



## FAMILY HOMELESSNESS RESPONSE SYSTEM FAQ: GUEST AND PROGRAM PARTICIPANT

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Family homelessness is a crisis that impacts some of the most vulnerable people in our community. To better address the needs of families in our community, HSH worked closely with family providers and people with lived experiences of homelessness to develop key reforms to the family homelessness response system. These reforms were rolled out in December 2024 and updated on January 21, 2025.

This document is intended to answer some of the most frequently asked questions that shelter guests have about the policy.

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

#### 1) What is the purpose of the family shelter reforms?

The purpose of the reforms to the family homelessness response system are intended to improve efficiency and **better meet the needs of families in our community** by:

- Increasing flow through the family system
- Reinforcing the use of shelter for emergencies
- Improving coordination between multiple parts of the family homelessness response system
- Increasing access for the most vulnerable families
- Reducing the family shelter waitlist to households who have no alternative
- Solidifying system alignment

#### 2) Did HSH engage with the community in developing these reforms?

**Yes.** Throughout 2024, HSH staff worked closely with internal subject matter experts, family shelter providers and families with lived experiences of homelessness. HSH hosted client input sessions and provider workshops to gather input and information about the most pressing challenges within the family homelessness response system. These reforms were developed out of this input.

### Family Shelter Eligibility & Prioritization

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#### 3) What is the new family shelter waiting list prioritization policy?

HSH changed the shelter waiting list process to ensure that it is focused on people living in the direst situations, including:

- Living in a place not meant for human habitation
- Residing in shelter/hotel w/exit date of less than 14 days
- Residing in a residence and being evicted w/in 14 days



- Leaving an institution and was homeless prior
- Actively currently fleeing domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, human trafficking and other dangerous or life-threatening circumstances
- Pregnant people or people reuniting with children transferring from shelter for adults without children
- Families living in a shelter without 24-hour access to amenities

**4) Under the new shelter prioritization policy, families are prioritized for shelter based on their current living situation. Will my family's living situation be verified through a site visit or inspection?**

**No.** Your living situation will be determined based on what you disclose about your current living situation to Family Access Point(s). Additional verification will not be required.

**5) If I am actively fleeing domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, human trafficking and other dangerous or life-threatening circumstances, am I eligible for shelter even if I currently live in housing or shelter?**

**Yes.** Family Access Points are expected to conduct Family Shelter Prioritization with all families seeking shelter who are currently fleeing domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, human trafficking and other dangerous or life-threatening circumstances even if you currently live in housing or shelter.

**6) If I am living in housing (including doubled up or SRO), am I eligible for shelter?**

**No.** To ensure that shelter is available for families that are unsheltered, leaving their current situation within 14 days, fleeing violence, and living in shelters without 24- hour access, families that currently have housing cannot sign up for shelter.

**7) What if my family's living situation changes and I need shelter in the future? Can I receive support?**

**Yes.** If you need shelter, contact a Family Access Point and complete a Current Living Situation Assessment and Family Shelter Assessment.

Note: When Family Access Points are referring any eligible family to the shelter waitlist, the provider should complete a new Family Shelter Assessment and use that new assessment to complete the waitlist referral.

**8) Which families on the shelter waiting list will be placed into shelter first?**

The new policy prioritizes families for shelter based on several circumstances including:



- Current Living Situation
- Actively Fleeing violence
- Disabilities
- Pregnancy
- Having children under 2 years old.
- Families with the highest prioritization scores will be offered shelter first.

**9) Does it matter how long my family has been on the waiting list?**

**Yes.** The length of time that you have been on the waiting list will be the “tiebreaker” when prioritization scores are tied.

For example, if there are two families living in places not meant for human habitation, actively fleeing violence, with three or more disabilities, one or more pregnant household members, and a child under 2, the first family with the longest time on the waitlist will be offered shelter first.

