

38. Federal and/or State Declared Natural Disasters

38.1 Application

38.1.1 Application Case Processing

When an individual or family displaced by a natural disaster (i.e. fire, earthquake, flood etc.) applies for CalWORKs, workers shall do the following:

- Establish the evacuee was living in a county designated as a federal disaster and/or State-declared emergency zone during the period the disaster occurred and
- Ask the evacuee if anyone in their family is currently receiving CalWORKs in that county, or from a disaster county.

38.1.2 Diversion Services [EAS 42-302.22, 81-215.33, 81-215.5]

Counties are strongly encouraged to explore CalWORKs Diversion eligibility for disaster evacuees applying for benefits. Diversion payments are designed to address a specific crisis or item of need and may be appropriate for displaced families. (Refer to Chapter 32 “[Diversion](#)” for more information.)

38.1.3 Treatment of Disaster Relief Payments and Assistance [EAS 44-111.61 (i), 42-213.515]

CalWORKs regulations exclude federal disaster and emergency assistance and comparable disaster assistance provided by state, local governments and disaster assistance organizations from consideration as income, property or resources. Therefore, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) relief, American Red Cross relief, and D-CalFresh benefits, if applicable, will not impact evacuees’ eligibility for CalWORKs.

38.1.4 Determining CalWORKs Eligibility for Evacuees Not Currently Receiving CalWORKs

Individuals who are displaced due to a disaster must meet all conditions of eligibility, including but not limited to deprivation, age, residency, immigration status, income and property limits.

Table 1:

<p>In addition to the required conditions of eligibility, Eligibility Worker’s will review the following when determining eligibility...</p>	
<p>Homeless Assistance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homeless evacuees must be informed of their option to apply for temporary and permanent housing assistance. Temporary homeless assistance may be granted to apparently eligible applicant families prior to the final determination of eligibility. • Applicant families who have already received homeless assistance in the last 12 months are entitled to an exception to the once every 12-month time limit. When the homelessness is the direct and primary result of a state or federally declared disaster, all 16 days of temporary homeless assistance may be issued in one lump sum payment. Once the family is approved for CalWORKs, referrals to additional programs like the CalWORKs Housing Support Program (HSP) or other homeless services available in the community should be made. <p>(Refer to Chapter 36, “Homeless Assistance”)</p>
<p>Immediate Need</p>	<p>Applicants are in an emergency situation and should be evaluated for an immediate need payment. Liquid resources are defined as items of value which are immediately available and reasonable convertible to cash in time to meet the emergency situation. Many evacuees of a disaster will not have time to convert resources to cash prior to or after evacuation.</p> <p>(Refer to Chapter 6, “Immediate Need”)</p>
<p>Residency</p>	<p>The written statement of the applicant is acceptable to establish the intention to reside in California and in the county of application for the foreseeable future. For example, many evacuees may wish to return to their home counties once it is allowable, safe, and feasible to do so, but are unlikely to know when (or if) that will occur. In these cases, neighboring counties should accept applications, carry the case if approved, and initiate inter-county transfers to the home disaster county if appropriate.</p> <p>(Refer to Chapter 18, “Residence”)</p>
<p>Income</p>	<p>Due to a disaster, some evacuees may not have income that can be anticipated. Reasonably anticipated income is defined as income expected to be available to or received by an applicant/recipient, and available to meet their needs during the SAR or AR/CO payment period. It is expected that some evacuees, due to the disaster, will no longer have income that can be reasonably anticipated.</p> <p>Note:</p> <p>For refugee families applying for CalWORKs, the Receptions and Placement (R&P) income may or may not be counted depending on the method of disbursement by the Resettlement Agency. However, if the R&P income is counted as income in the month received and the applicant is found to be ineligible for CalWORKs due to R&P income, then a determination of RCA/ECA must be completed.</p> <p>(Refer to Chapter 26.8, “Availability of Income”)</p>

