

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 **additional** instructions for the CalWORKs Family Stabilization (FS) Program regarding communication for eligibility determination, referrals, **and** updates to FS business process for staff.

Updates are in blue.

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 **or experiencing barriers that make it difficult to participate in WTW**. The goal of the program is to **assist participants with crisis and/or barrier mitigation in order to successfully complete the WTW Program and achieve self-sufficiency through employment and increased client engagement through the CalWORKs 2.0 (CW 2.0) approach**.

The CalWORKs 2.0 (CW 2.0) approach incorporates strategies and tools that help families set and achieve reachable goals while considering the participant's strengths and any barriers they may face. These approaches and tools aid staff in increasing client engagement, applying more intentional service selection, addressing the family's need and shifting to a more "client-led" and goal-oriented case management approach.

I. General:

Effective July 1, 2014, Alameda County implemented a Family Stabilization (FS) Program for CalWORKs families, mandated by **Assembly Bill (AB) 74 (Chapter 21, Statutes of 2013)**. This program provides **participants with services to help families overcome an identified crisis by assigning them to activities that aid in mitigation or removal. Its primary design is to address a temporary crisis that hinders the adult family member(s) WTW participation**. FS services are **available** for the adult(s) and children in the family. **FS services** can be combined with WTW activities for the adult family member who may still participate in the WTW program while also participating in the FSP.

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 designated Social Worker in Family Stabilization Unit will make an intensive case management effort and put together a Family Stabilization Plan, refer client to appropriate services, provide support, follow up **on the participant's** progress, and annotate findings in CalWIN. The Employment Counselor (EC) **and** the Social Worker (SW) work **in collaboration** to make the transition to and from WTW as smoothly as possible.

Participation in FS services will stop a client's WTW 24-Month Time Clock for up to six cumulative months if it is determined that the participant is unable to meet their required hours in WTW and would meet the good cause criteria. FS services may also be provided to clients who would at initial

engagement need assistance to transition into a WTW Plan. The length of time clients remain in FS is dependent upon the individual circumstance of each family.

II. Procedure

A. Circumstances considered a **barrier** 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 **barrier** 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

B. Family Stabilization services:

Services under the FS program include, **but are not limited to**:

- Treatment for family members (intensive day treatment, non-medical outpatient treatment, and residential treatment)
- Homeless financial housing assistance
- Emergency shelter
- **Transitional Housing Assistance**
- Rehabilitation services (i.e. Mental Health, Substance Abuse, Occupational Rehab, etc.)
- SSI advocacy
- Individual counseling due to lack of participation (includes noncompliance)
- **Housing Supportive Services (utility payments, moving cost assistance, etc.)**
- **Hotel Assistance**
- **Transportation**

C. Eligibility Criteria:

To qualify for FS services, **CalWORKs WTW families must meet** all the following eligibility criteria:

- The SW in **the** Family Stabilization Unit must determine that an identified **barrier** or crisis will limit the ability of the adult in the family to participate in WTW activities. If applicable, participant must provide verification(s) **that shows** the extent of the barrier or crisis;
 - Some examples of verification may include, but are not limited to the following:
 - Police reports, restraining order, sworn statement for DV situations
 - 3-Day notice for participants at risk of eviction
 - Signed lease for security deposit/move-in costs

Note: Check available resources (i.e. WebFiles) for verification. Sworn statements may be used on a case-by-case basis as a last resort.

- The adult member must have time remaining on **their** WTW 24-Month Time Clock;
- Assistance Unit (AU) must contain individuals who are required to participate in the WTW program. **This includes AUs in which the only adult is:**
 - **Non-compliant;**
 - **Sanctioned; or**
 - **A recent non-citizen entrant.**
- The adult(s) in the family agree on a Family Stabilization Plan created or amended in consultation with the SW in Family Stabilization Unit and **the** EC. In a two-parent household, each parent in need of FS services will have their own FS Plan.

Note: Additional person(s), including a person(s) outside of the AU may receive FS services if there is at least one WTW mandatory adult in the family. The services provided to the additional person(s) must be related to the crisis preventing the WTW mandatory adult from participation in their WTW 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;
- Ineligible non-citizens;
- Non-needy caretaker relatives; and
- Adults receiving Supplemental Security Income

III. Family Stabilization Services Referral and Eligibility Determination

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 should include Family Stabilization Referral on the subject line.

There is no limit on the number of times an AU can be referred to, or participate in the FSP as long as the AU meets the eligibility criteria and has been identified as experiencing a crisis or barrier that is destabilizing the family and would interfere with adult's ability to participate in WTW activities and services. The length of time clients remain in FS is dependent upon the individual circumstance of each family, however participation in FS services will only stop a client's WTW 24-Month Time Clock for up to six cumulative months if unable to participate in WTW and would meet the good cause criteria.

Individuals who are exempt or excused from participation in WTW are eligible to participate in FS as an exempt volunteer if the EC or SW determines that participation in FS will enable future participation in WTW.

