

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

Program/Area: CalWORKs/Welfare-To-Work

Title: Family Stabilization Program

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PURPOSE

The Family Stabilization (FS) program is designed to ensure a basic level of stability within a family prior to, or concurrently with, participation in Welfare-to-Work (WTW) activities. Individuals may participate in the FS program to overcome a crisis or situation that is destabilizing their family and impairing their ability to participate in WTW. The FS program includes a holistic approach and addresses the needs of all members of the family. The benefit of the FS program and services is the increased level and intensity of case management participants might not otherwise receive under the WTW program.

The FS program's goal is to assist participants with crisis and/or barrier mitigation to successfully complete the WTW program and achieve self-sufficiency through employment and increased participant engagement through CalWORKs (CW) 2.0. CW 2.0 incorporates strategies and tools that help families set and achieve reachable goals while considering the participant's strengths and any barriers they may face. Staff may refer to the Intranet for a list of CW 2.0 tools available.

BOOKMARKS

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DEFINITION OF A CRISIS OR SITUATION

FS is a component of the WTW program intended to provide short-term needed services and interventions to assist families facing crisis or difficult circumstances. A qualifying crisis or situation is defined as any identified event or circumstance experienced by an adult and/or child(ren) in the Assistance Unit (AU) which:

- Destabilizes the family, **and**
- Impairs the participant's ability to engage in WTW or meet WTW participation requirements.

The qualifying crisis or situation may include, but is not limited to:

- Homelessness (or imminent risk of homelessness)
- A lack of safety due to domestic abuse
- Untreated or undertreated behavioral needs, including mental health and grief/loss
- Substance abuse
- Child-related issues such as truancy
- Barriers related to the needs of refugee participants prior to or during integration into the workforce
- Court-related or other legal matters

FS ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

To be eligible for FS services, the AU **must** include an adult who:

- Is required to participate in the WTW program, and
- Has a FS qualifying crisis or situation that affects their ability to participate in WTW, and
- Has not exhausted their CW time on aid.

This includes AUs in which at least one adult is:

- WTW mandatory
- WTW exempt (voluntary participant), if the WTW Case Manager (CM) determines that participation in FS will enable future participation in WTW
- Noncompliant or sanctioned
- A recent non-citizen entrant with Lawful Permanent Resident status
- Family Reunification parent. Refer to Policy 403-A CalWORKs Family Reunification Program for information regarding CW Family Reunification.

An AU is **ineligible** to FS when all adults:

- Have exceeded their CW time on aid
- Are fleeing felons
- Are non-needy caretaker relatives
- Receive Social Security Supplemental Security Income (SSI), and/or
- Are ineligible non-citizens

Participation in FS services is voluntary and may be requested by a participant at any time. The length of time a participant may remain in FS is dependent upon the individual circumstance of each family.

Note: A participant may be referred to a Families and Communities Together (FaCT) Family Resource Center (FRC) for non-FS services and community-based resources if a participant:

- Requests FS services but does not meet eligibility criteria
- Declines FS services
- Is no longer participating in FS

Refer to the FaCT website for a list of FRC locations and available services.

FS SERVICES

FS services are available for the adult(s) and children in the family and tailored to meet each family's needs. Services are not limited to the aided adult and should address FS issues of the child(ren) and ineligible unaided members in the home.

FS services are focused on improving the family's domestic and economic stability and removing their barriers to WTW activities. Participants may be referred to existing services provided by the CW and WTW programs, County partners, and/or community-based organizations for resources and support.

