

AB 22: Right to Housing for Families and Children Facing Homelessness

Vision: Establish a right to housing for families and children by establishing best practices to prevent homelessness for families and children. Preventing a family from losing their home in the first place shall be critical. However, should this prove insufficient, the state should work with unsheltered homeless families and children and provide them with emergency shelter, supportive services and placement in permanent housing, and establish a process that treats participants with dignity and respect, to help stabilize the family and create as little trauma as possible.

Philosophy: Respect shall be held paramount and the culture when establishing a right to housing should be uplifting and minimize trauma. Many of these families are community members and maintaining their dignity and proximity to their daily lives is vital. The process should recognize the fear and anxiety families experience when facing the prospect, or state, of homelessness, the extreme manifestation of poverty.

Measurements: To ensure the efficacy of the program, and provide insight into future modifications, the following data shall be collected:

1. The number of households/families who received support and were prevented from losing their homes
2. The number of households/families who were provided temporary shelter and the average length of their stay
3. The number of households/families who were transitioned from temporary shelter into permanent housing

Framework:

- Prevention
 - The first line of defense to any successful efforts to ending homelessness
 - Critical components to preventing families from entering homelessness are:
 - Payment of rent and utility arrearages
 - Legal support in the eviction process
 - Better tracking of evictions as they occur
 - Connection to services which address factors that could lead to homelessness (e.g. job loss, domestic violence, mental health disorders, etc.)
- Emergency Accommodations
 - Should prevention fail to maintain housing for a family, immediate emergency accommodations, which can include shelter, must be available (placement in permanent housing is ideal, but may not be a reality immediately)
 - Critical components of a successful accommodation system are:
 - Shelters placed sufficiently to allow for families to remain in their communities
 - Quick in-processing that keeps disturbance of a families' routine to a minimum
 - Shelters which are accommodating, clean, safe and supportive
 - Access to other supportive services such as childcare, mental health programs, substance abuse treatment, financial literacy classes, enrollment in various social safety net programs, classes for employment attainment and connection with local workforce development boards and businesses
 - No preconditions to entry, aside from being a California resident
- Permanent Housing
 - While shelter is critical, it is a temporary solution to a persistent problem which can only be solved by providing permanent housing
 - Housing shall:
 - Be affordable to the family, ensuring further concern regarding payment of rent shall be alleviated until the family can maintain stability (federal funding can be leveraged)
 - Be in the community of the family to maintain access to support systems, education, employment, childcare, etc.
 - Continue to provide supportive services until such time they are no longer needed