<p>In addition to the required conditions of eligibility, Eligibility Worker’s will review the following when determining eligibility...</p>	
<p>Property/Resources</p>	<p>Many evacuees will not be able to access, occupy, or sell their property at the time of application. The applicant’s ability and circumstances in meeting the property requirements shall be taken into consideration and EWs will make a good faith effort to assist the applicant to obtain needed verification or accept a statement signed under penalty of perjury.</p> <p>(Refer to Chapter 14.3, “Availability and Inaccessibility”)</p>
<p>Temporary Absence</p>	<p>If an evacuee family member expects to reunite with the applicant family within one full calendar month, consider that member to be temporarily absent from his/her family.</p> <p>Existing CalWORKs recipients can maintain a home in a county different from the county where they are physically residing if they intend to return to that home within four months.</p> <p>(Refer to Chapter 25.10, “Temporary Absence”)</p>
<p>WTW</p>	<p>Many families are in a state of crisis and will not be able to participate in Welfare-to-Work (WTW) activities. To ensure these families receive appropriate assistance, EWs should make a WTW good cause exemption determination. This should be completed at the eligibility determination so that families are not needlessly required to attend a WTW orientation and appraisal. All good cause determinations or WTW exemptions are made on a case-by-case basis</p> <p>If an applicant or recipient expresses the need for CalWORKs barrier removal services, such as mental health services, HSP or temporary homeless assistance, refer them to CWES who will provide these services as expeditiously as possible.</p> <p>(Refer to Chapter 54 “CalWORKs Employment Services Program”)</p>

38.1.5 RCA/ECA and TCVAP

CalWORKs rules regarding residency, income, property/resources, temporary absence, work participation and SAR 7 reporting requirements also apply to RCA/ECA and TCVAP applicants and recipients.



Note:

Applicants for RCA/ECA and TCVAP are exempt from the provision of Social Security Numbers (SSNs) and they must be informed that SSNs are not required to access benefits but may be voluntarily provided. It is not a program requirement and they must be informed on the intended use for the SSNs.

The Receptions and Placement (R&P) income that is received from a Resettlement Agency as part of the refugee resettlement process is not counted as income. [Refer to [Chapter 60.10.1](#)]

38.1.6 Authorizing and Continuing Benefits

All AUs, including evacuees, must be informed of their reporting responsibilities under SAR or AR/CO, as appropriate. AUs that provide statements under penalty of perjury, must be advised to make every effort to obtain and provide documentation of factors impacting their eligibility during the payment period, and to seek assistance if help is needed in obtaining documentation. [Refer to “[Reporting Responsibilities](#)”, page 9-1 for additional information.]

38.2 Homelessness due to State or Federally Declared Natural Disaster

Whenever the client's homelessness is a direct result of a state or federally declared natural disaster, the client may be determined eligible for either, or both, TS and PH. All eligibility factors for TS and/or PH must be met, before payment is issued. The client must provide verification of their homelessness and the reason must be as a direct result of the disaster.

The following rules apply to clients who become homeless as a direct result of a state or federally declared disaster:

- These families qualify for good cause for failure to provide proof of housing search.
- The county may know that many families were displaced by disaster that was declared by the Governor and that the AU may have to travel quite a distance to find an available motel. The county may issue the AU the entire 16 days of temporary HA on the day they apply.
- There is no limit on how many times a family can receive HA due to a state or federally declared natural disaster in any given year.
- When the AU receives HA based on a state or federally declared natural disaster, it does not count as their regular once every 12 months HA benefit or their once every 12 months limit on exceptions.

AB 607 requires the county to identify and inform recipients of their eligibility for CalWORKs temporary and permanent HA.



Note:

In the **Collect Case Special Indicators** CalWIN window, please select:

- *THA Natural Disaster-AB 607* for temporary HA
- *PHA Natural Disaster-AB 607* for permanent HA

**Example:**

A recipient applies for TS, stating that their apartment is uninhabitable due to damage caused by an earthquake. The EW receives verification that the earthquake occurred and that the client's previous residence was uninhabitable due to earthquake damage. All other TS eligibility factors are met and the EW issues the TS payments as appropriate.