The following is a list of FS services, including a brief description of each, that may be provided:

- Specialized, Intensive Case Management – Specialized Case Managers (SCMs) will work closely with FS participants to evaluate the extent of the family's crisis or situation in order to provide appropriate and timely services and/or referrals to county and community-based resources.
- FS FRC Services – Available to participants through a contracted partnership with FaCT, administered by Children and Family Services (CFS) division . FS FRC services include, but are not limited to:
 - Emergency Assistance (EA):
 - Housing/Rental Assistance
 - Utility Assistance
 - Some items include, but not limited to:
 - ❖ Household items (bedding, mattress, fridge)
 - ❖ Clothing
 - ❖ Hygiene and/or baby items
 - ❖ Transportation Assistance (gas card)
 - Emergency Housing Assistance (EHA):
 - Motel Assistance
 - Move-in Costs/Security Deposits
 - Rental Arrears
 - Community Resources and Referrals
 - Family Literacy and Education
 - Child Development Activities
 - Parenting Education
 - Counseling

FS participants are to be offered FS FRC services and, if they accept, they are to be referred to the FRC. Refer to the Family Stabilization Processing Guide for further information on referring participants to the FRC for FS services.

In addition, FS participants may be referred to other programs and services available to CW eligible participants. Refer to attachment 1, Additional Programs and Services for CalWORKs-Eligible Participants, for further information. For housing needs, refer to WT 57- CalWORKs Homeless Housing Services. For additional community supportive services, refer to WT92 – Supportive Services Resource Directory.

**INFORMING
REQUIREMENTS**

Individuals must be informed verbally and in writing that FS services are available at application, during Appraisal or the development of the WTW Plan, at annual Re-Evaluation, any time a crisis is disclosed, and when appropriate during the CM's monthly contact.

The Family Stabilization Program Brochure (F063-41-400) provides general information about the FS program and services that are available to assist the participant and family. The brochure is included in the application and annual Re-Evaluation packets and must be shared with participants during the WTW Orientation/Appraisal and at any time during the discussion of a crisis or situation that impairs the individual's ability to participate in WTW activities.

WTW sanctioned individuals will be informed of FS services by the Employment and Eligibility Specialist (EES) or the CM as part of their ongoing reengagement effort.

**FS REFERRAL
PROCESS AND
PROCESSING GUIDE**

Participation in FS services is voluntary and may be requested by a participant at any time. There is no limit to the number of times an individual can request FS services. Each request will require a new FS referral, assessment, appropriate Notice of Action (NOA), and Journal entry.

If a participant agrees to FS services, staff will follow the steps outlined in the following tools:

- WT 36- Family Stabilization Referral Work Flow - a flowchart that provides instructions for processing a FS case, including a referral to the FRC. The flowchart includes a link to required forms and contains information related to domestic abuse.
- Family Stabilization Processing Guide - provides uniform guidelines for the following:
 - FS Referral Process
 - FS Program Assignment
 - FS Program Evaluation
 - FS Case Maintenance (including a referral to the FRC)
 - FS Participation Requirement

- FS Nonparticipation
- FS Plan Goals Met
- FS Statistics
- FS Program Administration
- FS Notices and Forms

If a participant declines services, a FS referral is not made. However, a referral to the local FRC for non-FS services as well as a Family Support Team (FST) meeting is encouraged. Refer to Policy 408 Family Support Assessment Process.

Note: All staff are mandated reporters, therefore, if staff suspects a child(ren) in the home may be at risk due to the specific crisis or situation, a child abuse report must be made following established procedures listed in the OCSSA Mandated Reporters webpage. Notify the Child Abuse Registry (CAR). After making the CAR call, the follow-up written report (SS8572), mailed or submitted electronically via the mandated reporter webpage.

INTENSIVE CASE MANAGEMENT

FS participants will receive intensive case management support. The following include examples of the intensive case management support that may be provided:

- Collaboration to assess, plan, implement, coordinate, monitor, and evaluate services to address and meet the needs of the family
- Coordinated meetings with County and contracted partners to assess the family's crisis and determine appropriate level of services and referrals in a team-based approach
- Ongoing communication and available resources used in conjunction with strategies to achieve optimum outcomes

SCM Roles:

FS referrals will be assigned to a specialized unit of CMs who will provide participants with intensive case management support. SCMs will work closely with FS participants to evaluate the extent of the family's crisis or situation in order to provide appropriate and timely services and/or referrals to County and community-based resources. SCMs will:

