](http://www.tuolumnecounty.ca.gov)

March 22, 2022

SUBJECT: Bringing Families Home (Child Welfare Services) Program Allocation

Dear Community Partner,

The Bringing Families Home (BFH) Program, created in 2016, is a state-funded, locally administered program operated by participating counties and tribes to provide housing-related supports to eligible families experiencing homelessness within the child welfare system. BFH was expanded under the Budget Act of 2021 by authorizing noncompetitive allocations for all California counties desiring to participate in the program and extending eligibility to include child welfare involved families who are at risk of homeless.

As a partner in the local safety-net system, the Tuolumne County Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) is pleased to inform your agency that a BFH allocation of \$250,000 has been made available to Tuolumne County through the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Housing and Homelessness Branch for use through June 30, 2024. HHSA intends to accept the full amount awarded and will make every effort to collaborate with our local community-based housing, homelessness, health, child and family social service providers to maximize benefits to the target population.

BFH offers housing stabilization and navigation, and housing-related case management and direct financial assistance to individuals/families who are 1) receiving child welfare services; 2) homeless, at risk of homelessness, or in a living situation that cannot accommodate the child or multiple children in the home; and 3) voluntarily agree to participate in the program. Detailed information is provided in the attached *Program Eligibility, Program Requirements, and Core Components* from the CDSS All County Welfare Director's Letter dated February 11, 2022. These documents describe BFH benefits, eligibility, and requirements related to collaboration with the local health and homeless service systems, including the Central Sierra Continuum of Care, and utilizing the Coordinated Entry/Homeless Management Information System.

Please contact Agency Manager Nicole Griswold at (209) 533-5743 or [ngriswold@co.tuolumne.ca.us](mailto:ngriswold@co.tuolumne.ca.us) for further general BFH information.

Sincerely,

Michelle Clark  
Director, Tuolumne County Department of Social Services

/aa  
Enclosure

## **ATTACHMENT ONE: PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY**

This attachment provides an overview of Bringing Families Home (BFH) participant eligibility.

The BFH eligibility is broadly defined in Welfare Institution Code (WIC) Section 16523(c) as families or individuals who meet all three conditions:

- (1) Receive child welfare services at the time eligibility is determined,
- (2) Are homeless, at risk of homelessness, or in a living situation that cannot accommodate the child or multiple children in the home, including individuals who have not received an eviction notice; and,
- (3) Voluntarily agree to participate in the program.

Details regarding the first and second eligibility requirements are further described below.

Additional information about program screening and prioritization are also further described below and in Attachments Two and Three.

### **I. PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY RELATED TO CHILD WELFARE SERVICES**

In order to be eligible for BFH, an individual or family, including but not limited to biological parents, guardians, or kinship guardians (e.g. applicable grandparents), must receive child welfare services at the time eligibility is determined. The BFH WIC Section 16523(a) defines "child welfare services" for BFH as having the same meaning as defined in [WIC Section 16501](#). The child welfare service component types for BFH eligible families may include but are not limited to Family Reunification, Family Maintenance, Emergency Response services, or families in receipt of voluntary supervision to prevent the need for the child's or children's removal.

### **II. PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS REGARDING HOUSING STATUS**

The BFH eligibility requires that the family is either A) homeless, B) at risk of homelessness, or C) in a situation that cannot accommodate a child or multiple children in the home.

Each of these categories are further defined below.

#### **A. Definition of 'Homeless'**

The BFH definition of homelessness broadly includes unsheltered homelessness, families living in shelters or temporary living situations, and those who are imminently homeless due to a residence being lost within 14 days. The AB 135 amended [WIC Section 16523\(d\)](#) to align the definition more closely with the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definition of homelessness.

## Attachment One

The updated BFH definition of homelessness as reflected in [WIC Section 16523\(d\)](#) is provided below for reference:

- (1) An individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.
- (2) An individual or family with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including, but not limited to, a car, park, abandoned building, bus station, train station, airport, or camping ground.
- (3) An individual or family living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements, including hotels or motels paid for by federal, state, or local government programs for low-income individuals or by charitable organizations, congregate shelters, or transitional housing.
- (4) An individual who resided in a shelter or place not meant for human habitation and who is exiting an institution where the individual temporarily resided.
- (5) An individual or family who will imminently lose their housing, including, but not limited to, housing they own, rent, or live in without paying rent, are sharing with others, or rooms in hotels or motels not paid for by federal, state, or local government programs for low-income individuals or by charitable organizations, if any of the following criteria are met:
  - (A) The primary nighttime residence will be lost within 14 days, as evidenced by any of the following:
    - (i) A court order resulting from an eviction action that notifies the individual or family that they must leave within 14 days.
    - (ii) The individual or family having a primary nighttime residence that is a room in a hotel or motel and where they lack the resources necessary to reside there for more than 14 days.
    - (iii) Credible evidence indicating that the owner or renter of the housing will not allow the individual or family to stay for more than 14 days, and any oral statement from an individual or family seeking homeless assistance that is found to be credible shall be considered credible evidence for purposes of this clause.
  - (B) The individual or family has no subsequent residence identified.
  - (C) The individual or family lacks the resources or support networks needed to obtain other permanent housing.
- (6) Unaccompanied youth and homeless families with children and youth defined as homeless under any other federal statute, as of the effective date of this program, who meet all the following:
  - (A) Have experienced a long-term period without living independently in permanent housing.
  - (B) Have experienced persistent instability as measured by frequent moves over that long-term period.
  - (C) Can be expected to continue in that status for an extended period of time because of chronic disabilities, chronic physical health or mental health

## Attachment One

conditions, substance addiction, histories of domestic violence or childhood abuse, the presence of a child or youth with a disability, or multiple barriers to employment.

### *Note: Domestic Violence and Adequate Nighttime Residence*

Families may be considered homeless and lack an adequate nighttime residence pursuant to WIC Section 16523(d)(1) if individuals or families are fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, stalking, or other dangerous or life-threatening conditions that relate to violence against the individual or a family if they have no other residence and lack the resources or support to obtain other permanent housing.

