

**County of Orange Social Services Agency
Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services Division**

Program/Area: CalWORKs/Welfare-To-Work

Title: CalWORKs Family Reunification Services

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Approved:

PURPOSE

Assembly Bill 429 (AB 429) allows continuation of CalWORKs (CW)/Cal-Learn services for the parent(s) when children are removed from the home and placed in out-of-home care by Children and Family Services (CFS). If CFS determines that services are necessary for Family Reunification (FR), CW families may continue to receive CW FR services which include Temporary Homeless Assistance (THA), child care, transportation, and supportive services to participate in Welfare-to-Work (WTW) activities, including mental health, substance use treatment, and other services determined to be necessary for FR Plan.

POLICY

CW FR program is an interdepartmental collaboration between CFS and Family Self-Sufficiency/Adult Services (FSS/AS) divisions to address barriers that limit parent(s)' ability to reunify with their children.

CW FR services promote child(ren)'s safety and stability, and the well-being of the family, reducing the number of children re-entering Foster Care.

CW FR services allow CW case to remain open, while the FR parent(s) is participating in FR plan. FR parent(s) shall not receive a CW grant or cash-based Medical. The CFS Senior Social Worker (SSW) initiates CW FR services when child(ren) is removed from their home. Benefits of CW FR services include, but not limited to:

- Allows CW case to remain open without children in the home
- Services needed for reunification such as Temporary Homeless Assistance (THA), child care, transportation, mental health, substance use treatment, etc.
- CW FR services can be incorporated into the CFS FR Plan

CW FR services shall be provided to any FR parent, including a child support or WTW sanctioned individual. Participation in CW FR services count toward WTW sanction curing plan.

Parents with a child in out-of-home care who are exempt from WTW participation requirements may elect to volunteer to participate in WTW activities, which support the FR plan.

Note: Parents who timed-out from the CalWORKs 60-month time limit, Social Security Income (SSI) recipients, or undocumented citizens are **not eligible** to CW FR services.

DEFINITIONS

Family Reunification Parents (FR Parents): Parents (biological or adoptive) who are eligible to continue to receive CW services when:

- The child was removed by CFS
- The family was receiving CW
- CFS has determined that CW FR services are necessary for FR Plan

Family Reunification Cases: CW cases in which the children have been removed and placed in out-of-home care by CFS **and** the parents are receiving CW FR services.

Family Reunification Services (FR Services): CW services that CFS determines necessary for a reunification parent to reunite with their child(ren) and are outlined in the FR Plan.

Family Reunification Plan (FR Plan): Plan that is developed by CFS for the provisions of services and given effect to the FR parent through the order of the court.

FR ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA & SERVICES TIME FRAME

For a CW family to receive FR services to support the FR plan, all the following conditions must be met:

- Child(ren) has been removed and placed in out-of-home care
- The family was receiving CW when the child(ren) was removed from the parent(s)
- CFS has determined that CW FR services are necessary for FR Plan

If not all the children are removed and the CW case becomes financially ineligible to CW due to income, the parent(s) may be eligible for FR services if there is a court-ordered FR plan for the child(ren) who was removed. If determined necessary, child care services are also available for the children remaining in the home.

If not all the children are removed from the home, and the parent(s) remains eligible for a cash grant, they are not FR parent(s) and the family is not a

reunification family. It is considered a Mutual Client case. For additional information, refer to [policy 403 FSS and CFS Mutual Clients Collaboration](#).

CW FR services may be provided for up to **180 days** from the date the child(ren) was removed from their parents. Additionally, these services may be extended for good cause, which includes the court extending the amount of time a family may need to complete the court ordered family reunification plan.

The CFS SSW may grant a good cause extension to the 180-day in the following situations:

- Extension is needed for the number of days between the date of the children’s removal and the date the court orders a reunification plan
- Additional time is needed beyond the 180 days to complete a reunification plan. This extension can be in effect until the termination of family reunification plan.

FR AID CODES

Family Reunification cases will be identified under aid codes 4P and 4R.

- **4P- CalWORKs Family Reunification – All Other Families:** Provides for continuance of CW services (no cash aid) to all families except two-parent families.
- **4R- CalWORKs Family Reunification – Two Parent Families:** Provides for continuance of CW services (no cash aid) to two-parent families.