- Develop a Family Stabilization Case Plan (F063-41-406) that assists the family to regain stability
- Develop long-term, achievable goals to further stabilize the family's circumstances
- Utilize CW 2.0 Tools when providing FS case management
- Assess weekly progress towards achieving the FS Case Plan goals and make necessary changes to improve the family's success
- Provide prompt referrals to appropriate County and community-based services to address the family's crisis or situation
 - This includes offering FS FRC services, and if accepted, referring the participant to the FRC

- In addition to the required monthly contact, communicate frequently (daily or weekly as needed) either by telephone, in-office or via a home visit with:
 - Each family, depending on the level of need and progress in FS services and activities
 - FS providers to determine the effectiveness of assigned services and activities
- Inform participant of available WTW Exemptions (refer to Policy 235 - WTW Exemptions)
- Make significant efforts to engage families who are not making adequate and satisfactory progress in FS activities
- Assist FS participants to transition to full or concurrent WTW activities

FS FRC Family Support Advocate (FSA) Roles:

For participants who accept FS FRC services, referrals will be assigned to the FS FRC FSAs based on the FS Service Region map. FSAs will work collaboratively with SCMs and provide participants with intensive case management support. FSAs will:

- Initiate warm hand off process with SCMs when necessary
- Complete Needs Assessment with FS participants
- Invite the family and SCM to the FRC Case Management Team (CMT) meeting
- Provide FS services such as EHA and EA (gift cards for food/gas)
- Link family to other community-based services and resources that address the crisis the family is experiencing
- Maintain regular weekly contact with SCM and provide updates of the family's participation in FRC activities and services utilizing the Family Stabilization Contact and Communication Form (F063-41-442)
- Co-locate at assigned regions to provide in-person services and consultations

Note: An FS FRC referral will be considered complete once the FSA has provided FS services and linked the family to resources. If a new crisis is identified while the FS case is still open, the SCM may initiate a subsequent FS FRC referral.

Reverse Referral:

A 'no wrong door' approach provides participants with access to appropriate services regardless of where services are initiated. FRC participants may be referred by FSA staff to the County for assessment of FS eligibility.

CW FST/ FRC CMT Meetings:

The FST meeting is a holistic, supportive approach conducted by CW to identify areas of need, overcome barriers, and promote self-sufficiency. An FST meeting is **encouraged** as part of the initial FS assessment and 30-day FS evaluation. An FST meeting is **required** for the 60-day FS evaluation. Refer to the Duration of Services section of the policy for further guidelines.

During the FST meeting, the FST members and County partners will:

- Review the family's strengths
- Assess the crisis and offer services and resources

- Develop achievable goals for the family to resolve the crisis
- Summarize actions needed to assist the family in meeting the goals outlined in the FS case plan

Refer to Policy 408 – Family Support Assessment Process for additional information. The CMT meeting is a weekly multidisciplinary team meeting conducted by the FRC to assess the family's strengths and needs and to provide linkages and referrals for community services.

Note: Participation in a FRC CMT meeting can be used in lieu of a FST meeting. The SCM will virtually print the CMT Action Plan (F063-41-428) form into Hyland Perceptive Experience (HPE).

Domestic Abuse Services Unit (DASU) participants:

The SCM and DASU Senior Social Worker (SSW) will collaborate to provide necessary support to DASU participants, including evaluation and referral for additional FS services. If a DASU participant is not eligible to Domestic Abuse Waiver (DAW), further assessment by SCM is needed to evaluate whether assignment to FS and approval of good cause from WTW participation would benefit the family. Refer to Policy 402 – Domestic Abuse Services and Policy 604 – Domestic Abuse Services Unit (DASU) for additional DASU policy considerations.

Sanctioned participants:

For cases where a participant is sanctioned at the time of referral to FS, further evaluation is required. If a sanctioned individual meets eligibility criteria for FS services and signs a FS case plan, the sanction is cured, and the cash grant will be restored the first of the following month after the FS case plan is signed.

**IDENTIFICATION
AND
DOCUMENTATION**

A participant will be advised that answering questions about the crisis or situation is voluntary and the information being requested is intended to assist them in becoming self-sufficient while promoting the family's well-being.