**10) When in the process will my family be screened for shelter eligibility?**

**Continuously.**

- **When first requesting shelter:** Families who are interested in shelter will be screened for shelter eligibility by Coordinated Entry Providers. Families who are eligible for shelter will complete a Family Shelter Assessment and join the shelter waitlist.
- **During each check:** Coordinated Entry Providers will gather information from the family, including a Current Living Situation Assessment and updating the Family Shelter Assessment to reflect changes. If a family is no longer eligible for shelter, they will be removed from the waiting list.
- **At the time of referral:** before offering shelter, Coordinated Entry Providers will verify if the family is still eligible for shelter. If the family is no longer eligible, they will be removed from the list instead of offered shelter.

**11) When will my Family Shelter Assessment be Updated?**

**Continuously.** Families who request shelter will be assessed for shelter using the Family Shelter Assessment with a Family Access Point who will ensure the information in the assessment is correct and add the family to the shelter waitlist. At each interaction with a Family Access Point, staff will complete a Current Living Situation Assessment. Families who are not eligible for shelter will be removed from the shelter waitlist.

**12) How long will my Family Shelter Assessments be valid?**

Until the family is placed in shelter or no longer eligible for Family Shelter. Families who are interested in shelter will be screened for shelter eligibility. Eligible Families will complete a Family



Shelter Assessment with a Coordinated Entry Provider who will ensure the information in the assessment is correct and join the shelter waitlist.

Note: when Coordinated Entry providers complete a Family Shelter Assessment for a family who was previously ineligible for shelter, the provider should complete a new Family Shelter Assessment.

**13) Will my Family Shelter Assessments expire if I do not maintain contact with the Access Point?**

**Yes.** Families seeking shelter are expected to maintain regular contact with their Family Coordinated Entry Provider. Any family with no updates for 90 days will be automatically removed from the Shelter Queue.

**14) Is shelter placement guaranteed for all eligible San Francisco Homeless Families?**

**No.** Family shelter supply is limited, and families are not guaranteed shelter placement.

## Family Shelter Length of Stay Policy

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**15) What is the new family shelter length of stay policy?**

HSH has reinstated the pre-COVID shelter length of stay limit of 90 days for temporary shelter placements. If a family and provider need more than 90 days to help end the family's homelessness the provider can authorize up to 3 extensions (30 days each) based on family circumstances and the guidelines of the policy. Additional extensions can be authorized by HSH based on family circumstances.

HSH has established a 14-day stay limit for emergency placements in hotels. If a family and provider need more than 14 days to support the family to connect into a temporary shelter placement or end their homelessness, the provider can authorize up to 3 extensions (14 days each) based on family circumstances and the guidelines of the policy. Additional extensions can be authorized by HSH based on family circumstances.

**16) What happened in January 2025 with the automatic 30-day extension for families in 90-day shelter placements?**

While the reforms were informed by providers and people with lived experiences of homelessness, we have updated the policy to reflect additional feedback that we have received from community partners to add an additional reason for extension. Given this update, **HSH granted families currently (January 21, 2025) enrolled in a 90-day family shelter as of January 2025 a one-time automatic 30-day extension to their shelter stay.** During this time, HSH will provide additional



communications materials and training to the provider staff implementing the updated policy so that it can be done transparently and equitably.

**17) If I am granted the automatic 30-day extension in January 2025, is this considered the first provider approved extension?**

**Yes.** The automatic 30-day extension granted in January 2025 is the first of up to three possible provider approved extensions.

**18) If I enter shelter in or after February 2025, will I also get an automatic 30-day extension?**

**No.** Only families currently in family shelter as of January 2025 will receive the automatic first extension. HSH is granting the extension time now to allow shelter providers to receive training and communication materials on the updated policy.

**19) Can I see the full policy?**

**Yes.** Click [here](#) to access the updated policy (updated January 21, 2025).

**20) Will I be informed of my shelter exit date?**

**Yes.** Family shelters inform families of their shelter exit date during their shelter intake. The date will be documented on their program agreement signed during intake. In addition, families should receive a 30-day notice letter if they are in a 90-day shelter placement, and their case manager will schedule an extension review meeting at least 30 days prior to their exit date to discuss extension eligibility. If a family receives an extension, their new exit date will be listed on their extension approval letter.