### **B. Definition of At Risk of Homelessness**

Changes made pursuant to AB 135 ([Chapter 85, Statutes of 2021](#)) now allow grantees to serve eligible families at risk of homelessness including families that have not yet received an eviction notice as well as families where the living situation cannot accommodate a child or multiple children.

For the purposes of BFH, a family is considered “at risk of homelessness” if they meet all three of the following requirements:

- (1) are experiencing housing instability, defined as, housing instability that places them at risk of becoming homeless including those who have not yet received an eviction notice;
- (2) have no subsequent permanent residence secured; and
- (3) lack resources or support networks needed to stabilize their unique housing situation and secure subsequent permanent housing.

This definition of “at risk of homelessness” is inclusive of, but not limited to the HUD definition of “at risk of homelessness” under 24 Code of Federal Regulations section 91.5. This means participants who meet the HUD definition of “at risk of homelessness” shall be deemed “at risk of homelessness” under the definition set out in this section.

This definition is distinct from the definition of homelessness due to a family who will imminently lose their housing.

Please see additional information about common factors that may place a family at risk of homelessness in Attachment Three, Section One.

### **C. Definition of “Living Situation that Cannot Accommodate a Child”**

A living situation cannot accommodate a child or multiple children if it meets all three of the following requirements:

- the parent or guardian’s nighttime residence would not be an adequate or appropriate long term housing placement for a child or children due to living situations that jeopardize the physical health, mental health, safety and/or well-

## Attachment One

being of the child, as well as situations where a lease, living arrangement, or because tenancy would be terminated for the family if the child or children were to live in the home;

- have no subsequent permanent residence secured, and;
- lack resources or support networks needed to stabilize their unique housing situation and secure subsequent permanent housing.

### *Case Examples*

Example 1: A parent receiving Family Reunification services is housed and is not at imminent risk of losing their housing. Throughout the child welfare case, the live-in-landlord notifies the parent that the family would not be able to remain in the housing after reunification. The parent does not have the necessary resources to identify or secure subsequent housing. The family may be served by BFH.

Example 2: A parent receiving Family Reunification services is stably housed but the court has identified the parent's roommate does not pass the necessary background check and/or the living situation would not be adequate for the children to reside in. The parent does not have the necessary resources to identify or secure subsequent housing. The family may be served by BFH.

Example 3: A parent is receiving Family Maintenance, in-home services. Through program service assessments and Child Family Team meetings, it has been identified the family is housed with a family member further jeopardizing the mental health and well-being of the children as well as progress towards the family's child welfare case plan. It is determined that the living situation can no longer accommodate the child without risking potential Child Welfare Services involvement, and it is determined that the parent does not have the necessary resources to identify or secure subsequent housing. The family may be served by BFH.

### **D. At-Risk Self-Attestation**

**Families and individuals shall be allowed to self-attest that they meet the definition of "at risk of homelessness" set out in this section, including that the living situation cannot accommodate a child or children.** No additional verification or documentation demonstrating that a family meets the definition of "at risk of homelessness" is needed; grantees shall not require further evidence for the purposes of BFH enrollment. This self-determination assumes that families in receipt of child welfare services are likely already more vulnerable to homelessness than the general population.

Once a family has met the "at risk of homelessness" definition in this section, grantees may assess for other criteria indicative of vulnerability related to risk of homelessness for further prioritization, if needed.

## Attachment One

### III. SCREENING AND PRIORITIZATION

Programs must utilize equitable and standardized assessment strategies to determine each family's housing and service needs, match appropriate housing services, and further prioritize program services, if needed.

Consistent with homeless assistance best practice, programs should utilize the equitable and structured assessment and screening processes to prioritize services for families with the highest service needs and vulnerabilities, if needed. Every effort should be made to serve all BFH-eligible families experiencing homelessness given expanded program funds.

Note: For the purposes of prioritization or tracking spending on homelessness prevention, anyone who meets the definition of "living situation that cannot accommodate a child" may also be considered at risk of homelessness.

Additional information about program assessments and prioritization is available in Attachment Two. Additional information on common factors that may place a family at risk of homelessness is available in Attachment Three, Section One.

## ATTACHMENT TWO: PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS AND CORE COMPONENTS

This attachment provides an overview of BFH and the core service components of the program. Counties and tribes interested in establishing a new program are encouraged to review this information, related All County Letters (ACLs), and guidance linked throughout this attachment to understand the full scope of the program.

Program requirements are outlined in [WIC Sections 16523-16523.2](#). All services must utilize trauma-informed and client-centered practices. Attachment One of this letter provides information specific to the expansion of participant eligibility. Please contact [housing@dss.ca.gov](mailto:housing@dss.ca.gov) with any questions or to request technical assistance.

### I. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Pursuant to WIC section 16523.1(c), BFH funding must be used to support projects that utilize evidence-based housing interventions across the full continuum of housing service needs to meet the varied needs of families, whether they are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of homelessness. Evidence-based and promising models include, but are not limited to:

- **Rapid Rehousing:** The [National Alliance to End Homelessness](#) defines rapid re-housing (RRH) as “an intervention designed to help individuals and families to quickly exit homelessness, return to housing in the community, and not become homeless again in the near term. The core components of a rapid rehousing program are housing identification, move-in and rent assistance, and rapid re-housing case management and services.” With BFH-supported RRH services, a family secures a rental unit, often on the private market, and is provided with rental assistance and other evidence-based services including but not limited to trauma-informed case management and housing retention services. Services are provided, as needed, until a family achieves housing stability or is transitioned to other longer-term housing support programming if needed.
- **Supportive Housing:** Supportive housing is a model that combines affordable housing with trauma-informed services to support family stability and well-being. Supportive housing is best matched with families whose heads of households are experiencing homelessness, are at risk of homelessness, or are inappropriately staying in an institutional setting and may be facing multiple barriers to employment and housing stability. Supportive housing often entails providing available housing and services as long as a family may choose to participate. Supportive housing is designed to serve those who would not be able to stay housed without a wide range of supportive services. Supportive housing may include single site housing, integrated housing, scattered site units, or long-term set asides and should include coordinated housing and wrap-around services to meet the ongoing needs of individuals and families. Please see [Supportive Housing Outcomes – Casey Family Programs](#) for additional information on Supportive housing.
- **Targeted Prevention Services:** Preventative services and assistance are varied and can include any preventative measure that will save a tenancy, help families regain stability in their current housing, or move and achieve stability in a new housing location. This may include rental or utility arrears, late fee

## Attachment Two

payments, first and last month's rent and/or security deposits, ongoing rental assistance, landlord mediation, repairs, connection to housing stabilization services, habitability/accessibility improvements, and housing navigation. Evidence-based and promising prevention models should use strategies such as those detailed in Attachment Three.