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 with completing 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 Family Stabilization Referral on the subject line. The following information shall be included in the body of the email:

- The case name;
- Case number;

- **Time Remaining on the** WTW 24-Month time clock;
- Type of crisis or **barrier** the family faced or is currently **facing**;
- Contact information (if different from available record); and
- The location of the FSP 1. **(FSP 1 may be scanned and attached to the email)**

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

All **referrals** for FS services shall be directed to a SW in Family Stabilization unit. If the family has an immediate crisis, **the** 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:

- **No adult in the AU is** required to participate in the WTW.
- **The** person required **to participate** in WTW activities has no time left on their WTW 24-Month Time Clock.
- The County does not have Family Stabilization services available that fit the client's need.
- The crisis does not meet the County's Family Stabilization **Program criteria**.
- **Client Request**

***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 **on** their FS Plan without good cause, the **Family Stabilization Program Notice of Change in Program Status (FSP 3)** will be **completed and** sent out by the Social Worker. **The** Social Worker will update **the** EC on **the** 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 prior to their **FS program** referral.

IV. Family Stabilization Services Assessment:

The SW in the Family Stabilization **Unit shall** schedule **an assessment appointment** with the participant(s) within five business days after receiving a referral. During the **appointment**, the SW will assess the crisis **or barrier**, using **Form #42-159 Family Stabilization Assessment**, by engaging the participant in a discussion **to better** understand the type and extent of the **barrier/crisis**, **its effect on** family member(s) and **to determine** if it can be resolved using FS services). The SW in Family Stabilization Unit may request verification **of the crisis/barrier**.

Once a participant is ready to transition from FS back to WTW due to the crisis or barrier being resolved, the SW will determine if a referral for a WTW assessment is necessary.

- If a client is participating in FS as an early engagement activity and no assessment for WTW has been completed, then the SW shall provide a referral to assessment at the conclusion of their participation in FS. SW shall document a referral for assessment in case comments.
- If the client has completed an assessment prior to their participation in FS, the SW shall review and make a recommendation for the EC to review and determine if the individual's prior WTW plan is still appropriate. If as a result of FS, their situation has changed the individual may require reassessment and a new WTW plan. The SW shall make a recommendation in case comments for the EC to determine if re-assessment and an amended WTW plan is necessary.

V. Family Stabilization Plan:

The SW in the Family Stabilization Unit shall determine if the client qualifies for FS services after reviewing their situation and examining the verifications. If the client is ineligible for the FS program, the SW in the Family Stabilization Unit will provide resources or referrals, if needed. If the client is eligible, the SW in the Family Stabilization unit and the client will work together to create a Family Stabilization Plan that includes activities and services appropriate for the family. The SW and the adult family member(s) shall sign the FS plan before it is implemented. FS participants are not subject to the WTW minimum hourly participation requirements; however, participants in FS must meet their FS Plan requirements with the SW's support as part of FS case management.

Note: In a two-parent household where each parent has their own FS plan, but one parent fails to meet the requirements of their FS Plan, 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 they are in need and follows through with their FS plan. It should also be noted that noncompliance is not initiated for failed FS plans, however, if the parent fails to sign the WTW2 Plan, then noncompliance shall be initiated by the assigned EC.

A copy of the FS Plan shall be sent to the assigned EC for clients whose FS plan will be implemented concurrently with other WTW activities.

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, 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 **shall be based on the client's needs**.

Note: CalWORKs clients who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness, and who are not eligible for other housing support programs can be referred to HSP by using the CW HSP-CDA Referral [Form 40-96](#). **Slots for participation in the HSP are limited. When available, Social Workers (SWs) will be notified.**

The FS Housing Assistance eligibility amount shall not exceed 80% of a **family's** Total Monthly Household Income (TMHI). **Eligible FS participants can receive** FS Housing Assistance for up to 4 months. **FS Housing Assistance payments may be paid all at once or in installments. FS Housing Assistance may be extended beyond the 4 months, if needed, on a case-by-case basis.** 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 FS Housing Assistance must attend a Financial Literacy Workshop prior to receiving **funds**. The Financial Literacy Workshops 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 (**i.e. rent/utility/deposit**) have been paid in full. Failure to provide receipts within 30 calendar days **may** result in **a Special Investigations Unit (SIU) referral initiated by the SW**.

B. Mental Health Services

The services available to address mental health issues include, but are not limited to intensive day treatment, residential and outpatient treatment, counseling and referral to rehabilitative services. (Refer to [Welfare to Work Handbook : 42-7.61 Behavioral Health Supportive Services](#)). A CalWORKs family may have a situation where a family member experiences a mental **health crisis** 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 **and** needs mental health services before being able to participate in WTW. **Behavioral health supportive services (BHSS) applicants** must provide verification if the person affected is currently attending BHSS activities.

The FS program provides short-term intervention, not exceeding six months, to relieve the family member **from an identified barrier/crisis**. **FS services will support** the participant **in returning to WTW** to complete assigned activities.

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, **they should make certain** 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. CalWORKs SSI Advocacy

If it is determined that individuals need continued assistance due to their physical or mental health limitations, the SW in the FS unit will refer them to the 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.) Refer to [Generic Processes Handbook 50-0.44 Process for SSI Advocacy](#).

