

HOW CALIFORNIA IS USING TANF TO END HOMELESSNESS

The State of California recognizes that housing is a key component of families’ health, economic and social well-being. In order to meet this need, the state is using a rapid re-housing approach to provide housing for families experiencing homelessness and has created a new program within Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) to pay for it.

The program is called **California’s Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) Housing Support Program (HSP)**. In 2014, California competitively awarded \$20 million to 20 county agencies administering the TANF program. Due in part to high demand for HSP, the state expanded the program in 2015, allocating \$35 million to 44 counties. In 2016, California further expanded HSP to \$46.7 million,

Rapid re-housing is an important tool in the response to homelessness. It places a priority on moving a family experiencing homelessness into permanent housing as quickly as possible, ideally within 30 days. The three core components of rapid re-housing are housing identification, rent and move-in assistance, and rapid re-housing case management and services.

Using the rapid re-housing model, California counties have innovated locally to address family homelessness. Data from fiscal year 2014-2015, and partial data from 2015-2016, indicate HSP housed over 4,000 families.

This brief outlines three counties’ efforts in rapid re-housing. Overall, given the short-term nature of financial assistance, counties have included a strong focus on connecting parents to employment. Some counties have reserved subsidized employment slots for families participating in the rapid re-housing program.

I HOW THEY DID IT IN YOLO COUNTY

Yolo County leaders have described HSP as the “missing link for many families.” Key elements to the county’s success in implementing HSP include a dedicated staff, a strong employment component, the ability to successfully link with other services in the community and the support of elected officials.

The county’s HSP helps homeless families stabilize into permanent housing first, so that they can then focus on employment and other barriers to a stable housing platform. The program provides the three core components of rapid re-housing: housing identification, rent and move-in assistance, and case management and services. The Yolo County program is implemented by TANF staff members who work in close coordination with other county and community partners.



Find out more about [Rapid Re-Housing Core Components](#).

- [Resources on Rapid Re-Housing for California County Welfare Departments](#)
- [Making Effective Use of TANF to End Homelessness](#)

ELIGIBILITY FOR THE YOLO COUNTY HSP

A participating family must:

- Receive CalWORKs
- Reside in Yolo County
- Be experiencing homelessness (living in emergency shelter, transitional housing or in an unsheltered location).

SERVICES PROVIDED THROUGH THE PROGRAM

Housing Identification

Yolo County TANF staff provide housing location and lease negotiation assistance to families. The program also provides assistance with landlord mediation, conflict resolution and eviction prevention. Building relationships with landlords has been a key focus.

Rent and Move-In Assistance

HSP in Yolo County can provide financial assistance to cover a range of household needs, such as:

- Move in costs (security deposit, application or credit check fees)
- Cost of making homes habitable (including purchase of basic furniture and appliances)
- Temporary shelter for up to 14 days until suitable permanent housing is located
- Up to six months of rent assistance, including lot rental for RV or manufactured homes;
- Up to six months of utility assistance, including set up fees (e.g. deposits for utilities)
- Legal fines and fees

The program assesses the level of ongoing financial assistance a family needs, providing “just enough” for the family to maintain permanent housing. Eligibility for rental and utility assistance can be extended beyond six months, and shelter stays beyond 14 days.

Rapid Re-Housing Case Management and Services

Yolo County TANF develops a Housing Stability Plan for each family. All participants receive intensive case management services and support to help connect them to other needed county and community service programs. Eligible participants will be strongly encouraged (but not required) to participate in the “The California Family Stabilization Program” on page 4.

The program focuses on integrating services with other agency and community based programs. Subsidized employment has been a key component; employment and work readiness are viewed as critical to support a family’s ability to maintain long-term housing. Families receiving financial assistance under the Housing Stability Plan are asked to save between 10 and 30 percent of their monthly income while receiving assistance.

OTHER INNOVATIONS

Yolo County also participates in two important activities:

- **The California Linkages Project** improves coordination in case planning and leverages resources for those families accessing both the CalWORKs and child welfare systems. The ability to provide rapid re-housing services to homeless families involved in these programs is likely to improve the performance of both systems. Shortened homeless episodes may also mean children and families are reunited sooner.
- **The CalWORKs Diversion program** allows county TANF agencies to provide a one-time, lump sum payment to prevent a family from needing to apply for the CalWORKs program. This funding resource (using short-term, non-recurrent funds) can be used alongside other funding resources to rapidly re-house homeless families.¹

See Yolo County’s plan at: <http://www.cdss.ca.gov/calworks/res/pdf/HSP/YoloHandbook.pdf>.

¹For more information, see TANF-ACF-IM-2013-01 (Use of TANF Funds to Serve Homeless Families and Families at Risk of Experiencing Homelessness): <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa/resource/tanf-acf-im-2013-01>

Yolo County Department of Employment and Social Service’s HSP proposal was approved with an allocation of \$813,142 for FY 2014-15.

Since the first allocation in September 2014, 109 families have been permanently housed and 282 families have been approved for housing, including 566 minors.