**Note: Additional information about allowable service components across these models, including use of interim housing, are further described below under Core Service Components.**

### **II. REQUIRED SERVICE COMPONENTS**

Grantees operating a BFH program must provide housing-related supports directly to program participants, or through a contracted partner, as applicable. Housing-related supports available to participating families shall include, but not be limited to, housing-related case management, housing navigation, housing-related direct financial assistance, and housing stabilization services. While BFH must offer the following service components, the duration, order and types of services received may vary by BFH participant, dependent on an assessment of participant need and choice. Services provided must take into account input from the family, based on the needs of the family, and in coordination with other services being provided by child welfare services, tribes, family resource centers, family courts, and/or other service providers. Coordination should occur at the participant and program level, inclusive of other related efforts such as child welfare case plans. In the event that an individual or family served by BFH should need subsequent housing assistance not available through BFH, a warm handoff to an appropriate alternative source of housing support should be provided before cessation of BFH housing services.

#### **A. Core Service Components**

The BFH core service components are detailed below and should be used to support the delivery of evidence-based and promising housing models such as rapid re-housing, supportive housing or homelessness prevention services. The following service types may overlap and may not be considered mutually exclusive.

##### *1. Housing-related Case Management:*

The BFH must offer housing-related case management services, consistent with Housing First principles and evidence-based models, to assist with achieving housing stability. As per WIC Section 16523.1(c)(2)(C), grantees should incorporate "motivational interviewing and trauma-informed care to build relationships with a parent or guardian."

Housing-related case management should be person-centered, trauma-informed, and provided in a manner consistent and in coordination with the child welfare service. This plan and may include, but is not limited to, the following activities to assist BFH participants in achieving and maintaining housing stability:



## Attachment Two

- developing a trusting relationship which utilizes appropriate cultural/linguistic supports and adaptations;
- coordinating all components of a family's housing service plan;
- coordinating with the child welfare case manager and court-ordered service plans;
- working with family and community to identify any and all available supports related to housing stability;
- providing various forms of in-depth problem solving related to housing stability including but not limited to housing-budget development;
- assisting families in applying for other public assistance benefits to support housing stability, including assistance in accessing rent relief programs such as Emergency Rental Assistance Program;
- assisting families in accessing physical and behavioral health services in order to support housing stability; and
- providing connections to benefits advocacy programs, workforce development programs, and/or access to other low-cost resources in order for BFH families to achieve or maintain housing stability.

The BFH housing-related case management should complement and coordinate with, but not replace or supplant, child welfare service plans, including court-ordered case plans. A family or individual's participation in BFH case management is voluntary, and clients should not be penalized or disenrolled from BFH due to failure to attend appointments or meet with a case manager. The BFH case management and support may extend beyond child welfare case management in support of housing retention and family stability. If reunification or maintenance is successful, families may need to continue receiving BFH support to achieve housing stability. If reunification is not successful, it is expected that programs will transition the individual or family off of BFH services and complete a warm handoff for other resources and services in the community.

### *2. Housing Navigation:*

As per WIC Section 16523.1(c)(2)(B), BFH grantees must provide housing navigation services. Housing navigation assists participating individuals and families in finding, applying for, securing, and moving into, interim and permanent housing, as needed. Housing navigation should also employ evidence-based tools, such as person-centered, trauma-informed care.

Examples of housing navigation that should be provided as part of the BFH program include, but are not limited to:

- landlord engagement, including outreach and appreciation events to recruit landlords to work with BFH families;
- searching for housing based on family's housing preferences and needs, as well as ensuring safety and habitability for children;
- building a resource list of available units and referring families to unit availability; according to their preferences for both interim and permanent housing options;

## Attachment Two

- transportation to housing location activities;
- assistance in completing housing applications and documentation as needed including but not limited to: preparing for the application process; assistance with advocating with landlords on behalf of the households; attending meetings between the landlord and the household to assist; and attending/supporting the lease signing and understanding tenant requirements and rights through the process.
- coordination with the local public housing authority and advocating for availability of affordable housing vouchers for BFH families;
- ensuring quality of housing placements; and
- assistance in making connections to permanent supportive housing.

### 3. *Housing-Related Direct Financial Assistance:*

As per WIC Section 16523.1(c)(2)(D), BFH grantees must provide housing-related financial assistance, including rental assistance, security deposit assistance, utility payments, moving cost assistance, and interim housing assistance while housing navigators are actively seeking permanent housing options for the family. Direct financial assistance includes any cost paid out on behalf of the participant related to securing or maintaining housing. Direct financial assistance in the program budget should be maximized to ensure that families are provided housing or prevented from entering homelessness as quickly as possible. Assistance with interim housing, including but not limited to hotel, motel or bridge housing, should be available until permanent housing is available and should include housing navigation services to ensure participants are able to move into permanent housing as quickly as possible.

Examples of direct financial assistance includes, but is not limited to, any of the following:

- costs associated with rental assistance
- rental backpay and arrearages
- application fees
- landlord incentives
- security and utility deposits
- first and last months' rent
- interim housing, including hotel/motel stays or master-leased units
- emergency shelter
- emergency financial assistance toward a specific crisis threatening housing stability provided pursuant to evidence-based practices in homeless assistance and prevention
- provision of basic housing items and resources to make the home habitable to obtain/maintain housing stability (i.e., furniture and appliances)
- time-limited transportation vouchers necessary to obtain or maintain housing stability
- costs associated with moving or relocating, including storage fees for a reasonable period of time, if needed
- costs associated with supportive housing

## Attachment Two

### 4. *Housing Stabilization:*

As per WIC Section 16523.1(c)(2)(E), BFH grantees must provide housing stabilization including ongoing tenant engagement, case management, public systems assistance, legal services, credit repair assistance, life skills training, and conflict mediation with landlords and neighbors. Housing stabilization services ensure, once housed, a family's housing is safe, sustainable, and supports the safety and well-being of children. It is often delivered in conjunction with direct financial assistance.

