

May 13, 2025

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CHILD CARE BULLETIN (CCB) NO. 25-08

The purpose of this Child Care Bulletin (CCB) is to provide guidance to County Health and Human Services Agencies (HHSAs) and Child Care and Development contractors administering the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) Stages One, Two, and Three Child Care Programs for families receiving CalWORKs Family Reunification (FR) services pursuant to Assembly Bill 135 (Chapter 85, Statutes of 2021).



JENNIFER TROIA
DIRECTOR

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GOVERNOR

May 13, 2025

CHILD CARE BULLETIN (CCB) NO. 25-08

GUIDANCE TYPE: DIRECTIVE

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS
ALL COUNTY CHILD CARE COORDINATORS
ALL CHILD CARE AND DEVELOPMENT CONTRACTORS
ALL FOSTER CARE MANAGERS
ALL JUDICIAL COUNCIL STAFF
ALL CALWORKS PROGRAM SPECIALISTS
ALL WELFARE-TO-WORK COORDINATORS
ALL COUNTY LINKAGES COORDINATORS
ALL COUNTY CHIEF PROBATION OFFICERS
ALL COUNTY CAL-LEARN PROGRAM COORDINATORS

SUBJECT: CALIFORNIA WORK OPPORTUNITY AND RESPONSIBILITY TO KIDS (CALWORKS) STAGES ONE, TWO (C2AP), AND THREE (C3AP) CHILD CARE PROGRAMS FOR FAMILY REUNIFICATION PARTICIPANTS PURSUANT TO ASSEMBLY BILL 135 (CHAPTER 85, STATUTES OF 2021)

APPLICABLE PROGRAMS: CALIFORNIA WORK OPPORTUNITY AND RESPONSIBILITY TO KIDS (CALWORKS) STAGE ONE, STAGE TWO, AND STAGE THREE CHILD CARE PROGRAMS

REFERENCE: [AB 135 \(CHAPTER 85, STATUTES OF 2021\); ACL 23-94; ACL 25-09; EDUCATION CODE SECTION 8263; MANUALS OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES \(MPP\) DIVISION 22, SECTION 22-071; MPP 31-505.123; MPP SECTION 40-187-40-190; MPP SECTION 47-420.3; MPP SECTION 82-812.671; TITLE 5 OF THE CALIFORNIA CODE OF REGULATIONS \(CCR\) SECTION 18106; WELFARE AND INSTITUTIONS CODE \(WIC\) SECTION 11203; WIC 16501.1; WIC 16519.5](#)

Purpose

The purpose of this Child Care Bulletin (CCB) is to provide guidance addressing the changes made by [Assembly Bill \(AB\) 135 \(Chapter 85, Statutes of 2021\)](#), regarding families receiving the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) Family Reunification (FR) services who also receive child care as part of their FR plan. This CCB will also discuss program flexibilities to ensure a seamless process for selecting and securing the best child care option to meet the needs of the children and resource families. This guidance is relevant to County Health and Human Services Agencies (HHSAs) and Child Care and Development contractors that administer the Emergency Child Care Bridge Program for Foster Children (Bridge Program), CalWORKs Stages One, Two, and Three Child Care Programs, along with the California Alternative Payment Program (CAPP), and the General Child Care and Development Program (CCTR).

Background

Family Reunification is the process of reconnecting children in out-of-home care with their families of origin by providing intensive services to address the barriers that caused placement into Child Protective Services (CPS). [AB 135](#) amended [Welfare and Institutions Code \(WIC\) Section 11203](#) to authorize the provision of cash aid and child care services to families participating in CalWORKs FR as part of their reunification plan. All individuals who were members of the CalWORKs Assistance Unit (AU) when the eligible children were removed from the home may be eligible for CalWORKs cash aid, child care, and reunification services when all the following conditions apply:

1. All CalWORKs-eligible children were removed from the home and temporarily placed in out-of-home care by the Child Welfare Services (CWS) agency. For the purposes of CalWORKs FR eligibility, “all CalWORKs-eligible children were removed from the home” includes families in which a parent is either receiving aid as a Pregnant Person Only (PPO) AU or receiving aid as an existing family participating in CalWORKs FR and a newborn is removed from the home.
2. The family was receiving CalWORKs cash aid when all CalWORKs eligible children were removed from the home.
 - a. At least one parent or needy caretaker relative must have been receiving aid at the time of the removal to be eligible for CalWORKs FR cash aid, child care, and reunification services.
 - b. There is an exception for AUs that have a parent with a Welfare-to-Work (WTW) sanction.
 - i. WTW sanctioned parents may participate in CalWORKs FR services.
 - ii. Sanctioned parents are not eligible for cash aid under CalWORKs FR until the sanction has ended and the parent has been added back to the AU.
 - iii. The HHSAs and CWS agencies are encouraged to work together and use the CWS case plan to cure the sanction as described below.
 - iv. Children who are part of a CalWORKs FR plan will remain eligible for cash aid and child care even if the adults are in WTW sanctioned status.
 - c. Unaided parents/caretaker relatives, such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI) participants, ineligible non-citizens, non-needy caretaker relatives, or timed-out parents who do not qualify for a Time on Aid (TOA) exception, are

not eligible to receive CalWORKs FR cash aid or services for themselves or their children.

3. The CWS agency or court has determined that the provision of CalWORKs FR cash aid, child care, and/or services is necessary for reunification and a CWS reunification plan is in effect or being developed ([Manual of Policies and Procedures \(MPP\) Division 82, Section 82-812.671](#)).

Additional information regarding CalWORKs cash aid and services for families participating in CalWORKs FR can be found in [All County Letter \(ACL\) 23-94](#).

Guidance

Pursuant to [AB 135](#), HHSAs and contractors are to begin authorizing child care services for resource families, or any other family the child is placed with when court ordered or recommended by the CWS caseworker as part of an FR plan. HHSAs and contractors are encouraged to coordinate with local Resource and Referral (R&R) Programs and CWS agencies to establish the hours of child care needed.

Definition of Resource Family

Pursuant to [WIC Section 16519.5](#), “resource family” means an individual or family that has successfully met both the home environment assessment standards and the permanency assessment criteria necessary for providing care for a child placed by a public or private child placement agency by court order or voluntarily placed by a parent or legal guardian.

For the purposes of CalWORKs child care, the resource family, or any other family the child is placed with, shall take the place of the family of origin regarding any forms, applications, or other required communication. The resource family will be responsible for choosing the child care provider that best suits the needs of the children and family.

Child Care Authorization for CalWORKs Family Reunification Participants

Pursuant to AB 135, CalWORKs FR services, including child care, are authorized for a period of up to six months or for a time period that is based on or in accordance with CWS reunification plan or court order. Participants may be authorized for an additional six months of child care upon extension of their CalWORKs FR plan. Per [ACL 23-94](#), CWS may grant a good cause extension to the six-month temporary absence, for reunification cases, and these services may continue through the entire FR temporary absence period. If the family reunifies before the six-month interval, the child care services are discontinued. Once the child is reunified with the family of origin and the family is recertified with CalWORKs, the child care services may be authorized for up to 24 months if otherwise eligible.

Child Care Options for CalWORKs Family Reunification Participants

Health and Human Services Agencies and contractors are encouraged to choose from the child care options listed below when serving families participating in CalWORKs FR. Counties that have opted into the Bridge Program are encouraged to prioritize these funds to serve FR participants. However, any existing child care authorization shall be discontinued to avoid duplication of services. The goal is to facilitate a smooth transition that enables effective coordination of services with the resource family, along with the appropriate child care services that meet the needs of the child(ren) and family.