**Example:**

A recipient applies for PH, stating that they have had to relocate because a flood occurred. Upon checking, the EW determines that the county of previous residence was not included in the federal or state declaration of natural disaster. The application for PH under the state or federal disaster exception is denied, a HA denial NOA is issued and the denial is recorded Online. The EW must explore potential eligibility for HA based on uninhabitability of a residence.

38.3 Questions & Answers

Question:	Answer:
1. Do we continue to follow normal regulations in regard to evacuees who are fleeing felons?	Yes. Evacuee applicants for CalWORKs must meet all conditions of eligibility.
2. How do we verify (birth certificates, SSN cards, etc) whether the applicants are truly victims, or can we just have them sign an affidavit?	If the applicant and county make a good-faith effort to obtain verification of the evacuee’s identity, TANF eligibility, time on aid, and linking and non-linking conditions of CalWORKs eligibility, and are unable to make contact with the evacuee’s financial institutions or any other entity/institution, the county shall accept the evacuee’s statements signed under penalty of perjury in lieu of verification.

3. What do we do with evacuees who have lost their SSN cards or do not know their SSN?

As a condition of CalWORKs eligibility, applicants/recipients are required to submit SSNs. Individuals who are unable to furnish SSNs must apply to the Social Security Administration (SSA) to get a replacement card and supply verification of their completed application before aid may be authorized. However, if the applicant has made a good-faith effort to apply but is unable to quickly obtain verification of a completed application, the county shall temporarily accept the evacuee’s statements regarding these facts signed under penalty of perjury.

RCA/ECA applicants are exempt from the provision of SSNs. The same standard applies to TCVAP applicants/recipients. Counties must not require RCA/ECA/TCVAP applicants to provide SSNs in order to be found eligible for benefits. The counties may request the applicants to voluntarily provide the SSN if the applicants are informed that is not a requirement and the intended use for the SSN.

Question:	Answer:
<p>4. Are homeless evacuee families subject to Semi-Annual/Annual Reporting (as appropriate) requirements for CalWORKs?</p>	<p>Yes, all AUs subject to Semi-Annual/Annual Reporting are expected to file their reports in a timely manner. However, the good cause rules for late filing apply to reports filed late because of the disaster. For semi-annual reports, if the report is filed in the first month after it is due, the county must evaluate good cause for late filing and if good cause is found, the discontinuance for late filing is rescinded. If the report is filed after the first month after it is due, the county must evaluate good cause upon request of the parent, other caretaker relative or an authorized representative.</p> <p>For annual redetermination, if the report is filed in the first month after it is due, the county must evaluate good cause for late filing upon the recipient's request. If good cause is found, the discontinuance for late filing is rescinded. If the report is filed after the first month after it is due, the county must evaluate good cause upon request of the parent, other caretaker relative or an authorized representative.</p>
<p>5. Are homeless evacuees eligible for more than 16 days of homeless assistance benefits?</p>	<p>Yes, if a family's homelessness is caused by a state or federally declared disaster, in addition to the 16 days of disaster homeless assistance, they are also eligible for 16 days of regular homeless assistance (if they haven't already received homeless assistance in the last 12 months), and 16 days of homeless assistance based on uninhabitability of the home (if they haven't already received homeless assistance based on an exception to the once-every-12-months rule in the last 12 months), for a total of up to 48 nights of shelter payments.</p>
<p>6. Can a family who already received disaster homeless based on a separate state or federally declared emergency receive disaster homeless assistance based on a non-related state or federally declared emergency?</p>	<p>Yes, a family is eligible for 16 days of disaster homeless assistance every time a state or federally declared disaster is the direct and primary cause of homelessness.</p>
<p>7. Does a family have to prove that their home was burned in the fire to be eligible for disaster homeless assistance?</p>	<p>No, if a family has been displaced or evacuated due to the fires, they meet the definition of homeless, and their homelessness should be considered to be a direct result of the declared disaster.</p>