Examples of housing stabilization services and assistance may include, but are not limited to, any of the following:

- provision or referral to legal assistance
- eviction prevention
- referral to life skills training
- tenant education and engagement
- public systems assistance
- conflict mediation with landlords and neighbors
- credit repair
- referral to employment services or benefits advocacy
- referrals to cultural and linguistic supports and services

#### **B. Program Design and Staffing Considerations**

It is best practice that the Child Welfare Services case worker, BFH case manager, and BFH housing navigator be separate roles within the BFH program, when able, but still maintain close communication and coordination. This cross-role communication and coordination is essential to ensure that the services provided are client-centered and are able to meet client needs effectively. The feasibility of role separation and specifics of these role interactions may vary by program and community, allowing for flexibility and innovation at the local level.

Additionally, programs may hire staff that are specifically responsible for facilitating coordination, whether that be coordination among staff, between programs, or with the local homelessness and child welfare systems of care.

#### **C. Prioritization and Assessment**

Pursuant to WIC Section 16523.1(c)(2)(A), grantees must conduct “an assessment of each family’s housing and service needs, including a plan to assist them in meeting those needs, using an assessment tool developed in the local community or an assessment tool used in other jurisdictions.”

Grantees must utilize equitable and standardized assessment strategies to determine each family’s housing and service needs, match appropriate housing services, and further prioritize program services, if needed.

## Attachment Two

Programs may not allow individual case managers to determine prioritization on a case-by-case basis. It is critical that assessment and prioritization criteria are consistent and not subject to the bias of an individual case manager or staff. Grantees should include their screening and prioritization frameworks in written program policies to ensure consistent application across the program and to assist CDSS in understanding best practices across the state.

Program screening and assessments should complement, be in coordination with, and leverage both the child welfare service assessment tools and techniques, as well as those within the broader local homelessness system including the Continuum of Care. This screening and assessment process should include assessment of housing instability, the health and safety of the child's living situation, and risk of further child welfare service needs, and this process should be implemented consistently across the program. Multi-Disciplinary Teams, Child and Family Team meetings, as well as thoughtful and collaborative conversations with the family should be employed as part of assessing and addressing the adequacy of a living situation and in turn, the family's housing and service needs.

Child welfare agencies and local housing systems should collaborate to identify appropriate points for implementing necessary assessments to ensure equitable access to housing services for families involved in child welfare services. Service assessments of all BFH-referrals should occur as soon as possible in order to provide immediate and urgent housing services whenever needed.

Assessment tools often fulfill a broad range of purposes beyond service matching. Consider these distinct goals when choosing an assessment tool or process. Prioritization or assessment processes should incorporate the following principles, regardless of the tool used:

- Applied consistently across the program and should not rely on the social worker's individual determination of who to serve.
- Incorporate factors that are evidence-based or promising best practices, such as targeting services to those most at risk of homelessness.
- Delivered and framed in an easy-to-understand and trauma-informed manner that centers the client's needs, including the timing of the assessment components or delivering in multiple stages if the client is in crisis and/or hesitant to engage. Grantees are strongly encouraged to use data that may already have been collected to inform the assessment process and to avoid repetitive or traumatic questions.
- Adopt a racial equity lens and framework. The [Centre for Social Data Analytics](#) and the [Government Alliance for Race and Equity](#) recommends testing the assessment process against questions such as: Is the assessment tool equally predictive and useful for all racial groups? When applying the tools, what will this mean for a person? Who will gain and who will be burdened? What information has already been gathered about how the tool impacts people of color?
- Eliminate barriers to entry and participation, versus being a tool to primarily screen people out. Adapt processes to this end as needed.

## Attachment Two

- Be used to assist BFH families in obtaining housing that prioritizes client choice taking into account recipient needs and preferences.
- Offers and provides [reasonable accommodations](#) for people with disabilities.
- Be in coordination with broader service systems including child welfare and housing systems of care.

To ensure that funding remains prioritized for those with the highest vulnerabilities, CDSS expects that grantees use the majority of funds to support people experiencing homelessness.

### **D. Housing First**

The BFH must operate in accordance with Housing First. [WIC Section 8256](#) requires that all state-funded housing programs operate in accordance with the core components of Housing First as enumerated in [WIC Section 8255](#) and further outlined in [ACL 19-114](#).

Housing First means that individuals should be connected to housing or housing supports immediately without preconditions and unnecessary barriers. While providers must actively engage eligible families to participate in services, participants may choose not to participate, making service participation voluntary, client choice shall be respected, and applicants shall not be rejected on the basis of income, past evictions, substance use, or any other behaviors that some may interpret as a lack of "housing readiness."

The CDSS has developed and previously requested that grantees complete a Housing First Self-Assessment to support grantees in assessing their adherence to and adoption of Housing First and identify areas for development. CDSS reserves the right to request that grantees complete a Housing First Self-Assessment throughout the technical assistance process. This may be requested from grantees establishing new programs or when a Housing First practice requires improvement or refinement. As an example, a Housing First Self-Assessment for the Bringing Families Home Pilot can be found under Attachment Five of [ACWDL dated September 5, 2019](#) and was developed using:

- The Housing First core components in [WIC Section 8255](#)
- [The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness \(USICH\) Housing First checklist](#)
- [The Department of Housing and Urban Development \(HUD\) Housing First Assessment Tool](#)
- [The Corporation for Supportive Housing \(CSH\) checklist](#)

### **E. Collaboration and Integration with the Local Homeless Response System**

Partnerships and collaboration are critical to the success of BFH. Grantees operating BFH are required to collaborate and coordinate with the greater homelessness response system, including participation in the local homeless Continuum of Care (CoC) and local Coordinated Entry System (CES), as CES is locally available. Coordination across local homeless service systems as well as the child welfare system is critical to

## Attachment Two

effectively and holistically serve BFH families as well as blend and maximize community resources. The BFH programs should be actively involved in, accept referrals from, and provide referrals to the local CES and participate in planning or performance processes to improve efficiency across systems and ensure appropriate referrals are occurring. While BFH programs should accept referrals from the local CES, BFH-eligible families should not be “screened out” of BFH based on their CES acuity score unless this is the grantee’s chosen prioritization assessment, and all eligible families cannot be served.

