

Bringing Families Home

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Forms

This policy references the following forms:

- 04-700 Bringing Families Home (BFH) Housing Program Referral
 - 04-702 Family Housing Screening Form
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Background

In 2016 in response to [Assembly Bill \(AB\) 1603 \(Chapter 25, Statutes of 2016\)](#), the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) launched a grant program for unhoused families involved with the child welfare system known as Bringing Families Home (BFH). The main goals of BFH are to reduce the number of families in the child welfare system experiencing or at risk of homelessness, increase the number of families reunifying, and to prevent foster care placement. The County of San Diego was one of the original 12 counties selected to receive the funding. Since launching in 2017 in San Diego, Child and Family Well-Being (CFWB) piloted BFH primarily in Central and South regions, serving other regions on a case-by-case basis. Funding for BFH has continued through multiple Senate Bills (SB) and Assembly Bills (AB) and in 2021 expanded BFH county-wide across the state of California. BFH is no longer a pilot program and expanded services across all San Diego County regions. However, funding is contingent on the State budget and if funding is not allotted or is decreased, the program can be at risk of sunsetting.

BFH is a rapid rehousing program that has core components of housing identification, move-in and rental assistance, and rapid rehousing case management and services. The BFH program has a low barrier in regard to criminal history which means that parents with criminal history are not disqualified. The exception would be if the crime falls under the housing authority administration plan for disqualification which is subject to change. More information will be provided to the SW during the [referral process](#) if there is a question regarding the parent's criminal history. BFH also follows a "Housing First" model to assist with achieving housing stability that is not contingent upon participation in services in their Office of Child Safety (OCS) case plan. Additionally, per [Government Code Section 8899.50](#), the BFH program is to be operated in a manner that affirmatively furthers fair housing, which includes fostering and maintaining compliance with civil rights and [fair housing laws](#). For example, a parent will not be discriminated against for housing because of race, color, national origin, religion, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), familial status and disability. For more information about fair housing laws, please click on the link above.

Background (cont.)	<p>BFH offers financial assistance and housing-related wrap-around supportive services, including, but not limited to rental assistance, housing navigation, landlord incentives, case management, security deposits, and furniture. BFH also has the ability to provide one time assistance to stabilize families and to prevent them from becoming homeless. One time assistance includes assistance with back rent, security deposits, furniture, and other assistance to stabilize the family.</p>
Policy	<p>SWs will assess families with an open OCS case in any of the following programs: Family Reunification (FR), Family Maintenance (FM), or Voluntary Services (VS) for housing needs throughout the life of the case and when there is a change in the family's housing circumstances leading to housing instability. Families receiving court ordered family reunification services who are homeless are prioritized due to the lack of housing affecting reunification with the child(ren). The family does not have to have reached a particular point in their OCS case plan or services to be referred. However, for court involved cases, SW will submit a referral after jurisdiction/disposition (J/D) has been ordered by the court.</p> <p>AB 120 expanded the definition of "child welfare services" to include in addition to families being served under OCS, families who are receiving services related to abuse or neglect concerns provided by a tribe, tribal entity or agency, in accordance with the tribal law or custom. These families may also be eligible for BFH as long as they meet other eligibility criteria listed in the next section.</p> <p>Once assigned to a BFH housing navigator, the housing navigator and the SW will remain in communication regarding case specifics and housing status. The SW will promptly inform the housing navigator of any changes or restrictions on who can reside in the home as well as changes in case recommendations, income, and new criminal history. This information is required to be reported to the housing authority timely or could jeopardize the subsidy assistance. The family will be assigned a housing navigator who will co-create a housing plan with the family and work closely with them throughout the housing process including until they are connected with housing and after their lease is signed for a unit. Unique to the BFH program, housing case management services will continue after the OCS case closes and through the length of subsidy assistance. Housing case management services provide tenancy supports such as education on following: lease agreements, paying rent when due, assisting in addressing issues with the owner/property manager, counsel on their housing rights, budget planning, exit planning, etc.</p> <p>Searching for housing is a shared task between the parent and the housing navigator. It is important for the parent to be an active participant throughout the housing location process because the housing authority limits use of the voucher to 90 days before it expires. Rental assistance voucher extensions are available on a case-by-case basis pending approval of the housing authority according to their administration plan.</p> <p>NOTE: The OCS case must be open at the time the family is approved for a voucher. The assigned BFH staff will guide SW on questions regarding the timeline.</p>