OVERVIEW OF SERVICE REQUEST

For a parent to receive CW FR services, the CFS SSW must determine if CW FR services are necessary to support the FR plan, which is developed based on a court order or anticipated court order. If CW FR services are necessary:

- The CFS SSW will contact the CW worker to request CW FR services
- The CFS SSW will determine which services are needed to help the family and make it possible for the child(ren) to return to a safe home based on the FR plan
- Once CW FR services are being provided to FR parents, the CFS SSW will notify the CW workers of each court and status review date
- The status reviews are referred to by CFS as SMR (six-month status review), TMR (twelve-month status review) and EMR (eighteen-month status review)
- CW FR parents must complete an eligibility redetermination at six-month intervals that coincide with the court review dates

FAMILY REUNIFICATION vs.

Family Reunification	Mutual Client
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MUTUAL CLIENT

All children are removed from the home and placed in out-of-home care	Some children removed from the home, but the remaining family members continue eligible for CW cash grant
Some children are removed from the home, but the CW case discontinued due to excess income that resulted from the AU reduction	

For additional information regarding Mutual Client cases, refer to [Policy 403- FSS and CFS Mutual Clients Collaboration.](#)

CALFRESH & MEDICAL ELIGIBILITY

CalFresh households (HH) who lose eligibility to their CW cash grant due to removal of some or all the children from the home by CFS are eligible to Transitional CalFresh (TCF) benefits for five months. The size of the TFS household is based on the CFHH size that existed in the final month of CW grant eligibility. For CW FR cases, the TCF household will therefore include the child(ren) that was removed from the home.

At the conclusion of the TCF period, CW FR cases may reapply for Non-Assistance CalFresh.

FR parents are ineligible to cash-linked Medi-Cal through CalWORKs; therefore, an evaluation for Medi-Cal must be completed.

TEMPORARY HOMELESS ASSISTANCE

Homeless FR families may be eligible to receive CalWORKs Temporary Homeless Assistance (THA), provided that the FSS/AS and CFS workers determine that these benefits will aid in reunification and the FR family meets THA eligibility requirements and definition.

Since THA only covers 16 days of temporary shelter assistance, staff should connect families to any additional housing programs and services including, but not limited to, Housing Support Program (HSP) and Family Stabilization (FS) for further assistance.

Additionally, once the children are returned to the home and are added back to the Assistance Unit (AU), the family may be eligible for Permanent Homeless Assistance (PHA).

Note: Staff utilize the [Non-System Determined Issuance \(NSDI\) \(F063-15-300\)](#) to issue the THA benefits to FR cases, following operational process.

Example: A CW family whose children were placed into Foster Care, has a court-ordered family reunification plan, and subsequently became homeless during the initial stages of their FR plan. If it is determined that housing is necessary for reunification to occur, the SSW and in collaboration with the CW Worker should recommend THA and consider pairing these benefits with a program like HSP, which offers housing search assistance, permanent housing, short term rental subsidies, and intensive case management to resolve homelessness.

In other instances, the family may experience homelessness toward the latter stages of their FR plan. Presuming they are still a CalWORKs FR case, THA may prove an acceptable interim solution that allows a dependency court judge to safely return the children to the care and custody of the parents, after which time the family may qualify for permanent HA or other interventions such as FS and/or HSP.

Refer to [policy 100-H2 Homeless Assistance](#) and policy [100-H2 A CW Housing Support Program](#) for additional information.

FR Cases in Welfare Data Tracking Implementation Project (WDTIP) and Tracking Recipients Across California (TRAC):

THA benefits are considered CW Special Needs payments and Special Needs payments does count as receipt of aid towards a recipient's CW 60-month clock.

For all counties to appropriately track time-on aid information for THA recipients in CW FR cases, aid codes 4P and 4R were added to TRAC system. Refer to the following [WDTIP/TRAC Reference for Family Reunification Cases](#) for guidelines.

STAFF ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

CFS SSW Responsibilities:

- Notify the CW worker with the following:
 - Date of the child (ren) removal from the home
 - Next court date
- Obtain the name of the WTW CM, if any
- Determines what provisions of CW FR services are appropriate or necessary to support the FR plan

- Discuss possible continuation of CW FR services with FR parent and obtains consent to refer for CW FR services
- Inform the WTW CM, that continued FR services are requested and the date of the next court hearing
- Discuss and explore with the CW Worker and/or WTW CM any services that are available and that would benefit families
- Inform CW staff of the results of the court hearing, the date of the Six-Month Status Review (SMR), Twelve-Month Status review (TMR) or Eighteen-Month Status Review (EMR) and whether the child (ren) are returned to the home or not
- Share the FR case plan, as needed
- Invite CW staff to the Team Decision Making (TDM) meeting, as needed
- Notify CW Worker of any court ordered changes such as: services are no longer to be provided or that child (ren) have returned to the home