Services provided must also be in coordination with other services being provided by child welfare services or tribes, family resource centers, family courts, and other service providers dedicated to the stability and wellbeing of the family. These may include but are not limited to, behavioral health and emergency response systems, educational systems, domestic violence agencies, juvenile dependency courts, legal aid organizations, and other relevant networks to maximize available funding and connect participants to additional resources and supportive services.

Collaboration with local Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) is also highly recommended. BFH programs are encouraged to utilize any available housing vouchers, such as HUD’s Family Unification Program vouchers or other housing resources offered by the PHA to provide housing to eligible BFH families. Grantees should also partner with tribal housing authorities and housing and homelessness agencies within incorporated cities.

Information on program collaborations will be requested in future program updates. Grantees may use BFH funds to establish specific positions to support the coordination of these systems.

### **F. Racial Equity**

The CDSS requires grantees to commit to addressing racial disproportionality for people experiencing homelessness and ensuring equitable provision of services for Black and Indigenous individuals and other people of color who are disproportionately impacted by homelessness. Black and Indigenous people experience homelessness at significantly higher rates than whites, largely due to long-standing historical and structural racism. In California, Black people account for seven percent of the general population, but represent more than 31 percent of people experiencing homelessness. The disproportionality in homelessness is a by-product of systemic inequity – the racism continues to perpetuate disparities in critical areas that impact rates of homelessness, including poverty, segregation/rental housing discrimination, incarceration, and access to health care. Additionally, children of color are overrepresented in the child welfare system including Black and Indigenous children despite requirements of the Indian Child Welfare Act.

Additionally, per [Government Code Section 8899.50](#), each county grantee must also operate its BFH in a manner that affirmatively furthers fair housing. This means that BFH must be operated in a way that takes “meaningful actions, in addition to combating discrimination, that overcome patterns of segregation and foster inclusive communities free from barriers that restrict access to opportunity based on protected characteristics.”

## Attachment Two

Grantees should review demographic data of child welfare and BFH participants and understand how program demographics compare to the racial and ethnic makeup of low income, unhoused families, and/or families in receipt of child welfare services. This information can provide initial insight on racial inequity within programming and should inform strategies for addressing racial equity. Grantees should utilize and track data to inform equitable services for families of marginalized populations including Black and Indigenous children who are overrepresented in the child welfare system. Grantees should review the reports and resources below for examples of how housing and homelessness programs have incorporated racial equity into programming. Grantees are encouraged to seek meaningful input and participation from current and former BFH recipients, including recipients of color, that go beyond identifying disparities to try to identify causes of such disparities from individuals with lived experiences. Additionally, CDSS will provide technical assistance opportunities to help counties address racial equity within BFH programming. The BFH funds can be used to support efforts such as a racial equity analysis or plans for BFH.

Grantees are encouraged to review the following reports and resources related to racial equity:

### Reports

- [Racial Inequalities in Homelessness, by the Numbers](#)
- [Supporting Partnerships for Anti-Racist Communities \(SPARC\) Phase One Study Findings](#)
- [A Brief Timeline of Race and Homelessness in America Report and Recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee on Black People Experiencing Homelessness](#)

### Resources

- [Equity-Based Decision-Making Framework](#)
- [Framework for an Equitable COVID-19 Homelessness Response](#)
- [Advancing Racial Equity through Assessments and Prioritization \(HUD\)](#)
- CA Housing and Community Development's [Guidance on Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing](#)
- CA Business Consumer Services and Housing Agency's [data portal](#)
- The Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH) [Race Equity in Housing](#)

## **III. PROGRAM ACCOUNTABILITY**

### **A. Technical Assistance**

Training and technical assistance (TA) will continue to be offered by CDSS for all grantees to help establish, develop, and improve their programs and to facilitate information-sharing across BFH programs. The TA and training opportunities include one-on-one calls, training as part of regional or topic-specific cohorts, state-wide learning sessions, in person or virtual learning forums, strategy meetings, process

## Attachment Two

[Assembly Bill 977, Chapter 397, Statutes of 2021](#) includes additional requirements of utilization of HMIS for BFH. Beginning on January 1, 2023, a county or entity operating BFH, as a condition of receiving state funds, shall enter the Universal Data Elements (Items 3.01-3.917) and the Common Data Elements (Items 4.02-4.20 and Item W5 of the Individual Federal Partner Program Elements) drawn from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development [Homeless Management Information System Data Standards](#). The BFH grantees should follow HUD guidance on HMIS project set-up for BFH as an HMIS project and collect the appropriate data elements. Grantees should collaborate with their CoC's HMIS lead to ensure proper project setup. Any grantee that does not already collect and enter these data into the local HMIS shall, upon request, receive technical assistance and guidance from staff of the California Interagency Council on Homelessness, and as available, from federal partners, including, but not limited to, the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development. To request technical assistance, grantees may either contact the Council directly at [HCFC@BCSH.ca.gov](mailto:HCFC@BCSH.ca.gov) or they may send their request to [Housing@dss.ca.gov](mailto:Housing@dss.ca.gov) and CDSS staff will coordinate the facilitation of any necessary technical assistance between the grantee and Council staff. Additional guidance regarding AB 977 requirements and implementation will be provided under separate cover.

### 4. Formal Statewide Evaluation

Grantees must also participate in activities related to any formal BFH evaluation, such as submitting data and logic models, conducting data reviews and cleaning, or participating in interviews, surveys and focus groups. Grantees are reminded that they may use BFH funds to support these requirements related to and in support of a formal evaluation.