E. Non-Compliant 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 few good cause reasons for not going to an Orientation appointment. Each time, the individual states they cannot attend because of a sick child. An FS referral can be made to determine how we can assist the child. A recommendation to receive In Home Support Services (IHSS) may be necessary if the SW discovers the individual may be needed in the home to care for the child (Refer to [In-Home Supportive Services Handbook 38-1.10: In-Home Supportive Services Application Process](#) for more detailed information).

F. WTW Sanctioned Clients

If a client is currently in sanction status due to their failure to comply with their WTW program requirements, and it is found that they meet the FS eligibility criteria, an FS Plan can be signed in lieu of a WTW compliance or curing plan to lift their sanction. The participant will then be required to follow their FS Plan and their sanction will be cured. The participant's portion of the cash grant will be restored the first of the following month after their FS Plan is signed.

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 Work 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, a pair of shoes, transportation, etc.
- 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 Family Stabilization [Program](#).
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;
 - [Time](#) remaining [on their](#) WTW 24-Month time clock;
 - Type of crisis or [barrier](#) the family faced or currently facing;
 - Contact information (if different from available record); and
 - The location of the completed FSP 1. ([FSP 1 may be scanned and attached to the email](#))
5. Receive update from FS Unit if SW is unable to establish contact with the 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.
 - [If participant is sanctioned:](#)
 - [SW will notify EC once an FS Plan has been developed and signed](#)
 - [EC shall cure the WTW sanction once notified an FS Plan has been signed](#)
 1. [Aid shall be restored the first of the following month after their FS Plan is signed](#)

Note: Cases must not be transferred to a Family Stabilization Employment Counselor until notified by [the FS Unit](#) that an FS Plan has been signed. If [the](#) participant is in Good Cause/Deferred status, [that](#) status shall end once [the FS Plan](#) is signed or if [the](#) 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. [Collaborate](#) with the SW in the Family Stabilization Unit to assist with the transition or inclusion of the FS Plan;
8. [Maintain](#) any activities recommended in the FS Plan that are approved in the WTW2 plan;
9. Develop a new or amend [the](#) 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's in the Family Stabilization Unit will be responsible for updating Family Stabilization

statuses in CalWIN, maintaining communication with the 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 for [case to be](#) assigned 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 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 [client](#) to see if there is an immediate need to be addressed [and to provide them with an overview of the FSP](#). Assists clients with services by contacting the providers on the client's behalf;
2. Locate the FSP 1 and contact the [client 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, [the client should](#) 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 [with the client](#) the extent of [the barrier or](#) crisis the family has encountered [using \(Form #42-159\)](#) and reference any available supportive documents
6. [Coordinate with the client to develop](#) a FS Plan ([Form #42-158](#)) that addresses the identified crisis or barrier within [ten](#) days of the Assessment;
7. Determine if the client is exempt from WTW participation while engaging the family in stabilization activities;
 - Notify the EC of record to exempt or defer the client
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;
 - [If participant is WTW Sanctioned:](#)
 - [Notify EC of the signed FS plan in order to have the sanction cured](#)
 - [Aid shall be restored the first of the following month after their FS Plan is signed](#)
10. Provide [a copy](#) of the [FS Plan](#) to the client and forward to WebFiles
 - EC will get a copy of the FS Plan if there are any changes to the current WTW plan
 - If verification of exemption is not in WebFiles, attach the verification in the communication with EC.
11. [Inform the EC of program exemptions, WTW participation recommendations, referrals or supportive services needs via the Social Worker Determination of CalWORKs Domestic Abuse Form \(50-172\)](#)
12. Refer and schedule participant in CalWIN under the appropriate service provider(s);
 - [For Rehabilitation Services refer to Welfare to Work Handbook : 42-7.61 Behavioral Health Supportive Services](#)

13. Update participant's progress in CalWIN with Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory progress, unless participant is exempt.
14. Assist family [with relocation \(in or out of the county\)](#), secure emergency shelter or transitional housing, as needed;
15. Authorize FS financial housing assistance to homeless families and families at risk of being evicted, as needed;
16. Authorize transportation, childcare and all other supportive services, as needed;
17. Ensure the participant [is completing the assigned activities and is](#) meeting the agreed upon goals;
18. Conduct a home visit as necessary to assess the progress made, and discuss any challenges faced during the FS process;
19. 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 Status Notices);
20. . Enter Case Comments at all applicable stages of the FS process.

References

ACIN I-64-15

[ACL 14-12](#) CalWORKs Family Stabilization Program

ACL 14-61. Family Stabilization Program Guidance, Notices and Request Forms
ACL 14-100

ACL [06-25](#)

ACL [06-58](#)

CFL 14/15-19

CFL 20/21-21

[In-Home Supportive Services Handbook 38-1.10.: In-Home Supportive Services Application Process](#)
[Welfare to Work Handbook : 42-7.61 Behavioral Health Supportive Services](#)
[CalWORKs Newsletter 16-01 CalWORKs Housing Support Program Referrals](#)