

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

**Program/Area:** CalWORKS/Welfare-To-Work  
**Title:** CalWORKs Family Reunification Cash Aid  
**Number:** 403 – B **Status:** Final  
**Effective Date:** 1/1/2025 **Revision Date:** 12/9/2025  
**Approved:** Signature on file

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**PURPOSE**

To provide guidelines for staff to support families participating in CalWORKs (CW) Family Reunification (FR) with cash aid as part of their Children and Family Services (CFS) reunification plan.

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**POLICY**

Effective January 1, 2025, Assembly Bill 135 (AB 135) authorizes CW FR cash aid and services to families participating in CW FR if determined necessary for reunification by CFS. A child(ren) who has been removed from the home and placed in out-of-home care may be considered temporarily absent for up to six months.

CW and Welfare-to-Work (WTW) regulations apply to the FR program, unless specifically superseded by FR program rules.

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## BACKGROUND

The CW FR program is an interdepartmental collaboration between the CFS and Family Self-Sufficiency/Adult Services (FSS/AS) divisions. It is designed to address barriers that limit parent(s)' ability to reunify with their children. Staff should refer to Policy 403 – FSS and CFS Mutual Clients Collaboration for detailed guidance on interdivisional coordination and case management expectations.

Effective January 1, 2025, AB 135 created two distinct CW FR processes:

- Cases that include the provision of both FR cash aid and FR services.
- Cases that include the provision of FR services only. Refer to Policy 403-A – CalWORKs Family Reunification Services for more information.

Assembly Bill 429 (AB 429) allows the continuation of CW services for a parent(s) when a child(ren) is removed from the home and placed in out-of-home care by CFS. Refer to Policy 403 – A: CalWORKs Family Reunification Services for more information.

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## DEFINITIONS

**Family Reunification Cases (FR Cases):** CW cases in which the child(ren) has been removed and placed in out-of-home care by CFS.

**Family Reunification Cash Grant (FR Cash Grant):** CW FR cash aid that CFS determines necessary for a reunification parent to reunite with their child(ren) and is outlined in the FR Plan.

**Family Reunification Parent(s) [FR Parent(s)]:** Biological/adoptive parent(s) or needy caretaker relative who is eligible to continue to receive FR cash aid and services when all of the following provisions are met:

- The child(ren) has been removed from the home and placed in out-of-home care by CFS,
- The family was receiving CW when the child(ren) was removed, and
- CFS or a court has determined that CW FR cash aid and services are necessary for family reunification.

**Family Reunification Case Plan (FR Plan):** A case plan developed by CFS including CW FR cash aid and services by order of the court or a voluntary placement in accordance with CFS regulations.

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

**FR ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA** For a CW family to receive CW FR cash aid and services to support the FR Plan, **all** of the following conditions must be met:

- All CW eligible children must be removed from the home and placed in out-of-home care by CFS.
- The family must have been receiving CW cash aid when the child(ren) was removed from the home.
- At least one parent or needy caretaker relative must have been aided when the child(ren) was removed.
  - Sanctioned parents are not eligible for cash aid under CW FR until the sanction has cured/ended and the parent has been added back to the AU. However, children in an FR plan will remain eligible for cash aid even if the adults are in a WTW sanction status.

**Note:** Sanctioned parents are only eligible to FR services while in a sanctioned status.

- Pregnant Person Only (PPO) cases when there is immediate removal of the child upon birth may also be eligible for CW FR cash aid.
- CFS or court must recommend CW FR cash aid and services within the temporary absence period. The temporary absent period is defined as a full calendar month (from the first to the last day of the month) and at least thirty (30) days from when the child(ren) was removed from the home.

All individuals who were members of the CalWORKs (CW) AU when the eligible child(ren) was removed from the home will be eligible to CW FR cash aid, childcare, and FR services based on CFS' recommendation.

**Note:** For existing FR case plans that do not already include a recommendation for CW FR cash aid, a notification from CFS must be obtained prior to CW FR cash aid approval.

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**INELIGIBLE FOR FR CASH AID AND SERVICES** The following individuals are not eligible to receive CW FR cash aid and services for themselves or their child(ren):

- Un-aided parents/caretaker relatives, such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients
- Ineligible noncitizens
- Non-needy caretaker relatives
- Timed-out parents who do not qualify for a Time on Aid (TOA) exception or extender

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**INITIAL TEMPORARY ABSENCE PERIOD**

When all CW eligible child(ren) are removed from the home by CFS, the CW case must not be immediately discontinued. The child(ren) must be considered temporarily absent for one full calendar month even though a

reunification plan has not been established. One full calendar month is defined as 30 days from the first of the month through the last day of the month. If the family is recommended for FR cash aid and services, the case will transition to a CW FR aid code effective the first of the month following the initial temporary absence period.