#### **C. Program Planning and Updated Requirements (NEW)**

As described in the main body of this ACWDL, CDSS is providing counties and tribes the opportunity to accept noncompetitive allocations. Therefore, as a condition of receiving these funds, grantees will be required to provide regular program updates to demonstrate use of program funds consistent with program guidance and requirements. CDSS will request a program update using a state-provided template to be distributed six months after the FY 2021-22 funds are accepted and annually thereafter.

#### **D. Program Performance and Evaluation**

Grantees are expected to regularly measure, monitor, and communicate program impact and performance. Establishing clear targets and collecting data to measure progress is part of this process. Further guidance on program metrics will be provided as needed. The BFH programs are encouraged to consistently track progress on process and outcomes metrics such as, but not limited to:

- Number of families referred and approved for BFH
- Number of families permanently housed who retain housing for 6 and 12 months
- Child welfare service component changes while families are enrolled in BFH
- Number of families with improved service receipt and connection in BFH



## Attachment Two

mapping, case conferencing, etc. CDSS may designate specific TA or training as mandatory, including for specific staff, such as program leads.

The TA and training topics may include strategies for strengthening outreach, case management, housing navigation, prevention services, as well as local workforce development, streamlining administrative efficiencies, advancing equity on a systems level, data collection, performance monitoring and improving collaboration with the local homelessness response system. The TA and training may be conducted by CDSS or a CDSS designated contractor or partner. Additionally, programs may utilize BFH funds to provide program-specific training in areas identified by the grantee or CDSS to support continuous quality improvement.

Based on feedback from current grantees, CDSS plans to establish cross-program opportunities for TA engagement. For example, CDSS will host joint office hours to address questions across the suite of CDSS funded programs, rather than exclusively program specific meetings. Grantees are encouraged to provide feedback to CDSS on how we can structure meetings that address the needs of grantees and service providers operating the programs. Please send feedback to [housing@dss.ca.gov](mailto:housing@dss.ca.gov).

### **B. Data Reporting and Integration**

Data collection, progress monitoring, and outcome reporting are essential and mandatory elements of BFH. Data needs should be considered when deciding on staffing, training, and program design. Successful data integration goes beyond completing program data reports and requires building relationships with Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) administrators, service providers, and other entities that are part of the data integration process.

#### *1. Bringing Families Home 17 Quarterly Report*

Grantees are required to report individual level and aggregate data on a quarterly basis via the BFH 17 report which is to be submitted via the [Secure Automated File Exchange website](#). Additional information about the BFH 17 data requirements are available upon request to [housing@dss.ca.gov](mailto:housing@dss.ca.gov). Updated instructions for the BFH 17 will be released under separate cover. Grantees may be required to complete and submit additional data as specified by CDSS, and any additional data requirements established by CDSS will be done after consultation with the County Welfare Directors Association of California (CWDA), tribes, and advocates for clients. Applicants may request additional information about BFH data reporting requirements by emailing [housing@dss.ca.gov](mailto:housing@dss.ca.gov).

#### *2. Homeless Management Information System*

Effective July 1, 2020, all grantees operating a BFH are required to ensure participants served by BFH are entered into their local Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). CDSS requires this practice to ensure BFH is aligned with the broader homelessness field and to build for future data collection efficiencies in BFH.

#### *3. Assembly Bill 977 Data Reporting Requirements (NEW)*

## Attachment Two

- Participant satisfaction metrics
- Equity data, including:
  - race and ethnicity of participants,
  - disability status of participants,
  - sexual orientation and gender identity of participants,
  - primary language of participants, and
  - geographic location/distribution where housing is preserved or obtained

There are other indicators that may be helpful in evaluating program performance and impact, such as length of time between referral and enrollment, between enrollment and placement in interim housing, or number of participants housed and unhoused at program exit. These metrics may be drawn from data reported in the BFH 17 and/or other sources available to the grantee. Client stories and other qualitative information can also communicate impact, though these should be shared with client consent, dignity, and in accordance with all applicable privacy laws. CDSS recommends grantees track and review other relevant metrics related to local program needs and impact and will provide further guidance, including through technical assistance, on how to set and monitor program performance indicators.

The CDSS will conduct ongoing monitoring of program performance using the data, claiming information, and program updates submitted by grantees. Consistent with evidence-based programming, CDSS aims to utilize outcomes data to inform future funding. Therefore, grantees are encouraged to use data to conduct their own program management, oversight, and continuous quality improvement.

### **E. Program Compliance**

Should CDSS become aware that a grantee is not operating the BFH consistent with statutory requirements or formal guidance issued by CDSS, the Department will notify the grantee that they shall amend their program within a specified timeline in order to come into compliance. CDSS will provide technical assistance to support grantees and to ensure that programs are operated consistent with evidence-based practices and may request more regular program updates to reflect program compliance. CDSS, in consultation with CWDA, or in consultation with the Tribe, in the case of a Tribal grantee, reserves the right to reallocate funds if a grantee is unable to comply with program requirements within a reasonable amount of time.

Examples of non-compliance may include, but are not limited to, failing to offer housing support and assistance as described in [WIC Section 16523.1](#), within this ACWDL and ACWDL dated September 5, 2019, or violating housing first requirements as described in [WIC Section 8255](#) and [8256](#).

The CDSS acknowledges that program goals and targets, including budgeting, may be subject to change given the dynamic nature of homeless assistance. If a grantee is not able to meet the target of families to serve or is not maximizing direct financial assistance, CDSS would offer additional technical assistance to the grantee to help achieve best or promising practices in these areas.

## Attachment Two

### 1. *Notice of Program Interruption to California Department of Social Services*

Grantees must notify CDSS in writing at least 30 days in advance of any temporary or permanent interruption or end to BFH services and operations for any reason, including fully spending their allocation.

#### **IV. ADDITIONAL STATE AND FEDERAL RESOURCES TO SUPPORT BRINGING FAMILIES HOME CLIENTS**

The [FY 2021-22 California State Budget](#) also includes investments in programs across the state that may assist BFH clients. For more information on funding sources to leverage in support of BFH, please visit the [California Interagency Council on Homelessness \(Cal-ICH\), website](#) and reference the [Guide to Strategic Use of Key State and Federal Funds](#) document. Grantees are also encouraged to leverage expanded funding, services, and staff made available to other programs within the local Department of Social Services, such as the CalWORKs Housing Support Program, CalWORKs Homeless Assistance program, and the Housing and Disability Advocacy Program. Additional resources that may support BFH clients are listed below, for reference.

