



Legislation Text

File #: 17-269, **Version:** 1

Approve the Department of Health & Social Services (H&SS), Child Welfare Services (CWS) Division's grant application of \$416,000 for the Bringing Families Home (BFH) program to provide housing-related supports to eligible families served by the child welfare agency and to support in the reunification of homeless families in the child welfare system; and Delegate authority to the County Administrator to execute the grant application and other related documents necessary to submit the grant proposal and to accept the grant funds and sign the necessary documents if awarded

Published Notice Required? Yes _____ No X
Public Hearing Required? Yes _____ No X

DEPARTMENTAL RECOMMENDATION:

The Department of Health & Social Services (H&SS), Child Welfare Services (CWS) Division recommends that the Board approve a grant application of \$416,000 for the Bringing Families Home (BFH) program to provide housing-related supports to eligible families served by the child welfare agency and to support in the reunification of homeless families in the child welfare system; and Delegate authority to the County Administrator to execute the grant application and other related documents necessary to submit the grant proposal and to accept the grant funds and sign the necessary documents if awarded.

SUMMARY

The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) issued an All County Welfare Directors Letter dated January 10, 2017 which states that it recently received authority established by AB 1603 to launch a new program for homeless families involved in the child welfare system. The Bringing Families Home (BFH) Program is a new State funded program, with a County match requirement in which participating counties will provide housing-related supports to eligible families served by the child welfare agency, to support in the reunification of homeless families in the child welfare system. The CDSS sought initial concept papers from child welfare agencies interested in participating in the BFH Program. Those that met program requirements and sufficiently demonstrated the capacity to implement the BFH Program were invited to continue in the application process.

On February 10, 2017, Solano County H&SS, Child Welfare Services (CWS) Division submitted a concept paper and subsequently received an invitation from CDSS to submit a complete grant application. With this grant, Solano County seeks to serve 20 families who, without stable housing, would otherwise be at imminent risk of having children placed into foster care due to lack of housing or be unable to reunite as a family due to lack of housing.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

Counties in receipt of BFH funding are required to match the state BFH funding on a dollar-for-dollar basis. In accordance with Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC) section 16523.1, counties in receipt of funds provided for BFH shall supplement and not supplant current county funding for these purposes.

The required County match of \$208,000 towards the total program cost of \$416,000 will be funded by the Wraparound Reinvestment Fund. There is no impact to the County General Fund.

DISCUSSION:

In 1997, Wraparound was established in California under Senate Bill (SB) 163 (Chapter 795, Statutes of 1997) which

allows California counties to develop the Wraparound Model using State and County Aid to Families with Dependent Children - Foster Care (AFDC-FC) dollars. This legislation permits counties to use the Wraparound funding for planning and services delivery instead of use for placements of children/youth in high-end group homes. The purpose of the bill is to return children and youth in group home care to their homes and communities or help children at imminent risk of placement in high-end group homes to remain in their homes. This program generates reinvestment monies that can be used to provide services for families in Child Welfare Services.

Solano County has the capacity to implement the BFH Program because the program design is an expansion of the existing model used in its California Work Opportunity for Kids (CalWORKs) Housing Support Program (HSP). CalWORKs HSP focuses on assisting families with housing acquisition and retention through case management services and rental assistance, utility arrears, security deposit and housing locator assistance. Expanding on the CalWORKs HSP model, families who have an active case with CWS and have a need for housing identified will be referred to the Employment and Eligibility Division's Helping Empower Limited-Access Population (HELP) Bureau. County Social Workers in the HELP bureau will administer the VI-SPDAT assessment and enter the information in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). The VI-SPDAT will help Social Workers prioritize families for services based on their length of time of homelessness, physical and mental health conditions, and financial resources. Rapid rehousing and supportive housing models will be utilized and used depending upon client need. Once a family is identified and prioritized for services, Solano County will leverage its housing locator program which is supported by a landlord recruitment effort, to match clients with appropriate housing.

Coordination and engagement are integral to the BFH Program and child welfare agencies are highly encouraged to have established relationships with their homeless Continuum of Care (CoC) and connections with the justice system. The Solano County BFH program will provide a full suite of coordinated supportive services, including case management, mental health care, addiction treatment, financial planning, job readiness, job training and placement. An already functioning inter-disciplinary team, including representatives from CWS, E&ES, and from the Juvenile Court, will collaboratively address problems and work to support family goals.

With this grant, Solano County seeks to serve 20 families and successfully and permanently house 90% of 20 participating families, so that those families are still in a safe and permanent housing situation and will have no active child protection services case twelve months after the BFH sponsored assistance ceases. To ensure stability, the Solano County BFH program will provide tiered financial assistance that slowly decreases over a period of up to 6 months as families return to economic self-sufficiency. The community and the step-down schedule maximizes the efficient use of resources while preparing families for financial independence.

The grant application is competitive and is currently being developed by H&SS.

ALTERNATIVES:

The Board may choose not to approve H&SS's grant application for the Bringing Families Home Program. This is not recommended because it is a chance to provide housing assistance to families who are at imminent risk of having their children placed into foster care and reunite as a family due to the lack of housing.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

H&SS worked with Housing First Solano Continuum of Care and Superior Court of California.

CAO RECOMMENDATION:

APPROVE DEPARTMENTAL RECOMMENDATION