

CalWORKs Handbook :. 42-7.5

Family Stabilization Program for CalWORKs Clients

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Summary

The purpose of this revised handbook is to provide updated instructions for the CalWORKs Family Stabilization (FS) Program regarding communication for eligibility determination, referrals, denials and program status changes; as well as information on housing programs available to the FS participants and updates to FS business process for staff.

FS is a component of the CalWORKs Welfare to Work (WTW) program that provides intensive case management and services to families who are in a crisis situation. To be eligible for the FS program, participants must meet qualifying criteria. Referrals to the FS program shall be sent to [Hayward FSU-Mail](#) and include Family Stabilization Referral on the subject. The body of the email shall consist of case name, case number, remaining WTW 24-Month time clock, type of crisis or situation the family faced or currently facing, and contact information (if different from available record).

I. General

Alameda County implemented a Family Stabilization (FS) Program for CalWORKs families, mandated by AB 74. This program provides additional activities or services to overcome identified situation of crisis in a family. It is designed primarily to address a temporary crisis that deters the Welfare to Work (WTW) participation of the adult family member(s). FS services are provided for the adult and children in the family and can be combined with WTW activities for families who face crisis while the adult member can still participate in WTW program.

A significant difference between the FS program and services participants might otherwise receive under the WTW 24-Month Time Clock is the increased level and intensity of case management. The assigned social worker in Family Stabilization unit will make an intensive case management effort and put together a workable plan, refer client to appropriate services, provide support, follow up progress, and annotate findings in CalWIN. In situations where the collaboration of an Employment Counselor (EC) is required, the Social Worker (SW) will work closely with the EC to make the transition to and from WTW as smoothly as possible.

II. Procedure

A. Circumstances considered a situation or crisis

Any individual or family circumstance that causes instability in the family and interferes with the adult's ability to participate in and meet WTW requirements. Examples of situation or crisis include, but are not limited to:

- Homelessness or at risk of eviction
- A lack of safety due to domestic violence
- Untreated or undertreated behavioral needs, including mental health needs
- Linkages family reunification and family maintenance

B. Family Stabilization services

Additional services under the FS program include:

- Treatment for family members (intensive day treatment, non-medical outpatient treatment, and residential treatment)
- Homeless financial housing assistance
- Emergency shelter
- Movements to transition housing
- Rehabilitation services (Mental Health, Substance Abuse, Occupational Rehab, etc.)
- SSI advocacy
- Individual counseling due to lack of participation (includes noncompliance)

C. Eligibility Criteria

In order for CalWORKs WTW families to qualify for FS services, all of the following eligibility criteria must be met:

- The SW in Family Stabilization unit must determine that an identified situation or crisis will limit the ability of the adult in the family to participate in WTW activities. If applicable, participant must provide verification(s) showing the extent of the situation or crisis;
- The adult member must have time remaining on his/her WTW 24-Month Time Clock;
- Assistance Unit (AU) must contain individuals who are required to participate in the WTW program; and,
- The adult(s) in the family agrees on a Family Stabilization plan created or amended in consultation with the SW in Family Stabilization unit and EC. In a two-parent household, each parent in need of FS services will have their own FS plan.

D. Ineligible for FS

The following are ineligible for FS services:

- AUs that only include WTW clients who have exhausted the WTW 24-Month Time Clock;
- AUs that do not include a work eligible adult who is required to participate in WTW;
- Cases where all adults have exceeded the 48-month CalWORKs time limit;

- Drug and fleeing felons;
- Ineligible non-citizens;
- Non-needy caretaker relatives; and
- Adults receiving Social Security and Supplemental Security Income

III. Family Stabilization Services Referral and Eligibility Determination

Informational notice and posters will advise CalWORKs participants of the program. Participants can request a referral to the program by contacting their EC or requesting to see a SW. In addition, an EC, Eligibility Services Technician (EST) or SW may refer the participant for FS services as part of their regular case management. Other county staff members can refer families in crisis for services provided by the FS program. The referral can be made via email to the [Hayward FSU-Mail](#) and include Family Stabilization Referral on the subject.

Family Stabilization Program Requests:

Prior to sending the referring email, regulation (ACL 14-61) requires that the **Family Stabilization Evaluation Request (Form FSP 1)** be completed and signed by the participant and referring caseworker. The referring staff shall assist the participant to complete the FSP 1 evaluation request form, obtain required signature from the participant and referring caseworker, provide the original copy of the completed form to the participant and send a copy of the form to Web Files.

After the FSP 1 has been completed, the referring staff shall send the **referral email** to the [Hayward FSU-Mail](#) with the *Family Stabilization Referral* **subject line** and include the following information in the **body of the email**:

- The case name;
- Case number;
- Remaining WTW 24-Month time clock;
- Type of crisis or situation the family faced or currently facing;
- Contact information (if different from available record); and
- The location of the FSP 1.