**Note:** The month of February does not meet the definition of “one full calendar month” as the first of the month through the last day of the month is less than 30 days. Therefore, the calendar month will not be deemed completed until the child(ren) have been absent for 30 days.

#### **Example 1: Children are removed in January 2025**

- CW eligible children are removed from the home on 01/09/2025
- CFS notifies the eligibility worker of the removal on 01/10/2025
  - The month of January 2025 is not considered part of the temporary absence period.
- Initial temporary absence period begins on 02/01/2025 and ends on 03/31/2025.
  - February is not considered one full calendar month of temporary absence because there are less than 30 days in the month.
- Family is transitioned to CW FR aid code on 04/01/2025.
- Six months CW FR begins effective 04/01/2025.

#### **Example 2: Children are removed in April 2025**

- CW eligible children are removed from the home on 04/09/2025.
- CFS notifies the eligibility worker of the removal on 04/10/2025.
  - The month of April 2025 is not considered part of the temporary absence period.
- Initial temporary absence period begins on 05/01/2025 and ends on 05/31/2025.
  - May is considered one full calendar month of temporary absence because there are at least 30 days in the month.
- Family is transitioned to CW FR aid code on 06/01/2025.
- Six months of CW FR begins effective 06/01/2025.

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#### **PREGNANT PERSON ONLY (PPO)**

A PPO case with no other CW eligible children will be eligible for CW FR cash aid if a newborn child is removed from the home by CFS. The initial temporary absence period will begin the date the newborn is removed.

**Note:** Existing processes to add a child to the family unit mid-period remain applicable. The Statement of Facts to Add a Child Under Age 16 (CW 8A) must be completed to add the newborn to the existing case.

Refer to Policy 100-C04B – Adding a Newborn-Second Parent to the Assistance Unit for additional information.

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## OVERVIEW OF FR RECOMMENDATION

To determine eligibility for CalWORKs FR cash aid or services, the Mutual Client Employment & Eligibility Specialist (EES) must receive a completed CalWORKs Family Reunification Cash Aid/Services Communication Document (F063-30-987) from CFS. This document serves as the official notification regarding CFS' recommendation for FR cash aid or services.

Before initiating the request, a Mutual Client EES will review the case for potential FR eligibility.

**Note:** If the case is assigned to a region, the Mutual Client Team will take the appropriate steps to complete an incoming transfer of the case to the Mutual Client Team. Refer to the Mutual Client PG for detailed instructions.

**If the case is eligible for FR**, the Mutual Client EES will:

- Initiate a recommendation request by completing Section A – CalWORKs Case Information of the CalWORKs Family Reunification Cash Aid/Services Communication Document (F063-30-987).
- Send the completed communication document to the assigned CFS Senior Social Worker (SSW).

**If the case is not eligible for FR**, the Mutual Client EES will:

- Notify the assigned CFS SSW via email.

**Note:** When the Mutual Client EES becomes aware that a child has been removed from the home the EES will complete the steps noted above.

Upon receipt of a response from the CFS SSW, the Mutual Client EES will:

- Evaluate for FR based on the recommendation received from CFS.
- Complete Section C – Family Self-Sufficiency/Adult Services Mutual Client Team to respond with the outcome of the recommendation.

Based on the recommendation by CFS for FR, Mutual Client staff will take the following actions:

### **CW FR Cash and Services is Recommended:**

If CFS or a court recommends CW FR cash aid and services as part of the family's FR plan and the family meets the eligibility criteria, the family will transition to a CW FR aid code and begin receiving cash aid and services while working on their FR plan.

### **CW FR Cash and Services is Not Recommended:**

If CFS or a court does not recommend CW FR cash aid and services, the case will be discontinued at the end of the month.

Example:

- Child removed from the home on 03/15/2025.
- Temporary Absence Period starts on 04/1/2025 and ends on 04/30/2025.
- CFS does not recommend FR, CW case is discontinued 05/01/2025.

**Recommendation is not received:**

If CFS or a court does not provide a recommendation for CW FR cash aid and services by the end of the initial temporary absence period, the CW case will be discontinued at the end of the month.

Example:

- Child removed from home on 03/15/2025.
- Temporary Absence Period starts on 04/1/2025 and ends on 04/30/2025.
- Recommendation from CFS has not been received, CW case is discontinued 05/01/2025.

For PPO cases, if CFS or a court does not provide a recommendation for CW FR by the end of the initial temporary absence period, the PPO case will remain open until the end of the SAR payment period.

Example:

- PPO has child removed from home on 03/15/2025.
- Temporary Absence Period starts on 04/1/2025 and ends on 04/30/2025.
- PPO case remains open if the CFS does not provide a recommendation by 04/30/2025.