##### **A. CDSS Housing Resources**

- **CalWORKs Housing Support Program**

The Budget Act of 2021 appropriated \$285.0 million for the CalWORKs Housing Support Program (HSP), including the annual, ongoing appropriation of \$95.0 million, as well as a one-time appropriation of \$190.0 million available for encumbrance or expenditure over multiple years, to foster housing stability for families experiencing or at risk of homelessness in the CalWORKs program. Grantees should consider transfers to, or co-enroll with, HSP for eligible BFH families.

- **CalWORKs Homeless Assistance**

The CalWORKs Homeless Assistance (HA) Program was established to help families in the CalWORKs program meet the costs of securing or maintaining permanent housing or to provide emergency shelter when a family is experiencing homelessness. The HA includes both temporary HA, which helps families pay the costs of temporary shelter, and permanent HA, which provides financial assistance to prevent eviction or help families pay a security deposit for permanent housing. Eligible families may receive either temporary or permanent HA, or both, once in a 12-month period, with certain exceptions. Grantees should consider transfers to HA for their families exiting BFH.

- **AB 429: CalWORKs-Funded Family Reunification Services**

Assembly Bill (AB) 429, permits continuation of CalWORKs services to parents after removal of their children from the home by the Child Welfare Service Agency (CWSA). These CalWORKs-funded Welfare-To-Work services are part of a Family Reunification (FR) plan established by the county CWSA in conjunction with the Court and may continue for up to 180 consecutive days, during which time the children are considered temporarily absent from the home. The BFH administrators

## Attachment Two

should collaborate with local CalWORKs administrators to ensure programs are complimentary and coordinated in addressing family needs.

- **Project Roomkey**

Project Roomkey was established in March 2020 as part of the state response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The purpose of Project Roomkey (PRK) is to provide non-congregate shelter options for people experiencing homelessness, protect human life, and minimize strain on health care system capacity. The PRK can be a resource for BFH families in need of urgent temporary shelter in order to protect against the risk of COVID-19. The BFH administrators should collaborate with local PRK administrators to ensure programs are complimentary and coordinated in addressing family homelessness within the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **Housing and Disability Advocacy Program**

The Housing and Disability Advocacy Program (HDAP) was established to assist people experiencing or at risk of homelessness who are likely eligible for disability benefits by providing advocacy for disability benefits as well as housing supports. The HDAP offers housing related financial assistance and wrap-around supportive services, including, but not limited to: interim housing, rental assistance, housing navigation, case management, security deposits, utility payments, moving costs, legal services, and credit repair. The HDAP also provides outreach services as well as case management for connections to any additional service needs as applicable. The BFH administrators should collaborate with local HDAP administrators to ensure programs are complimentary and coordinated in addressing family homelessness.

### **B. Additional Housing and Supportive Services Resources**

- **Homekey**

The Budget includes \$2.75 billion for Homekey (Round 2) to further expand the portfolio of housing by supporting the acquisition and conversion of properties into affordable and supportive housing or interim housing. Counties should collaborate with their CoC to identify local Homekey operators and identify potential areas of collaboration, such as unit set asides for BFH participants. Information regarding [Homekey Notice of Funding Availability](#) is on the Homekey website.

- **Homeless Housing, Assistance, and Prevention Program Rounds 3 and 4**

The Budget includes \$2.0 billion one-time General Fund to the Homeless Coordinating and Financing Council, newly renamed [the California Interagency Council on Homelessness \(Cal ICH\)](#), to assist counties Continuums of Care, large cities, and federally recognized tribes with addressing homelessness in their communities.

- **California Department of Education: Homeless Education**

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act ensures the educational rights and protections of children and youth experiencing homelessness. The McKinney-Vento Act also authorizes the funding for the federal Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program. Children, youth and their families identified by local education agencies (LEAs) may be eligible for BFH. The BFH administrators should outreach to and collaborate with local LEAs to ensure processes and program plans are

## Attachment Two

aligned and eligible families are identified and offered BFH services and that programs are complimentary and coordinated in addressing family needs.

- **Emergency Rental Assistance Program**

The Emergency Rental Assistance Program makes funding available to assist households that are unable to pay rent or utilities. Two separate programs have been established under the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. The funds are provided directly to states, U.S. territories, local governments, and Indian tribes. Counties use the funds to provide assistance to eligible households through existing or newly created rental assistance programs.

- **Emergency Solutions Grants Program**

The Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) program assists in helping people to quickly regain stability in permanent housing after experiencing a housing crisis and/or homelessness. The ESG funds may be used for five program components: street outreach, emergency shelter, homelessness prevention, rapid re-housing assistance, and HMIS; as well as administrative activities.

- **Mental Health Services Act**

The Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) was passed by California voters in 2004 and is funded by a one percent income tax on personal income in excess of \$1 million per year. It is designed to expand and transform California's behavioral health system to better serve individuals with, and at risk of, serious mental health issues, and their families. The MHSA addresses a broad continuum of prevention, early intervention, and service needs and the necessary infrastructure, technology, and training elements that effectively support the public behavioral health system.

- **Behavioral Health Continuum Infrastructure Program**

The Behavioral Health Continuum Infrastructure Program (BHCIP) provides Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) with funding to award competitive grants to qualified entities to construct, acquire, and rehabilitate real estate assets, or to invest in mobile crisis infrastructure to expand the community continuum of behavioral health treatment resources. A portion of the funding is available for increased infrastructure targeted to children and youth age 25 and younger. For more information, please email [BHCIP@dhcs.ca.gov](mailto:BHCIP@dhcs.ca.gov) or visit the DHCS website.