The Family Stabilization Unit will locate FSP 1 and contact the participant within ten (10) business days.

Note: Due to some circumstances (i.e. homelessness) that may cause a participant to be referred to the Family Stabilization Program, it may take more than 10 days to establish contact and enroll participant in FS program. When appropriate, EC shall place participant in Good Cause/Deferred status for up to 3 months, if FS Unit SW notifies EC that no contact has been made with participant after 10 days.

All applications for FS services shall be directed to a SW in Family Stabilization unit. If the family has an immediate crisis, that request shall be referred using the normal process when a SW is needed.

Family Stabilization Program Denials:

If it is determined that a participant is ineligible for the Family Stabilization program, the request for FS services must be denied. The Social Worker in the Family Stabilization Unit will send the client the **Family Stabilization Program Denial Notice (FSP 2)** that includes an explanation of their denial and the client's hearing rights. Reasons for denial of FS services can include, but are not limited to, the following:

- If there is not anyone required to participate in the WTW.
- If the person required participating in WTW activities has no time left on their WTW 24-Month Time Clock.
- If the County does not have Family Stabilization services available, that fit the client's need.
- If the crisis does not meet the County's Family Stabilization program plan.

Note: Please also reference the above Section II, D for additional reasons participant(s) may be ineligible for FS.

The Social Worker enters the manual variables to generate the Family Stabilization Program Denial Notice (FSP 2) from CalWIN.

Family Stabilization Change in Program Status:

If a participant enrolled in the FS program fails to follow through their FS Plan without good cause, the **Family Stabilization Program Notice of Change in Program Status (FSP 3)** will be sent out by the Social Worker and Social Worker will update EC on change of status. Upon returning to WTW, clients may be required to amend their WTW2 plans or continue to participate in the activity they were assigned to prior to their referral to the FS program.

The Social Worker completes and sends the *Family Stabilization Program Notice of Change in Program Status (FSP 3)*.

IV. Family Stabilization Services Assessment

The SW in the Family Stabilization unit will schedule a meeting with the participant(s) within five business days after receiving a referral for Assessment. During the meeting, the SW will assess the crisis in the family by engaging the participant in a discussion aimed at understanding the type and extent of the crisis, the family member(s) affected the most and if it can be resolved using FS services (Form #[42-159](#)). The SW in Family Stabilization unit may request verification.

V. Family Stabilization Plan

The SW in the Family Stabilization unit will make a determination of whether the participant qualifies for FS services after reviewing the client's situation and examining the verifications. If participant is ineligible for the FS program, the SW in the Family Stabilization unit will provide any other support or services, if needed. If the participant is eligible, the SW in the Family Stabilization unit and the participant will work together and agree on family stabilization activities and services appropriate for the family. The county and the adult family member(s) shall sign the FS plan before it is implemented. FS participants are not subject to WTW minimum hourly participation requirements; however, participants in FS must meet the requirements of the FS plan with the assistance of FS case management.

Note: In a two-parent household where each parent has their own FS plan, but one parent fails to participate in FS, the SW will end the FS plan and refer that parent back to WTW to sign a WTW2 plan. The SW will continue to work with the other parent as long as he/she is in need and follows through with their FS plan. Furthermore, noncompliance is not initiated for failed FS plans, however, if the parent fails to sign the WTW2 Plan, then noncompliance shall be initiated.

For clients who sign a FS plan that needs to be implemented concurrently with other WTW activities, a copy of the FS plan shall be sent to the assigned EC.

A. Homeless or at Risk of Eviction

Homeless CalWORKs WTW families at risk of becoming homeless may be eligible for limited financial assistance for up to 4 months. The housing assistance available in the FS program is intended to provide permanent housing stability for the family. Families at risk of becoming homeless include those who receive an eviction notice, or those who are behind in rent and may be subject to eviction. Families in this group must provide verification of eviction or homelessness.

In addition, the SW in Family Stabilization unit may refer eligible CalWORKs WTW families to the following homeless assistance services:

1. CalWORKs Homeless Assistance Program (HA) - Provides a continuous period of assistance for eligible homeless families. This assistance provides Permanent and Temporary Homeless assistance to CalWORKs eligible families. For further information on HA refer to CalWORKs Handbook 44-2.7 Homeless Assistance.
2. The Alameda County Client Assistance Fund (CAF) - Provides homeless assistance and other financial services to victims of domestic violence. For more information refer to CalWORKs Newsletter 16-05 (Issuing Gift Cards for CalWORKs Domestic Violence Clients).
3. Housing Support Program (HSP) - Assists homeless CalWORKs clients with housing stability case management, and housing search and placement services. HSP can provide temporary financial rental/utility/moving assistance to participants on a short or medium-term basis. The level of financial assistance is determined on a need basis.