The case will be discontinued at the end of the SAR payment period if an FR recommendation has not been provided by CFS.

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**FR AID CODES**

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

- **4P- CalWORKs Family Reunification – All Other Families:** Provides the continuance of CW FR cash aid and services to all families except two- parent families.
  - **4R- CalWORKs Family Reunification – Two-Parent Families:** Provides the continuance of CW FR cash aid and services to two-parent families.
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## **TIMEFRAMES FOR CASH AID & SERVICES**

FR cash aid is limited to a maximum of six months from the time it is granted and may not be extended.

There is no lifetime limit to the number of times families can receive FR cash aid. Eligible families can receive up to six months of CW FR cash aid for every instance of child removal that results in a reunification plan with a recommendation of cash aid.

FR services may only continue if a good cause extension is granted by CFS. A good cause extension may be granted for the following reasons:

- The CFS reunification case plan extends beyond the initial six months from removal, or
- Additional time is required to complete the court-ordered reunification case plan.

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## **REPORTING & REDETERMINATION REQUIREMENTS**

When FR cases are approved for CW FR cash aid, the SAR cycle will not change, and the following reporting and redetermination requirements apply:

### **SAR 7:**

Semi-Annual Reporting (SAR) requirements apply cash aid for reunification cases must be discontinued at the end of the six-month period, or earlier if the family is found to be financially ineligible based on the information submitted on the SAR 7, or if the reunification plan is terminated. If non-cash reunification services are approved after cash aid discontinuance, a SAR 7 is not required as long as the reunification plan remains in place.

### **Mid-Period Reports/Changes:**

All mandatory and voluntary reports and county-initiated mid-period changes remain in effect. As a reminder, SAR AUs are not required to report mid-period changes to household composition. FR cash aid and services must be discontinued if the family is found to be financially ineligible based on a mid-period report of income exceeding the income reporting threshold.

### **Redetermination:**

While the family is in FR and receiving a CW grant, the regular annual redetermination requirements apply.

### **Failure to Complete SAR 7 or Redetermination:**

Failure to submit a SAR 7 or complete redetermination will result in a cash aid and/or reunification services discontinuance for families in FR who are receiving a CW grant. The eligibility worker may grant good cause for failure to submit a complete SAR 7 or redetermination when the request is made by the parent(s).

When the removal of a child(ren) and the recommendation for reunification services occur in the month following a CW discontinuance due to not completing a SAR 7 or an annual redetermination, the staff is encouraged to evaluate whether good cause exists to rescind or restore the CW case. If good cause cannot be applied, the case will remain discontinued, and the family will not be eligible for reunification services.

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**CALFRESH & MEDI-CAL ELIGIBILITY**

**CalFresh**

FR families receiving FR cash aid may continue to be eligible to CalFresh (CF) benefits if all other eligibility requirements are met. At the time FR cash aid eligibility is determined, CF will need to be re-evaluated.

CalFresh households (CFHH) who lose eligibility to their CW and/or FR cash aid may be eligible to Transitional CalFresh (TCF) benefits. The size of the TCF household is based on the CFHH size that existed in the final month of CW FR cash aid eligibility. Therefore, for CW FR cases, the TCF household would not include the child(ren) that was removed from the home.

**Medi-Cal**

Families participating in FR are not eligible to cash-linked Medi-Cal.

When a family is assigned an FR aid code, an evaluation for Medi-Cal must be completed.

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**TEMPORARY HOMELESS ASSISTANCE**

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

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).

Refer to Policy 100-H02.B – Homeless Assistance and Policy 100-H02.A – CW Housing Support Program for additional information.

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

- THA benefits are considered CW Special Needs payments and Special Needs payments 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 the TRAC system.

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## WELFARE-TO-WORK (WTW)

### **WTW Participation:**

Consistent with existing CW rules, FR cash aid recipients are required to participate in WTW activities as a condition of eligibility for cash aid unless exempt, granted good cause, or deferred from participating while in Family Stabilization (FS).

Participants exempt from WTW may voluntarily participate in WTW and receive WTW services necessary to assist in reunification.

Case Managers (CMs) are encouraged to use the CFS developed FR plan in lieu of a WTW plan when possible.

- When a FR plan **is used** in lieu of the WTW plan, no additional activities are required and new WTW sanctions cannot be imposed.
- When a FR plan **is not used** in lieu of the WTW plan, all existing rules pertaining to WTW apply to the FR case, including noncompliance and sanction for failure to fulfill WTW participation requirements outside their FR plan.