CalWORKs EES/ET Responsibilities:

- Communicate and collaborate with WTW CM and CFS SSW
- Share the name and contact information of the CFS SSW with WTW CM and vice versa
- Inform the WTW CM that the children have been removed from the home
- Transfer case to the Specialized Mutual Client unit once the request for services has been made by CFS. Share the specialized case worker contact information with the CFS SSW
- Terminate child care plan/payments, Diaper payment and other services for the children who were removed from home, as appropriate
- Take any other appropriate county initiated Mid-Period actions

WTW CM Responsibilities:

- Communicate and collaborate with CW eligibility staff and CFS SSW
- Notifies the eligibility worker that the child(ren) has been removed from the home so the worker can take appropriate actions
- Transfer the case to the Specialized Mutual Client unit

Specialized FR EES Responsibilities:

- Submit a request to the SSSI to convert the case aid code into 4P or 4R
- Complete the 6-month redetermination, which is coordinated with the Six-Month Status Review (SMR) of the FR plan
- Attend Team Decision Making meeting, as needed
- Complete eligibility redetermination to re-open CW case, once the children are returned to the home
- Assess and issue supportive services, as appropriate
- Collaborate with the Mutual Client Social Services Supervisor I (SSSI) in assessing the need to assign CM, as needed.

WTW PLAN

Parents who have a FR plan with CFS because of the children being removed from the home, and the individual's WTW activities and services are provided as part of the FR plan are not required to sign a WTW plan. WTW case remains open to provide services associated with the FR plan. WTW services will continue until the FR plan is terminated by CFS. Refer to policy [200 WTW Program, Activities and Participation Requirements](#) and [policy 211 WTW Plan](#) for additional information.

FR parents who volunteer to participate in WTW activities and fail to attend such activities or any other activities required under the FR plan are not subject to the WTW noncompliance or sanction process.

SIX-MONTH ELIGIBILITY REDETERMINATION

An eligibility redetermination must be completed at six-month intervals in coordination with the court review dates for the FR plan. If the court review intervals are extended beyond the six months or are less than six-month intervals, the eligibility determination should be changed to coincide with the court dates.

ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION AFTER FR PERIOD

Once the children are returned to the home, an eligibility redetermination will be required in order to issue cash benefits on the CW case. The assigned Specialized EES will be responsible for completing the eligibility redetermination. The beginning date for re-issuance of cash benefits is the **first** of the following month after the family is reunified, provided all eligibility requirements are met.

TIME LIMIT

The CalWORKs 60-month time clock **will not** tick for CW FR parents who are receiving CW FR services and supportive services.

Supportive services that are provided by TANF to an **unemployed** parent are considered "assistance" and **count** towards the federal TANF clock.

Supportive services that are provided to an **employed** parent are not considered "assistance" and **do not count** towards the federal TANF clock.

Service/payment which provides the needs for a period that is four months or less, is not considered "assistance" and **would not count** toward the federal TANF clock.

CASE TRANSFER

Once CW benefits is terminated and the CFS SSW has notified the CW EES that FR has been ordered and services are being requested, the CW EES will transfer the CW and WTW case to the [CW Mutual Client Unit](#).

REFERENCES

Assembly Bill (AB): AB 429 and AB236.
ACL 02-36, ACL 03-18; ACIN I-49-04, ACL 03-52, ACL 11-04; ACL 18-71, ACL 16-98 and ACL 16-98E, ACL 19-77, ACL 19-112.
EAS Section 40-181.2 Redetermination of Eligibility
EAS Section 80-301- FR Definitions
EAS Section 42-711.512- WTW Participation
EAS Section 82-812.67- Temporary Absence
[Policy 100-H2 Homeless Assistance](#)
[Policy 100-H2 A CW Housing Support Program](#)
[Policy 200 WTW Program, Activities and Participation Requirements](#)
[Policy 211 WTW Plan](#)
[Policy 403 FSS and CFS Mutual Clients Collaboration.](#)

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 [CalWORKs Family Reunification Q and A](#)
Attachment 2 [FSS Regional Contact List](#)
Attachment 3 [Transitional Medi-Cal/Transitional CalFresh Processing Guide](#)
