



Child Welfare PASS Recommendations for Housing Access

The California Child Welfare Council established a Prioritization Task Force to develop strategies to ensure that families in the reunification process have access to the services and supports needed to successfully reunify. Housing is among the five categories of supports and services identified as critical to many families in this process. Without adequate housing, children cannot be returned to the home and parents struggle to meet their other parental obligations when they have nowhere safe or stable to live.

The State Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) was asked to lead the effort to identify strategies to secure priority access to housing in California. This work takes place in the context of historically tight housing markets and severely limited housing supports, inadequate to meet the level of general need for low-income households. In addition, housing resources -- including dedicated units with and without support services attached, long and short-term subsidies, and services that help families locate and obtain housing -- are funded and administered through a variety of public agencies at the State and local level. The State of California administers only a small fraction of these resources and many of the resources originate at the Federal level and are restricted to specific areas of the state. Thus, making priority access to housing possible for families in reunification will require not only State action, but State and local partnerships, cross-sector education, and encouragement to many parties that the State does not have the direct authority to compel to act.

To help understand better what methods and programs should be considered for creating the most effective priority access, HCD invited national and State experts and key stakeholders to a day-long convening on October 6, 2014, approximately 50 people from California and from Washington DC participated, including State and local government officials, non-profit representatives, advocates and from both housing and child welfare backgrounds. The convening included presentations about the intersection between families that experience child welfare involvement and those experiencing homelessness and housing instability, and about what is currently known regarding program models to address their needs. Attendees from around California presented on programs they are currently operating that provide housing supports for child-welfare involved families, including supportive housing, rapid rehousing, transitional housing and priority through community assessment processes for homeless families with child welfare concerns.

Attendees were also asked to work in small groups to identify key strategies to improve access. Discussions focused on targeting existing and potential new State resources, impacting of locally-controlled programs and resources, and addressing policy challenges that make housing access difficult. HCD expresses its gratitude to all the people who attended and provided their experience and commitment to helping achieve access for child welfare involved families. [A complete list of the attendees and the programs that were presented is included as an attachment to this document.]

From reviewing the available research and the current array of State programs, and considering the recommendations of the stakeholders and experts convened, HCD has developed a set of strategies and action steps to pursue over the coming years. These include activities that HCD can and will lead, as well as recommendations for work supporting other State partners and local entities. Taken together, these recommendations are intended to ease the burden on child-welfare involved families in need of housing and support the State's objective of keeping more families together.