**21) If I am a family in shelter and I think I might need more than 90-days, what should I do? Can I request an extension?**

**Yes.** If you are currently staying in a family shelter and think that you will need more time at the shelter, please contact your shelter case manager right away. If you do not know who your shelter case manager is, please check in with the front desk staff at the shelter and they will give you the contact information for your assigned case manager.



You can request an extension from your shelter case manager by phone, email, or in person meeting with them. Your case manager will schedule an extension review meeting at least 30 days prior to your exit date to discuss if your family is eligible for an extension.

**22) How will I find out if I am granted an extension?**

Your case manager will communicate with you about extension approval/denial in writing after your extension review meeting. For 90-day stays, you will receive a letter within 7 days of your extension review meeting. For 14-day stays, you will receive a letter within 2 days of your extension review meeting.

**23) I am in the family shelter and confused about this new policy and how it will affect my family. Can I get help understanding the new policy?**

**Yes.** If you are currently staying in a family shelter and are confused about how this policy will affect you and your family, contact your shelter case manager right away. If you do not know who your shelter case manager is, please check in with the front desk staff at the shelter and they will give you the contact information for your assigned case manager. The family can also request to speak to the case management supervisor for assistance.

Family shelter providers should leave a list of assigned case managers and contact information with front desk staff.

**24) How do I qualify for an extension?**

The Family Shelter System Length-of-Stay Policy allows families placed in any of HSH's Family Temporary Shelter or Urgent Accommodation Voucher (UAV) Programs the opportunity to receive a placement extension beyond the designated length of stay to address barriers to housing for households actively engaged in a housing resolution and meeting their family success plan milestones.

Families may be eligible for up to three extensions of their 14-day or 90-day stay if they meet the specified criteria outlined in the policy. Households must demonstrate active engagement in case management, participate in any programs and/or services that address barriers to housing, maintain compliance with shelter rules and regulations, provide documentation of efforts made to secure housing, applications submitted, and attend housing appointments. The eligibility criteria for extensions include:

- A medical condition or treatment that will be resolved during the extension
- A pending shelter, transitional housing or permanent housing placement
- Housing barriers outside of the client's direct and immediate control, including but not limited to, immigration-related barriers.



**25) Can you provide examples of the types of barriers that are out of a family's control?**

**Yes.** Families may be eligible for an extension if the family can demonstrate continual and consistent efforts to obtain a housing resolution that they have been unable to achieve because of barriers outside of their direct and immediate control. This may include barriers to housing and employment based on one's immigration status. Other examples include barriers to housing due to credit scores, criminal records, history of evictions, difficulty obtaining employment, disabilities that impact the family's ability to participate, and active domestic violence crises that impact the family's ability to participate. This list is not all-inclusive.

**26) Can you provide the type of documentation I need for each extension criteria?**

**Yes.** Here are some examples of documentation that could be provided to show that a family meets extension criteria. Families should speak to their case manager about extension eligibility, as not all situations require written documentation.

Extension Criteria	Description	Documentation Examples
Medical	Guests has a current medical or mental health course of treatment, intervention, or assessment that will be resolved or completed during the extension.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doctor's Note</li> <li>• Hospital Discharge Paperwork</li> </ul>
Shelter or Transitional Housing Placement Pending	<p>Household is on the Family Shelter Waitlist (for families in 14-day emergency placement)</p> <p>Is approved for a Victim Service Provider (VSP) or Domestic Violence (DV) shelter placement;</p> <p>Is approved for a transitional housing program; or for an approved transfer to an Adult or TAY shelter program.</p> <p>Household has written documentation of approval for a transitional housing program.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ONE system verification of family on the HSH family shelter waitlist.</li> <li>• Letter, text, or phone call from the program provider confirming a shelter or transitional housing placement is pending.</li> <li>• Placement verified verbally or in writing from HSH Program Manager about a pending transfer.</li> </ul>
Pending Housing Placement	Household has written documentation of a housing opportunity through a landlord or	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ONE system verification of Housing Referral</li> </ul>