The participant's statement may be sufficient to identify a crisis or situation. Under no circumstance will staff contact any person deemed by the participant to be unsafe to contact for the purpose of corroborating or refuting the participant's statement.

For participants who experience a crisis or situation that includes homelessness or the risk of homelessness, supporting documentation may be requested to determine the type of housing assistance needed.

Supporting documentation will be requested only if the SCM has a reasonable basis for determining that documentation is needed, or the participant is not credible. Reasons for requesting additional documentation must be thoroughly narrated in the case record and approved by the SCM's supervisor. Supporting documentation includes, but is not limited to:

- Eviction notices or a written statement from a shelter or shared housing provider

- School documents for child-related matters
 - Police, court, legal, medical, or other professional records
 - A statement from someone who has knowledge of the circumstances
 - Sworn statement from the participant
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FS CASE PLANS

Family Stabilization Case Plan:

Individuals who have been approved for FS services must sign a Family Stabilization Case Plan (F063-41-406). The SCM will develop the FS case plan with the participant that:

- Assesses the stability of the family's living situation, physical/emotional health, and safety
- Provides intensive case management and referrals to appropriate services to assist the family
- Identifies supportive services needed for FS plan activities
- Reduces the chance of reoccurring crises
- Enhances the family's ability to resolve issues
- Monitors the family's progress towards making the necessary changes to improve the crisis or situation

The plan must consider the family circumstances and identify the participant's most appropriate path to family stability and resolution of the specific crisis or situation. The plan goals, services, and activities should enable the participant to move toward engagement in WTW activities. Participation in WTW activities should be encouraged to the fullest extent of the individual's abilities which will be based on the individual assessment completed by the SCM and re-evaluated during monthly meetings between the participant and the SCM.

Failure to sign or comply with the FS case plan will result in the participant's timely discontinuance from the FS program, reinstatement in the WTW program, and the requirement to sign a new WTW Plan.

Welfare-to-Work Plan:

WTW Plans for FS participants will be ended or modified as necessary to reflect the individual's ability to participate in WTW activities. A WTW plan may be signed if the SCM determines that the individual is able to participate in concurrent WTW activities. WTW plans will only indicate the concurrent WTW activities to which the participant is assigned, hours of participation, and supportive service needs. Refer to Policy 211 Welfare-to-Work Plan for additional information and guidelines for WTW plans.

DURATION OF SERVICES

FS services are intended to be short-term to resolve an immediate crisis. The duration of services will vary depending on the types of services received and the family's specific crisis or situation. The length of time a participant may remain in the FS program is dependent upon their individual circumstances.

Participation in the FS program will be reviewed every 30 days to determine if the participant continues to meet program eligibility criteria. The 30-day evaluation will include:

- Assessment by the SCM to evaluate for continued eligibility to FS including status of crisis and need for continued FS services
- Assessment of current FS case plan
- Review of participant's attendance in assigned FS activities
- Evaluation of participant's ability to engage in concurrent or full WTW activities
- Determination for continued participation in FS and completion of new FS case plan with participant
- Review by the SCM's supervisor, who will:
 - Monitor the effectiveness of the plan
 - Assess services provided
 - Ensure compliance with FS Policy

When the participant continues to meet the program criteria beyond 60 days, continued participation in the FS program will require approval from the Social Services Supervisor II (SSSII).

TRANSITIONING FROM FS TO WTW

When making a determination to discontinue FS services and transition the participant back to WTW utilizing the criteria noted in the Duration of Services section of the policy, the SCM will send the appropriate NOA below:

- FSP3 - Family Stabilization Program Notice of Change in Program Status – will be issued when participation in the FS program is being discontinued for failure or refusal to comply with the requirements of the FS plan. The effective end date entered on the NOA is the last day of the month in which the adequate and timely notice is mailed or
- Family Stabilization Program Discontinuance (F063-41-407) will be issued when a participant has achieved the goals outlined in the FS case plan, no longer meets FS criteria, has requested to end FS services, WTW case has closed, or other reasons.

