



County of Santa Cruz

HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Housing for Health Division

Robert Ratner, Director

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March 18, 2022

Dear Housing for Health Partnership (CoC) Members and Partner Agencies:

I am pleased to announce that the County of Santa Cruz Human Services Department has been allocated, and will be accepting, \$1,566,553 from the California Department of Social Services' (CDSS) fiscal year 2021-22 Bringing Families Home (BFH) program. This allocation is equal to the amount the County was awarded to implement the BFH program for the three-year period of Fiscal Year 2019/20 – 2021/22 and will allow the County to continue operating the program. BFH program participants are identified through both the County's Child Welfare Program and the countywide homeless Coordinated Entry System.

Per BFH funding expectations, I am writing to inform you of BFH related benefits, eligibility, and program related requirements with regards to the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) and the local Coordinated Entry System, as described in the February 11, 2022 Letter to All County Welfare Directors and Federally Recognized Tribal Governments in California regarding Notice of Funding for the Bringing Families Home Program (https://www.cdss.ca.gov/Portals/9/Additional-Resources/Letters-and-Notices/ACWDL/2022/CL_02-11-22%20.pdf?ver=2022-02-22-145812-573).

Program Eligibility:

BFH eligibility is broadly defined as families or individuals who **meet all three** of the following conditions:

1. Receive child welfare services at the time eligibility is determined;
2. Are homeless, at risk of homelessness, or in a living situation that cannot accommodate the child or multiple children in the home, including individuals who have not received an eviction notice; and,
3. Voluntarily agree to participate in the program.

Consistent with homeless assistance best practice, CDSS requires programs to utilize an equitable and structured assessment and screening processes to prioritize services for families with the highest service needs and vulnerabilities.

Program Design and Benefits:

The BFH core service components are detailed below and used to support the delivery of evidence-based and promising housing models such as rapid re-housing, supportive housing, or homelessness prevention services. The following service types may overlap and may not be considered mutually exclusive:

- **Housing-Related Case Management:** Should be person-centered, trauma-informed, and complement and coordinate with, but not replace or supplant, child welfare service plans, including court-ordered case plans. Activities may include coordinating a family's housing service plan, assisting in the identification of available supports related to housing stability, and providing in-depth problem solving related to housing stability.
- **Housing Navigation:** Assists participating individuals and families in finding, applying for, securing, and moving into, interim and permanent housing, as needed.
- **Housing-Related Direct Financial Assistance:** Includes rental assistance, security deposit assistance, utility payments, moving cost assistance, and interim housing assistance while housing navigators are actively working with program participants to secure permanent housing options.
- **Housing Stabilization:** Includes ongoing tenant engagement, case management, public systems assistance, legal services, credit repair assistance, life skills training, and conflict mediation with landlords and neighbors. Housing stabilization services support, once housed, a family's housing is safe, sustainable, and supports the safety and well-being of children

Collaboration and Integration Requirements:

CDSS requires BFH grantees to collaborate and coordinate with the greater housing and homelessness response system, including participation in the local homeless Continuum of Care (CoC) and local Coordinated Entry System (CES). BFH services must be in coordination with other services provided by child welfare services or tribes, family resource centers, family courts, and other service providers dedicated to the stability and wellbeing of the family. These may include but are not limited to, behavioral health and emergency response systems, educational systems, domestic violence agencies, juvenile dependency courts, legal aid organizations, and other relevant networks to maximize available funding and connect

participants to additional resources and supportive services. CDSS highly recommends BFH grantees collaborate with local Public Housing Authorities (PHAs), tribal housing authorities, and housing and homelessness agencies within incorporated cities.

Effective July 1, 2020, all grantees operating a BFH are required to ensure participants served by BFH are entered into their local Homeless Management Information System (HMIS).

I look forward to working with you as we expand and refine the local BFH program in the coming months. If you have any questions, please contact Jessica Scheiner, Housing for Health Manager, at jessica.scheiner@santacruzcounty.us or 831-454-4088.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert Ratner". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Robert Ratner
Housing for Health Division Director