

Shasta County Housing Authority

Family Unification Program Action Plan

I. Introduction

The Family Unification Program (FUP) is designed to provide rental assistance to families that might otherwise become separated or remain separated due to lack of adequate housing. The Child Services Division (CSD) of the Shasta County Social Services Department must certify families. The certification is a statement that the family is one for whom the lack of adequate housing is a primary factor in the placement of children in out-of-home care or in the delay of the discharge of children from such care. The Shasta County Housing Authority provides the family with a Voucher that enables the family to obtain adequate rental housing.

II. Contacting Client Families

There are three basic means by which potential client families may be contacted:

1. Families that are currently on the Housing Choice Voucher wait list may be eligible. The Shasta County Housing Authority will advise the families both directly and by newspaper advertisement. The families will be advised of the program's benefits and regulations, and referred to CSD if they appear to be eligible. Families will be selected in order based on their positions on the wait list.
2. Families in the community at large may be eligible. They will be advised by newspaper ad, and if apparently eligible, the family will be directed to CSD by the Shasta County Housing Authority.
3. Families that are current clients of CSD may be eligible. CSD will evaluate their clients for eligibility for the program, and will cross check with the Shasta County Housing Authority Housing Choice Voucher wait list.

III. Enrolling Families in the Program

When CSD has determined that the family is eligible, the CSD caseworker will provide the family with a certification and refer them to the Shasta County Housing Authority. The Shasta County Housing Authority caseworker will determine Housing Choice Voucher eligibility. Assuming eligibility, the family will be asked to submit an application, which will place them on the wait list. Families will be placed on the list based on the date of application and preferences, if any. If there is a FUP Voucher available, a briefing will be scheduled. Shasta County Housing Authority staff will conduct a briefing and issue a Voucher. The staff of the two agencies will assist the family in locating and securing a unit. Shasta County Housing Authority staff will inspect the unit and complete the leasing process.

IV. Ongoing Service

Staff from both agencies will be in contact with the family to monitor their situation in a new housing unit. CSD will evaluate the family's overall needs. Shasta County Housing Authority staff will conduct annual recertification.

V. The Role of the Public Child Welfare Agency

CSD will continue to work closely with the Shasta County Housing Authority in assisting FUP families. Those families indicating CSD involvement will be asked to complete a release and exchange of information form that will allow the Shasta County Housing Authority and CSD to certify eligibility. CSD can check lists of names against a computer listing of children and families receiving services. Identified families can then be referred to the social worker handling the case to complete the certification. A similar process will be employed with new applications coming in directly to the Shasta County Housing Authority. The individual caseworkers of the public welfare agency also identify families. Home visits, personal observation and outside referrals from neighbors, teachers, etc., all contribute to the identification of appropriate families. The Shasta County Housing Authority will open the Housing Choice Voucher wait list to Family Unification eligible families. The list will not be limited to families who are referred by public child welfare agencies.

CSD, as part of their initial investigation and prior to opening a protective services case, completes an extensive assessment of the family and their problems. As part of the assessment, housing is carefully evaluated. Should housing be an issue, a service aide is assigned to work with the family. For each family where housing is determined to be a primary contributing factor, a referral will be made to the Family Unification Program. The family will be asked to sign a release and will be given a certification as part of the referral process. The CSD Service aides will assist the family in completing the application process and provide transportation when needed.

Families that have been on the list for an extended period following certification will be crosschecked to determine continued eligibility.

CSD, in addition to the CSD Service aides, will assign a Staff Services Analyst to serve as a liaison between CSD and the local Shasta County Housing Authority staff. Additional support staff will assist as needed in processing certifications in a timely manner.

CSD recognizes the dangers homelessness and substandard housing play in the lives of children. To address the needs of these children for a safe home environment, the Division has focused much attention on this issue over the years. CSD has worked with the Shasta County Housing Authority in the past on several projects and on behalf of specific clients.

Staff of CSD work with transitional housing facilities, which provide a multitude of services, aimed at assisting the homeless family to gather the personal and financial resources to move to permanent housing. The facilities provide a stable environment that has been extremely beneficial to the agency's clients. CSD participates with the Shasta County Housing Authority and transitional facility staff in locating and securing housing for clients.

CSD has also developed two service aide positions. The service aides are assigned to assist social workers in serving families with homemaking, parenting, budgeting, and nutritional needs. One often used and important function of the aides is in the area of housing. Families with poor housekeeping standards and/or living in substandard housing receive hands-on instruction and assistance in improving and/or locating appropriate new housing. The aides, over the years, have developed a list of agencies and landlords who are willing to help these families. They will provide such service as getting power and other utilities restored or started.

The current aides are well known at the rescue mission, shelters, and agencies that offer any form of

housing assistance. This program will provide another valuable tool that can be used in helping dysfunctional families recover and regain control of their lives.

CSD is committed to helping families and has recognized the problems families face when homeless or with substandard housing. When housing is an identified problem, every effort is made to assist families to improve their home environment or to locate housing that is more appropriate. The added services offered by the Family Unification Program will provide a needed and valuable new asset. Shasta County Department of Social Services is ready to make a commitment to this project and assign the necessary staff to support and administer the Department's part of this program.