

March 31, 2020

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS LETTER

This letter provides updated interim guidance regarding existing policies and flexibilities available in the CalWORKs Homeless Assistance program due to the federal declaration of a major disaster in California based on the statewide outbreak of COVID-19 (or novel coronavirus). Please note, the information in this letter supersedes the Homeless Assistance guidance included in the [ACWDL released on March 19, 2020](#).



KIM JOHNSON
DIRECTOR

STATE OF CALIFORNIA—HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
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March 31, 2020

ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS LETTER

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS

FROM: **JENNIFER HERNANDEZ, DEPUTY DIRECTOR**
FAMILY ENGAGEMENT AND EMPOWERMENT DIVISION

SUBJECT: INTERIM HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS PROGRAM
GUIDANCE AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON NOVEL
CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

REFERENCE: [ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS LETTER DATED MARCH 19, 2020](#); [WELFARE AND INSTITUTIONS CODE \(WIC\) SECTION 11450](#)

The purpose of this All County Welfare Directors Letter (ACWDL) is to provide updated interim guidance regarding existing policies and flexibilities available in the CalWORKs Homeless Assistance program due to the federal declaration of a major disaster in California based on the statewide outbreak of COVID-19 (or novel coronavirus). Please note, the information in this letter supersedes the Homeless Assistance guidance included in the [ACWDL released on March 19, 2020](#). All other interim guidance in the [March 19, 2020 ACWDL](#) to counties operating Housing and Homelessness Programs overseen by CDSS is still valid. The flexibilities and program modifications in this ACWDL shall expire automatically and without further notice from the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) on June 30, 2020, or earlier upon written notice from the CDSS. Once all flexibilities and guidance in this letter have expired, all requirements modified herein shall be reinstated, unless the flexibilities and guidance in this letter have been further extended by the CDSS.

CalWORKs Homeless Assistance (HA) Program

Up to 16 days of motel vouchers are available through CalWORKs HA for eligible CalWORKs recipients or apparently eligible CalWORKs applicants. In accordance with WIC sections 11450(f)(3)(A) and based on the federal declaration of a [major disaster in](#)

[California](#) due to COVID-19, counties may waive the three-day limit to verify a families' homelessness and may also issue HA benefits in increments of more than one week, up to all 16 days at once. Additionally, these families should be granted good cause for not completing the daily permanent housing search. Receiving HA due to a state or federally declared disaster does not count against a client's once-every-12-month limit on regular HA or HA based on an exception. In addition to receiving HA due to a declared disaster, clients affected by COVID-19 may also be eligible for HA based on an exception to the once-every-12 months rule, due to uninhabitability of the home or a medical illness. For example, if one parent in an AU is concerned that they have been infected and requests HA to isolate themselves from the rest of their family, HA should be granted based on an exception due to a medical illness.

Due to the current public health concerns related to COVID-19 and [social distancing guidance](#) issued by the California Department of Public Health, counties are strongly encouraged to help minimize trips that clients must make into the county office. Specifically, this letter encourages counties to use the following practices:

- HA applications are not required to be made in person or to include a face-to-face interview; therefore, counties have the discretion to complete the CW 42 for the client and have them sign electronically to avoid having them come into the County Welfare Office.
- In lieu of providing required paper verifications, such as motel receipts or daily permanent housing searches, counties may accept sworn statements from clients affirming that HA benefits were appropriately spent, or counties may grant good cause for not providing paper verifications.
- In place of a signature on the CW 42, and in place of paper verifications, counties can record a verbal attestation over the phone. For counties who do not have the capability to record a verbal attestation over the phone, they can enter a case journal entry stating the individual attested to the information provided per [ACL 16-119](#). Please see [ACIN I-60-13](#) and [ACL 17-57](#) for additional guidance on using electronic signatures in CalWORKs.
- Existing guidance requires counties to issue vendor/voucher payments when a finding of mismanagement has been determined. However, if there is no feasible way to issue a vendor/voucher payment due to COVID-19 restrictions, counties should consider issuing benefits directly on the client's EBT card, as clients remain entitled to their remaining days of benefits, despite a finding of mismanagement.

If you have any questions or need additional guidance regarding the information in this letter, please contact the Housing and Homelessness Branch at (916) 651-5155 or at housing@dss.ca.gov.