I HOW THEY DID IT IN SANTA CLARA COUNTY

Santa Clara County's HSP is demonstrating it can use rapid re-housing to promote housing stability for homeless families receiving TANF cash assistance. **Key elements to success for the program include the strong commitment of staff, effective partnerships to provide services, the flexibility of program supports, the ability to leverage other funding sources and a focus on employment and wraparound services to ensure family stability.**

The county first received an allocation through CalWORKs in 2014 and expanded its efforts in 2015. The County's Department of Employment and Benefit Services, the Office of Supportive Housing, along with Abode Services — an experienced rapid re-housing provider and county rental assistance program administrator — administer the program. The target population for HSP includes CalWORKs families experiencing homelessness.

SERVICES PROVIDED THROUGH THE PROGRAM

Housing Identification

The County works to ensure that housing identification is a collaborative effort between the family and the housing team.

The housing team assists with mediation and outreach to landlords, helps families understand leases, and helps with moving arrangements.

Rent and Move-In Assistance

Typically, the county provides households with double deposit, first month's rent and a subsidy for one to three months, with subsidy depth determined at assessment. They then reassess households every three months throughout their participation in the program.

Rapid Re-Housing Case Management and Services

Wraparound services are key to family stability. Families receive a range of services from HSP as well as other county programs including cash assistance, moving expenses, child care, clothing and employment supports. The program also leverages "[The California Family Stabilization Program](#)" on page 4 resources, which are primarily used for homelessness prevention.

The county also has a one-stop employment center, where HSP staff are co-located, providing a range of employment services, including job search, job placement and subsidized employment.

LIMITED AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Identifying affordable housing is a challenge for the county, whose rents are currently at a historic high. In fact, finding employment used to be the main issue for low-income families at risk of homelessness. Now, with increasing rents, identifying affordable housing is the primary hurdle. To address this challenge, the county offers finder's fees to families who are able to obtain their own units; developed tools to help work with landlords who have concerns about credit issues and eviction histories; is exploring a variety of shared housing options; and has hired a housing liaison to identify strategies for increasing landlord participation in the program.

I HOW THEY DID IT IN SAN DIEGO COUNTY

San Diego County's HSP is successfully achieving housing stability for homeless families receiving TANF cash assistance through rapid re-housing. **Key elements to success for the program include working with an experienced provider, tailoring case management to meet the needs of the family and designing a holistic program that addresses the core components of the rapid re-housing model.**

Santa Clara County was approved with an allocation of **\$1.5 million** for FY 2014-15 and continued funds for FY 2015-16 and 16-17.

Since implementation in November 2014 to August 2016 **159** families have been placed into permanent housing. The goal is to place **70** additional families between now and June 2017.

The program is administered by the Community Action Partnership, a division of the County's Health and Human Services Agency. It first received an allocation in 2014 and expanded the following year. The target population for HSP includes CalWORKs families experiencing homelessness, nearly 70 percent of whom reside in the city limits. Clients must agree to develop and comply with a housing plan to participate.

SERVICES PROVIDED THROUGH THE PROGRAM

Housing Identification

The program provides assistance with housing navigation, landlord recruitment and identifying permanent housing options.

Rent and Move-In Assistance

Clients receive financial assistance to cover move in-costs, deposits and utility payments. The program can also provide assistance to cover bridge housing for families while they wait for permanent housing. A rental subsidy of up to 80 percent of the total rent is available and the total financial assistance available per family is \$4,300, unless a provider approves an exception.

Rapid Re-Housing Case Management and Services

Wraparound services are key to family stability. Families receive a range of services from HSP as well as The program provides intensive case management, including the initial assessment of housing barriers, development of a housing plan, financial literacy and coaching and assistance with legal issues.

CHALLENGES

Identifying housing is a key challenge for the county, in which the average studio apartment is \$1,000 and a two-bedroom can cost \$1,600. Intensive landlord recruitment efforts have helped to address this concern. The county is also working to improve its data management for use in evaluating program performance.

San Diego County was approved with an allocation of **\$500,000** for FY 2014-15 and **\$1 million** continued funds for FY 2015-16.

During the first year of the program, the county served **66** families, of whom **47** were placed in permanent housing. During the second year, the county served **73** families, **31** of whom have been placed in permanent housing.

The California Family Stabilization Program

In 2014, the **Family Stabilization Program** was created as part of the CalWORKs program, with the goal of supporting families in crisis (e.g., homelessness, fleeing domestic violence, or a parent with an untreated/undertreated mental health or substance abuse disability) whose circumstances have the potential to interfere with their ability to participate in Welfare-To-Work (WTW) activities. The program provides individually tailored assistance, including intensive case management and modified work requirements to allow families to quickly resolve. Another unique aspect is that services focus on all members of the household, including children and other unaided members of the family.

Rapid Re-Housing

Families participating in the CalWORKs WTW program who are homeless (and those at-risk of homelessness) may be eligible for rapid re-housing services, including limited amounts of financial assistance, under the Family Stabilization Program.

In addition to intensive case management services, participants may also receive:

- **Housing identification, stabilization and relocation assistance.** This includes outreach and engagement, landlord recruitment, housing search and placement, legal services and credit repair.
- **Financial assistance.** This includes monthly rental assistance, security deposits, utility payments, moving cost assistance, motel and hotel vouchers and emergency assistance.
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The Family Stabilization Program provides another example of possibilities for leveraging funds to provide housing and prevention services for low-income homeless and at-risk families on TANF.