### **WTW 34:**

A FR recipient must be notified in writing when they are eligible for FR services. At the initial engagement, Case Managers (CMs) are required to use the **WTW 34: WTW Family Reunification Plan** form to notify the participant of the agreed pathway chosen to receive the CW WTW services needed to reunify the child(ren) with the family.

**Note:** The WTW 34 will only need to be sent to the participant once; however, when an AB 135 (CW FR Cash Aid and Services) case transitions to an AB 429 (CW FR Services only) case a new WTW 34 shall be sent to the participant.

There are two (2) versions of the WTW 34 form:

- AB 135 (CW FR Cash Aid and Services) - WTW 34 (01/2024) - CalSAWS.
- AB 429 (CW FR Services only) - WTW 34 (04/2004) - EFMS.

While CMs are encouraged to use a FR Case Plan in lieu of a WTW plan, CMs should also evaluate for additional CW services. As needed, the CM can develop a WTW plan to include activities that are not part of the FR Plan to provide for these services.

**Note:** If participation in activities required under the FR plan temporarily prevents or significantly impairs a parent's ability to comply with the WTW hours of participation requirement, the parent must be granted good cause for not participating in their WTW activities.

Reference policies in the Welfare to Work 200 series for additional information.

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**DOMESTIC ABUSE SERVICES & FAMILY REUNIFICATION**

When a CW FR parent discloses domestic abuse, refer to Policy 402 – Domestic Abuse Services and Policy 604 – Domestic Abuse Services Unit.

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**TIME LIMIT**

**FR Cash Aid:**

- The CalWORKs 60-month time clock **will** tick for CW FR parents who are receiving CW FR cash aid unless they meet the requirements for a CalWORKs TOA exception or extender.
- The TANF clock **will not** tick for CW FR parents who are receiving CW FR cash aid.

**Parents Reaching Their CW 60 Month Time Limit:**

If the parent(s) reaches their 60-month time limit while in FR and does not meet an extender criterion, the CW worker must remove the parent(s) from the AU. Parents who reach their 60-month TOA limit while participating in FR will no longer be eligible for any reunification services for themselves or their child(ren).

Timed-out parents whose CW time clocks are adjusted to add additional months of aid may be eligible for FR for the remaining months in their FR temporary absence period if recommended in their reunification plan; eligibility for reunification services for these parents is effective the date the timeclock is adjusted.

Refer to Policy 100-E03 – Time on Aid for additional information.

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**DISCONTINUANCE OF FR**

CW FR cash aid may be discontinued when any of the following occur:

- The family is found to be financially ineligible on the mid-period report, SAR 7, or Redetermination
- The reunification plan is terminated
- The parent(s) is timed out
- The SAR 7 or Redetermination is not completed

## **OVERPAYMENTS/ UNDERPAYMENTS**

All existing CW rules pertaining to overpayments and underpayments remain unchanged while the family is in FR.

Refer to Policy 100-B15 – Overpayments and Underpayments for additional information.

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**NOTICE OF ACTION (NOA)** The following NOAs are specifically for recipients of FR Cash Aid:

- M82-812A - Start of Cash Aid for Family Reunification Case
  - Utilized to inform CW FR Families of the approval of FR Cash Aid
- M82-812B -End of Cash Aid Following Family Reunification Discontinuance – Child Returned to Home
  - Utilized to inform CW FR Families of the discontinuance of FR Cash Aid due to the child(ren) returning to the home
- M82-812C – Family Reunification – End of Cash Aid
  - Utilized to inform CW FR families that their FR Cash Aid is ending while in a FR plan

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## **REFERENCES**

- ACL: 02-36, 03-18, 03-52, 11-04, 16-98, 16-98E, 18-71, 19-77, 19-112, 23-94, 24-48, 25-05, 25-09
- ACIN: 1-49-04
- EAS Section: 40-181.2, 42-711.512, 80-301, 82-812.67
- Mutual Client PG
- Policy 100-B15 – Overpayments and Underpayments
- Policy 100-C04B – Adding a Newborn-Second Parent to the Assistance Unit
- Policy 100-E03 – Time on Aid
- Policy 100-H2.A – CW Housing Support Program
- Policy 100-H02.B – Homeless Assistance
- Policy 200 WTW Program, Activities and Participation Requirements
- Policy 402 – Domestic Abuse Services
- Policy 403 – FSS and CFS Mutual Clients Collaboration
- Policy 403-A – CalWORKs Family Reunification Services
- Policy 604 – Domestic Abuse Services Unit.

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## **ATTACHMENTS**

- CalWORKs Family Reunification Cash Aid/Services Communication Document (F063-30-987)
  - WTW 34 – Welfare to Work Family Reunification Plan (AB 429)
- CalSAWS Repository Forms
- WTW 34 – Welfare to Work Family Reunification Plan (AB 135)