Eligibility Criteria	BFH eligibility is defined by Welfare and Institutions (WIC) Code 16523(c) as families or individuals who meet all three conditions:
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1. Receive child welfare services at the time eligibility is determined
2. Are homeless, at risk of homelessness, or living in a situation that cannot accommodate the child or multiple children in the home, including individuals who have not received an eviction notice in their current residence **and**
3. Voluntarily agree to participate in the program

In accordance [WIC 16523\(d\)](#), housing instability and homelessness are characterized by one or more of the following as an individual or family who:

- Lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence
- The primary nighttime residence 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
- Is living in a supervised shelter designed 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/sober living
- Resides in a shelter or place not meant for human habitation and is exiting an institution including but not limited to a psychiatric hospital or in custody
- Will imminently lose their existing housing if any of the following criteria are met:
 - The primary nighttime residence will be lost within 14 days, as evidenced by any of the following:
 - A court order regarding eviction notifying individual they must leave
 - Resides in a hotel or motel and unable to remain there for more than 14 days
 - Credible evidence a landlord will not allow individual to stay for more than 14 days. For the purposes of this clause, any oral statement from an individual seeking homeless assistance that is found to be credible shall be considered credible evidence. A family may self-attest that they meet the definition of "at-risk of homelessness"
 - No subsequent residence has been identified,
 - The individual or family lacks the resources and support network needed to obtain permanent housing
- Fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other dangerous life- threatening conditions that relate to violence against the individual, family member, including a child, that has either taken place within their primary nighttime residence or has made the individual afraid to return to their primary nighttime residence
- Homeless families with children who meet all of the following:
 - Have experienced a long period, typically more than one year, without living independently in permanent housing
 - Have persistent instability as measured by frequent moves over a long period

**Eligibility Criteria
(cont.)**

- Can be expected to continue in that status for extended period due to chronic disabilities, chronic physical/mental health conditions, substance use disorder, domestic or familial violence, a child with a disability, or multiple barriers to employment

A family is considered “at risk of homelessness” if they meet **all** three of the following requirements:

- Are experiencing housing instability that places them at risk of becoming homeless including those that have not yet received an eviction notice
 - Have no subsequent permanent residence secured
 - Lack resources or support networks needed to stabilize their housing situation and secure subsequent permanent housing
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Referral Process

The following table describes the process for referring a family to BFH:

Step	Who	Action
1	SW	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assess eligibility for homelessness or risk of homelessness with parent• Complete the family housing screening 04-702 and email it to the housing email inbox, for the parent closest to or most likely to reunify in FR cases or the parent the children are already placed with under FM or VS cases.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ If the other parent needs housing resources, email the housing email inbox for community housing resources
2	Housing Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review the family housing screening 04-702 and assess eligibility• Respond to the SW with the housing programs the family is eligible for along with availability, referral links and directions for how to apply to a program• If a parent does not meet eligibility for CFWB housing programs, provide community housing resources
3	SW	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review the options for CFWB housing program(s) with the parent, answer questions they have, and collaborate together on which one housing program they will be referred to

Referral Process (cont.)	Step	Who	Action
	3 (cont.)	SW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If BFH is selected, complete a BFH referral, 04-700, and submit via the BFH email inbox, within 7-10 business days
	4	BFH PSS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review BFH Referral 04-700 Contact SW within 2 business days to provide a status of the referral including if there is currently a waitlist Provide SW a list of required verifications the parent will need to obtain Once required verifications are received, assign to housing navigator within 2 business days
	5	SW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assist the parent in obtaining the required verifications within 30 days. Send the required verifications listed in the email you received from BFH PSS and cc the BFH email inbox.
	6	BFH Housing Navigator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete initial evaluation Contact the parent within 2 business days of assignment to schedule the intake and pre-enrollment meeting where they will learn about the program and begin completing BFH program paperwork. SWs will be invited to the pre-enrollment meeting and will receive a summary of the meeting by email. Keep SW informed of status updates throughout the housing process

NOTE: Families that have received CFWB housing program assistance previously will be placed on a waitlist.

Alignment with SET	This policy aligns with SET Value 1 , by partnering with the family to create long-term safety, ongoing permanency, and well-being. It also aligns with SET Value 3 by recognizing that the optimal place for children is safely in their own homes and identifying living situations that support children and their relationships as quickly as possible.
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