Health and Human Services Agencies and contractors are reminded that in accordance with [Title 5 of the California Code of Regulations \(CCR\) Section 18106](#), priority shall be given to families currently involved with CPS, or for children in families who are at risk of neglect, abuse, or exploitation upon written referral from a legal, medical, or social services agency. Within the first priority listed for services stated in [Education Code Section 8263\(b\)\(1\)](#), children receiving protective services through the local HHSAs shall be enrolled before children identified as at risk. Below is a list of subsidized child care programs that a family using FR services may access:

1. Emergency Child Care Bridge Program for Foster Children (Bridge Program)
2. CalWORKs Stage One Child Care Program
3. CalWORKs Stage Two Child Care Program
4. CalWORKs Stage Three Child Care Program
5. California Alternative Payment Program (CAPP)
6. General Child Care and Development Programs (CCTR)

Documentation of the Family Reunification Case Plan and Coordination of Services by County Welfare Services Agencies

The CWS caseworker must document in the case plan when CalWORKs FR cash aid would assist in meeting the FR goal of the parent, legal guardian, or Indian custodian to receive CalWORKs FR services. [WIC Section 16501.1\(b\)\(5\)](#) requires the caseworker to document reasonable services for FR in the case plan unless the juvenile court determines otherwise. When the case plan goal of FR changes to "Return Home", the caseworker is required to update the case plan goal in the Child Welfare Services/Case Management System. At a minimum, the caseworker must complete the case plan within 60 days of the children's removal from the home, and it must be updated every six months. Additional information on CWS caseworker case plan documentation for CalWORKs FR services can be found in [ACL 25-09](#).

The CWS caseworker should assess and document the family's child care needs in the case plan to implement CalWORKs FR services including but not limited to coordinating with the resource family to provide resources and child care provider referrals suited to their needs, the child care authorization date and hours of care that will be provided. The CWS caseworker should share the case plan with the CalWORKs WTW worker to coordinate planning and service delivery for families involved in both systems. The CWS worker and contractor are also encouraged to inform and update the HHSAs of the FR status of the family when applicable.

The CWS agencies and HHSAs are encouraged to communicate regularly with each other throughout the FR process. Communication should be prioritized at key points including when the child is removed from the home, when FR has begun, when the FR plan has been extended, and when the child is reunified with the family of origin.

Inter-County Transfers (ICT)

In accordance with the [MPP Division 40, Sections 187 to 190](#), HHSAs and contractors are to ensure a smooth transfer between counties when children are removed from the family of origin and placed with a resource family in a different county. The county of jurisdiction shall notify the placement county of an incoming child placement and provide the most recent

copies of all relevant documentation. The county of jurisdiction is responsible for providing direct supervision and arranging services in accordance with [MPP Division 31, Section 505.123](#). This includes but is not limited to coordinating with their local Resource and Referral Network to locate providers that best suits the needs of the family. Every attempt should be made to confirm the child care authorization period and the last date services were received.

Child Care Reimbursement Based on Certified Need

The HHSAs and contractors are reminded that the provisions in accordance with [Senate Bill \(SB\) 140 \(Chapter 193, Statutes of 2023\)](#) have been extended through June 30, 2025. Child care shall continue to be paid based on families' certified need, regardless of attendance as described in [CCB 23-21 \(pg. 3\)](#).

Notices of Action and Discontinuances

The [MPP Division 47, Section 420.3](#), specifies that HHSAs and contractors shall notify clients whenever there is an approval, denial, change, or discontinuance of a child care subsidy. Health and Human Services Agencies and contractors may continue using the existing Notices of Action (NOAs) for FR participants. The NOAs should be sent to the FR participant as soon as possible before any change in child care authorization occurs.

California State Automated Welfare System (CALSAWS) Automation

Until automation occurs, HHSAs and contractors are responsible for creating a six-month child care authorization certificate when child care is authorized for FR and a second six-month authorization certificate if they receive a good cause extension.

If you have any questions or need additional guidance regarding the information in this CCB, contact the Integrity, Training, and County Support Bureau by email at:

StageOneChildCare@dss.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Original Document Signed By

LUPE JAIME MILEHAM, EdD
Deputy Director
Child Care and Development Division

Attachment

Family Reunification Child Care Program Flowchart (Attachment A)