Upon discontinuance of FS services, a new WTW Plan must be developed with the participant who must now meet WTW requirements, unless otherwise eligible to an exemption. Refer to Policy 211 Welfare-to-Work Plan for additional information.

Discontinued cases from FS services will be transferred from the SCM to a WTW CM.

NONCOMPLIANCE WITH FS

When a participant fails or refuses to comply with the requirements of the FS case plan or is not making progress towards achieving the goals specified in the plan, the SCM will explore good cause and/or available WTW exemptions with the participant.

If the participant is not found to be exempt nor granted good cause, the SCM will send the FSP3 to notify the participant they are being removed from FS. The FSP3 includes a scheduled appointment for the participant to meet with the SCM to sign a new WTW plan. If the participant fails to attend the

scheduled appointment, Noncompliance will be initiated for failure to attend the appointment.

Note: The FSP3 is sufficient notice to initiate Noncompliance.

Refer to Policy 235 – WTW Exemptions and Policy 240 Noncompliance Process for additional information.

JOURNAL ENTRIES, DOCUMENTATION AND SYSTEM ENTRIES

Journal entries must be completed to reflect information obtained during participant contacts, including, but not limited to:

- Cooperation and progress toward achieving FS goals
- Information specific to the FS services and activities including attendance and supportive services provided
- Other identified needs and completed referrals

Sensitive details of the crisis or situation are not to be shared or recorded. Any disclosures that may assist the EES, SCM, and/or County partners in providing services to the participants should be managed professionally, on a “need to know” basis.

System entries must be entered to reflect all actions taken on a case and documented on the FS case plan, including, but not limited to:

- Participant meetings and appropriate communication
- FS referrals
- New or revised FS and WTW Plans
- Attendance
- Progress in FS
- Any changes to an individual’s services, activities, attendance, or participation hours

Participation hours for concurrent WTW activities are documented on the WTW Plan. Enter actual, documented hours specific to FS and/or other concurrent WTW activities when completing system entries.

In addition, FS system entries are required to populate required statistical data, refer to the Family Stabilization Processing Guide and to the Family Stabilization CalSAWS Entries Guide.

All FS forms will be virtually printed into HPE.

CAL-OAR PERFORMANCE MEASURE

Family Stabilization Transition to WTW Engagement Rate is one of the California CalWORKs Outcomes and Accountability Reviews (Cal-OAR) performance measures. This outcome measures the rate of FS cases that are exited from FS (for any reason) to WTW and have started participating in an approved activity.

The goal is to increase this rate over time by quickly engaging former FS cases into WTW activities. As such, CMs must engage and connect former

FS participants into WTW activities immediately after they exit FS and update system entries to accurately reflect this transition.

In addition, CalSAWS entries are required to populate required statistical data, refer to the Family Stabilization CalSAWS Entries Guide.

REFERENCES

ACIN I-02-14; ACIN I-64-15; ACL 14-12; ACL 14-61; ACL 14-64; ACL 15-22; ACL 20-120; ACL 21-45; MPP 42-749
Policy 235- Welfare-To-Work Exemptions
Policy 211 Welfare-to-Work Plan
Policy 240 Noncompliance Process
Policy 402 Domestic Abuse Services
Policy 403-A CalWORKs Family Reunification Program
Policy 408 Family Support Assessment Process
Policy 604 Domestic Abuse Services Unit (DASU) Operating Procedure

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1 – Additional Programs and Services for CalWORKs-Eligible Participants
- CMT Action Plan (F063-41-428)
- FSP3: Family Stabilization Program Notice of Change in Program Status
- Family Stabilization CalSAWS Entries Guide
- Family Stabilization Program Brochure (F063-41-400)
- Family Stabilization Program Assessment (F063-41-404)
- Family Stabilization Case Plan (F063-41-406)
- Family Stabilization Discontinue NOA (F063-41-407)
- Family Stabilization Processing Guide
- WT 36- Family Stabilization Referral Flowchart CalSAWS
- WT 57- CalWORKs Homeless Housing Services
- WT92 – Supportive Services Resource Directory