	<p>problem-solving resolution plan that will be achieved during the extension.</p> <p>Household is active on the PSH or Rapid Rehousing queue; or household is enrolled in a Rapid Rehousing or other housing program and is in active housing search.</p>	<p>Status or Housing Referral.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Problem-solving plan or resolution coordinated with the shelter case manager and documented in ONE system notes and/or the family success plan.</li> <li>• Letter from Housing Authority or other agency.</li> </ul>
Housing Barriers	<p>Despite the household’s continual and consistent efforts to obtain a housing resolution they have not been able to achieve a housing solution due to barriers outside of their direct and immediate control. This includes, but is not limited to, immigration-related barriers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Receipts of application submissions or copy of applications (housing, employment).</li> <li>• Documentation (emails, calls, text) of appointments with legal representation or other organizations helping with immigration, criminal record expungement, etc.</li> </ul>

In addition, eligibility for every 90-Day Temporary Shelter Placement Type extension requires documentation in the ONE System of the household’s engagement with an Access Point, progress in their Family Success Plan and engagement with shelter program case management, including regular attendance of weekly case management meetings. The Family Success Plan shall include goals to address any identified housing barriers.

Engagement and success plan documentation is the responsibility of Family Access Point and/or family shelter provider staff when providing services to a family. If a family is not engaging in services, this documentation will not be available in the ONE system.

**27) I’ve already received three extensions in my 90-day stay because I have “barriers to housing” but I still don’t have a housing solution. Can I continue to be extended at the shelter?**





The shelter provider can approve up to three extensions for guests with 90-day shelter placements. After those three extensions, additional extensions can be provided with the approval of HSH.

Families are eligible for these additional extensions if they meet the following criteria:

- The family continues to meet the extension criteria for first three extensions
- The family continues to face housing barriers outside of their direct and immediate control

Families with a lot of housing barriers may also be eligible for transitional housing. Families should speak with their case manager if they are interested in learning more about transitional housing options and eligibility.

**28) What happens if my extension request is denied?**

If a family's shelter extension request is denied because the family does not meet the extension eligibility criteria than the shelter exit date stands. Families can get back on the family shelter waiting list if they will not have a safe place to go upon exit from the shelter. Families should call or go to a Family Access Point to reapply for the family shelter waitlist. Families with 14 days or less left in shelter may be eligible to get back onto the family shelter waitlist. Families do not need to wait until they exit the shelter to get back on the waitlist.

**29) I'm a shelter guest and I feel like my provider did not follow the policy or grant me an extension that I am eligible for. Can I appeal the decision?**

**Yes.** Families can make a complaint/grievance about the decision by following the shelter program's complaint policy. If a family has already submitted a complaint with the shelter provider and they are not satisfied, they may file a grievance with HSH by emailing [HSHgrievances@sfgov.org](mailto:HSHgrievances@sfgov.org).

**30) If I am currently in shelter but my stay is coming to an end, can I get back on the family shelter waitlist?**

**Yes.** You can put your family back on the family shelter waiting list by calling or visiting one of the family access points within 14 days of your exit date.

**31) If I am working with Problem Solving Housing Location Assistance, is that considered a pending placement that would qualify me for a shelter extension?**

**Yes.** A problem-solving resolution is considered a pending placement and as long as the problem-solving solution can be achieved within the extension timeline and can be documented, this would be a valid reason for an extension. If the housing location assistance will take longer than the extension timeline to achieve a solution but the family is engaged actively with the Problem-Solving Housing Location Assistance, they may be granted an extension.



### **32) What housing resources are available to families in shelters?**

All families staying in family shelter should work closely with their case manager to ensure that they have been assessed for housing in the Homelessness Response System. Some family shelters offer housing workshops or other support to help families understand their housing options.

Through the Homelessness Response System families may be able to access permanent supportive housing, tenant based rental assistance, rapid rehousing, shallow subsidies, and problem solving depending on eligibility and coordinated entry prioritization. The implementation of these shelter reforms corresponds with the rollout of new family rapid rehousing vouchers as part of the Safer Family Plan which significantly expands the number of family rapid rehousing vouchers available to family's experiencing homelessness.

In addition to housing through HSH's Homelessness Response System, families interested in mainstream affordable housing should apply in DALIA for San Francisco's affordable housing programs. Community [housing counselors](#) can help you with your DAHLIA application and housing search. Other housing opportunities such as Section 8 may also provide housing options to families.