Bringing Families Home (BFH) for CWS Allocation

Collaboration Contacts 3.2022

Organization	First	Last	Title	Address	City	ST	ZIP	Phone	Email
Adventist Health Sonora	Matthew	Rose	Community Integration Director	1000 Greenley Rd.	Sonora	CA	95370	209-536-5000	<a href="mailto:RoseMT@ah.org">RoseMT@ah.org</a>
Amador-Tuolumne Community Action Agency	Joe	Bors	Executive Director	427 N. Hwy 49, Suite 305	Sonora	CA	95370	209-533-1034	<a href="mailto:jbors@atcaa.org">jbors@atcaa.org</a>
Center for a Non Violent Community	Laura	Sunday	Community Services Director	542 W Stockton Street	Sonora	CA	95370	209-588-9305	<a href="mailto:laura@nonviolentcommunity.org">laura@nonviolentcommunity.org</a>
Central Sierra Child Support Agency	Julie	Prado	Executive Director	975 Morning Star Drive	Sonora	CA	95370	866-901-3212	<a href="mailto:julie_prado@centralsierra.cse.ca.gov">julie_prado@centralsierra.cse.ca.gov</a>
Central Sierra Continuum of Care Disability Resource Agency for Independent Living (DRAIL)	Denise	Cloward	Housing Director-ATCAA	10590 Highway 88	Jackson	CA	95642	209-223-1485	<a href="mailto:dcloward@atcaa.org">dcloward@atcaa.org</a>
Foothill Pregnancy Center	Heather	Santos	Executive Director	1101 Sylvan Ave., Suite C-105	Modesto	CA	95350	209-521-7260	<a href="mailto:heather@drail.org">heather@drail.org</a>
Give Someone a Chance	Jerad	Moss	Director	427 North Highway 49, Suite 101	Sonora	CA	95370	209-536-9262	<a href="mailto:jmoss@fpcsonora.com">jmoss@fpcsonora.com</a>
Infant-Child Enrichment Services (ICES)	Hazel	Mitchell	Chief Executive Officer	P.O. Box 272	Jamestown	CA	95327	209-588-8377	<a href="mailto:gsacceo@gsactc.org">gsacceo@gsactc.org</a>
Interfaith Community Social Services	Chris	Mackenzie	Executive Director	20993 Niagra River Drive	Sonora	CA	95370	209-533-0377	
Jamestown Family Resource Center	Cathie	Peacock	Director	P.O. Box 5070	Sonora	CA	95370	209-532-0905	<a href="mailto:cathiepeacock@yahoo.com">cathiepeacock@yahoo.com</a>
Kene Me-Wu Family Healing Center	Contessa	Pelfrey	Superintendent	10540 7th Street	Jamestown	CA	95327	209-984-4058	<a href="mailto:cpelfrey@jespanthers.org">cpelfrey@jespanthers.org</a>
Mariposa, Amador, Calaveras & Tuolumne (MACT) Health Board	Lynda	Smallendberger	Consultant	P.O. Box 4605	Sonora	CA	95370	209-984-8602	<a href="mailto:kmwfhc@sbcglobal.net">kmwfhc@sbcglobal.net</a>
Mathiesen Memorial Health Center	Mariella	Contreras	Finance Director	P.O. Box 939	Angels Camp	CA	95222	209-754-6262	<a href="mailto:mactbilling@macthealth.org">mactbilling@macthealth.org</a>
Mother Lode Job Training	John	Vass	CEO	18149 Main St. #B	Jamestown	CA	95327	209-984-4827	<a href="mailto:john.vass@carih.org">john.vass@carih.org</a>
Nancy's Hope Community Center	Lindsay	Macon	Tuolumne Center Manager	197 Mono Way, Suite B	Sonora	CA	95370	209-588-1150	<a href="mailto:lmacon@mlit.org">lmacon@mlit.org</a>
Resiliency Village				10000 Technology Drive	Columbia	CA	95310	209-533-2647	<a href="mailto:nancyshopecommunitycenter@gmail.com">nancyshopecommunitycenter@gmail.com</a>
Sierra HOPE	Mark	Dyken	Director	P.O. Box 523	Soulsbyville	CA	95372	209-396-5554	<a href="mailto:mark@clandyken.com">mark@clandyken.com</a>
The Refuge Recovery Center	Jerry	Cadotte	Director	PO Box 159	Angels Camp	CA	95222	209-736-6792	<a href="mailto:jerry@sierrahope.org">jerry@sierrahope.org</a>
Tuolumne Co. Superintendent of Schools	Chris	Khan	President	19401 Susan Way	Sonora	CA	95370	209-439-6655	<a href="mailto:chris@therefugeca.com">chris@therefugeca.com</a>
Tuolumne County Superior Court Self Help Center	Colleen	Whitlock	Student Support Svs Director (Homeless Youth Ed Rights)	175 Fairview Lane	Sonora	CA	95370	209-536-2075	<a href="mailto:cwhitlock@tcsos.us">cwhitlock@tcsos.us</a>
Tuolumne Me-Wuk Indian Health Center	Hector	Gonzalez	Court Executive Officer	12855 Justice Center Dr.	Sonora	CA	95370	209-533-6565	<a href="mailto:hgonzalez@tuolumne.courts.ca.gov">hgonzalez@tuolumne.courts.ca.gov</a>
Valley Mountain Regional Center	Lyndon	Peters	Compliance Officer	18352 Tuolumne Road, Suite 6	Tuolumne	CA	95379	209-768-0507	<a href="mailto:lyndon.peters@tmwihc.org">lyndon.peters@tmwihc.org</a>
Vets Helping Vets	Tony	Anderson	Executive Director	P.O. Box 692290	Stockton	CA	95269	209-955-3241	<a href="mailto:tanderson@vmrc.net">tanderson@vmrc.net</a>
Victory Village Veterans Center	Jason	Penrose	President, Board of Directors	P.O. Box 25	Tuolumne	CA	95379		<a href="mailto:sonoravetshelpingvets@gmail.com">sonoravetshelpingvets@gmail.com</a>
	Jason	Mulford	Chief Executive Officer	12408 Kennedy Flat Road	Jackson	CA	95642	209-223-2286	<a href="mailto:jmulford@victoryvillageamador.org">jmulford@victoryvillageamador.org</a>