CalWORKs clients who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness, who are not eligible for other housing support programs can be referred by using the CW HSP-CDA Referral Form 40-96

The FS Housing Assistance eligibility amount shall not exceed 80% of families Total Monthly Household Income (TMHI). The FS Housing Assistance can be paid for up to 4 months and may be paid all at once or in installments. The four months do not have to be consecutive.

Note: The TMHI for an AU does not include CalFresh, CalWORKs Special Needs and SSI/SSP income (ACL 06-25, 06-58).

All participants who are determined eligible for the FS Housing Assistance must attend a Financial Literacy Workshop prior to receiving funding. The Financial Literacy Workshop will be conducted through SSA provided workshops or partnering agencies and shall be incorporated in the FS plan. The SW will verify that the participant attended the workshop by obtaining the attendance sheet. Participants will be required to submit receipts that verify the housing costs have been paid in full. Failure to provide receipts within 30 calendar days will result in an overpayment.

B. Mental Health Services

A CalWORKs family may have a situation where a family member experiences a mental disturbance that makes it difficult for the adult WTW participant to focus on assigned activities. The adult participant may need to take care of a family member and/or follow up with service providers. Alternatively, the adult participant could be in crisis himself/herself that needs mental health services before being able to participate in WTW. Applicants of mental health services must provide verification if the person affected is currently attending recovery activities.

The FS program provides a short-term intervention, not exceeding six months, to relieve the family member from identified situation/crisis and return the WTW participant on track to complete assigned activities. The services available to address mental health issues include, but are not limited, to intensive day treatment, residential and outpatient treatment, counselling and referral to rehabilitative services. Refer to WTW Handbook 42-7.6 for detailed information on Behavioral Health Services.

C. Domestic Violence Services

Victims of domestic violence can be referred for additional FS services by a SW. Before the SW refers individuals to the FS program, he/she has to make sure that current domestic violence services are not meeting the needs of the family. A determination shall be made by the SW that additional activities or services would enhance the family's ability to achieve stability within a short period. Domestic Violence services are provided for a maximum of six months in FS program. Refer to WTW Handbook 42-7.7 and 42-7.6 for detailed information on Domestic Violence Services.

D. Linkages Cases

Families that are currently in the Linkages program may require additional services that enhance family stability. EC's assigned to manage linkages cases will identify such cases and make a referral to the SW in Family Stabilization unit.

E. CalWORKs SSI Advocacy

If individuals are determined to need continued assistance due to limitations on their physical or mental health, the SW in the FS unit will refer them to SSI advocacy unit. This referral should be part of the FS plan. Forms CW 61 and 50-164 are required. Ancillary expenses shall be made available to facilitate the SSI advocacy progress (i.e. transportation to medical appointments etc.).

F. Non-Complaint Clients

Individuals who fail to comply frequently on their welfare to work activities may be referred to the FS program. Depending on the uniqueness of the reason(s), the EC shall refer the individual to the SW in the Family Stabilization unit who will determine on a case by case basis the appropriate support they may provide.

Example of a case that may be referred:

An individual who has received a couple of good cause reasons for not coming to an Orientation appointment. Each time the individual states they cannot attend because of a sick child. A referral can be made to determine how we can assist the child. A referral to IHSS may be necessary if the SW discovers the individual may be needed in the home to care for the child.

VI. Ancillary Funds

Depending on the uniqueness of the crises encountered in each family, other ancillary expenses outside of the WTW qualifying expenses may be authorized. These expenses shall be determined and authorized on a case by case basis, if the SW determines that the funds will assist the individual to participate in the WTW Program. Expenses determined to be more than \$500 will require the approval of the Social Worker Supervisor. Examples of ancillary payments include, but not limited to:

- A domestic violence victim having lost of all property may request financial assistance for clothing, pair of shoes, transportation, etc.
- A linkages case requesting financial assistance for an accommodation of a returning child.
- A non-compliant client asking for a one-time pair of reading glasses.

The payments for the FS program will be done via the Employment Services Subsystem in CalWIN.

An activity type (Family Stabilization) is available in CalWIN for the SW to select. This will distinguish the FS program funding and activity sources from the WTW program.

The SW will have the responsibility of both opening and closing the ancillary funds activity in CalWIN as soon as payment is issued.

VII. Family Stabilization Process

A. Clerical Staff

1. Refer clients who express interest in the FS program to the EC of record or a SW if immediate referral is needed.

B. Employment Counselor (EC)

1. Identify families that potentially qualify for the FS program;
2. Assist participant in completing the Family Stabilization Evaluation Request (Form FSP 1) and get the form signed by the participant and referring caseworker. Provide the original copy of the completed form to the participant and send a copy to Web Files.
3. Refer the individual to the SW in the Family Stabilization unit.
4. Send the referral email to Hayward FSU-Mail with the subject line "*Family Stabilization Referral*" and include the following information in the body of the email:
 - The case name and case number;
 - Remaining WTW 24-Month time clock;
 - Type of crisis or situation the family faced or currently facing;
 - Contact information (if different from available record); and

- The location of the completed FSP 1.

5. Receive update from FS Unit if SW is unable to establish contact with participant after ten (10) days from initial referral, to determine if participant shall be placed in Good Cause/Deferred status until the FS Plan is signed or up to 3 months.

Note: Case must not be transferred to a Family Stabilization Employment Counselor until notified by FS unit that an FS plan has been signed. If participant is in Good Cause/Deferred status, status shall end once FS plan is signed or if participant is denied for FS services.

6. Maintain the current activities in the WTW case (i.e. provide supportive services, update attendance for current VTR activity);
7. Will collaborate with the SW in the Family Stabilization Unit to assist with the transition or inclusion of the FS plan;
8. Will maintain any activities that are recommended in the FS plan that are approved in the WTW2 plan;
9. Develop a new or amend WTW plan, as appropriate;
10. If cases are determined to need a WTW exemption, enter the appropriate CalWIN entries and communicate with the EST, via form 42-6, to stop the appropriate time clock(s); (Refer to Welfare-to-Work Handbook 42-7.2: Exemptions and Good Cause / Deferral Reasons in the Welfare-to-Work Program)
 - Provide deferrals if applicable
11. Enter Case Comments in CalWIN.

Note: SW in the Family Stabilization Unit will be responsible for updating Family Stabilization statuses in CalWIN, maintaining communication with assigned EC, and providing any supportive services (i.e. transportation and child care) related to the FS plan that is not related to the current WTW plan. The WTW program will continue to be assigned to an EC during this process.

C. Social Worker Supervisor

1. Retrieve all referrals to the unit
2. Assign referred cases to social workers in the unit.
3. Notify Clerical staff and EC Supervisor of acceptance of FS referral to assign case to appropriate EC.
4. Maintain monthly report and log of referrals assigned to FS Unit Social Workers.
5. Review and authorize Vendor payments when appropriate.
6. Review FS case closures.
7. Forward requests to add providers in CalWIN and forward to clerical.
8. Complete Family Stabilization Program (FSP) 14 Quarterly Report.
9. Communicate and collaborate with WBA staff and Service Providers regarding FS program.

D. Social Worker in Family Stabilization Unit

1. Contacts participant(s) to see if there is an immediate need to be addressed. Facilitate the services by contacting the providers on the client's behalf;
2. Locate FSP 1 and contact the participant within 10 business days.
3. If unable to reach participant after ten (10) days from initial referral, contact EC of record to advise that, if appropriate, participant be placed in Good Cause/Deferred status.
4. Send an "Assessment Appointment" Letter with an appointment date and time. Include the type of verification to be submitted during the Assessment Appointment;
5. Assess the extent of crisis the family has encountered with the client (Form #42-159) and reference available documents, if any;
6. Develop a FS plan (Form #42-158) that addresses the identified crisis or situation within ten days of the Assessment;
7. Determine if the client is exempt from WTW participation while engaging the family in stabilization activities;
 - o Notify the EC of record to exempt or defer the individual
8. Enter FS plan in CalWIN. Print two hard copies of Form #42-158 for the client to sign;
9. Sign an agreed upon plan;
10. Provide copies of the FS plan to the client and forward to WebFiles
 - o EC will get a copy of the FS plan if there are any changes to the current WTW plan
 - o If verification of exemption is not in WebFiles, attach the verification in the communication with EC.
11. Refer and schedule participant in CalWIN to the appropriate service provider(s);
12. Update participant's progress in CalWIN with Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory progress, unless participant is exempt.
13. Assist family to secure emergency shelter or transitional housing, as needed;
14. Authorize FS financial housing assistance to homeless families and families at risk of being evicted, as needed;
15. Authorize transportation, child care and all other supportive services, as needed;
16. Ensure the participant is meeting the agreed upon goals;
17. Conduct a home visit as necessary to assess the progress made, and discuss any challenges faced during the FS process;
18. Send out notices to clients at all applicable stages of the FS process (this can include Family Stabilization Program Denial Notices and FS Change in Program Status Notices);
19. Enter Case Comments at all applicable stages of the FS process

References

[ACL 14-12](#) CalWORKs Family Stabilization Program
ACL 14-61. Family Stabilization Program Guidance, Notices and Request Forms

[All County Letter \(ACL\) 06-25](#)
[All County Letter \(ACL\) 06-58](#)