Employment Services
Annual Update

Department of Employment and Benefit Services
Social Services Agency
County of Santa Clara
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Employment Services is a comprehensive employment and training program designed to help participants become financially self-sufficient.

Although its primary focus is the CalWORKs program, Employment Services also assists CalFresh and General Assistance recipients, as well as community members who participate in our job fairs.

FY 2019-2020 was a very productive year for Employment Services. We made great strides in beginning to implement Cal-OAR, the state’s new data-driven program management system for CalWORKs.

Unlike the federal Work Participation Rate, which is an all-or-nothing measurement reflecting the number of cases in which CalWORKs clients fulfill welfare-to-work requirements, Cal-OAR is a broader, more nuanced system that will allow the County to measure the incremental progress of families striving for economic self-sufficiency.

We also continued our unique Intern & Earn program, which prepares youth from CalWORKs, CalFresh, and Foster Care families for workplace success.

This year, youth who participate in Intern & Earn will have the opportunity to earn up to $3,960 over the summer while they explore potential career paths and grow their employment IQ.

Beginning in June 2020, changes to the “earned income disregard” will allow working CalWORKs families to exclude more of their income from the grant calculation. The disregard will increase from $225 to $500 and 50% of the remaining income.

In another positive change that will increase the budget of CalWORKs families, the Governor’s Proposed Budget for FY 2020-2021 includes a 3.1% cost-of-living increase for CalWORKs families.

Finally, beginning next year, the State will allow parents who receive child support payments to retain additional funds now captured by CalWORKs and not passed through to the recipient.

The following pages highlight the successes and key programs of Employment Services.

We hope that you enjoy learning about Employment Services, a vital program within the Social Services Agency that helps the neediest families within our community achieve financial independence.
*Just before publication of the Annual Update, Santa Clara County was struck by COVID-19. In an attempt to contain this new coronavirus, the Public Health Department issued shelter-in-place orders which mandated that all non-essential businesses shutter their doors and that all essential businesses enforce social distancing.

As a result of the sudden closure of so many businesses, unemployment skyrocketed and applications for benefits rose dramatically.

Agency-wide, a tremendous effort was made to convert our workforce into teleworkers. Almost all employees received laptops, headsets, and other equipment required to assist families during this crisis.

Although we closed our lobbies to the public, we continued to serve families in need by processing all applications electronically, by mail, and by phone, and by waiving the requirement for some eligibility documentation.

In response to COVID-19, we certainly tried to help ease the burden of our community members, and we hope that our agency-wide efforts made a difference.
CALWORKS 2.0

CalWORKs 2.0 is a framework that uses a goal-oriented, individualized case management approach focused upon family strengths and needs.

Based on adult learning and behavioral research models, CalWORKs 2.0 helps participants set goals that align with program requirements while taking into account their capabilities and the obstacles they face.

An important feature of CalWORKs 2.0 is that it allows participants to set individual goals that are both meaningful to them and realistic given their strengths and challenges. Claudia Ramirez-Nazemian, Program Manager in the Employment Services Bureau, explained: “By empowering clients to create their own goals, we are helping to create a sense of ownership and commitment.”

WHOLE FAMILY APPROACH

Families that come to Employment Services may experience crisis situations and obstacles such as domestic violence, substance abuse, and mental health issues. CalWORKs 2.0 recognizes that in order to achieve economic stability, these issues must first be addressed.

Employment Services staffers collaborate with community partners including Abode Services, the Health Alliance, Next Door Solutions to Domestic Violence, and Silicon Valley Adult Education.

The combined expertise of this multi-disciplinary team, well-versed in intensive case management and clinical social work, helps families develop a comprehensive, holistic action plan to support them in their journey to familial well-being and financial self-sufficiency.
A single parent with custody of her young grandchildren, Susy was receiving services from both her case management Employment Counselor, Audrey Hernandez, and from her Employment Services Social Worker, Ivette Rodriguez. Suzy began working with Ivette because she was applying for Social Security Income (SSI) and needed assistance with the complex SSI process.

Both Audrey and Ivette quickly noticed that Susy was struggling with other barriers. Susy suffers from severe hearing loss and was in dire need of two new hearing aids.

As a result of everything she was experiencing, Susy’s confidence was low, she was making minimal progress in her work plan, and she struggled with trust and communicating with people.

As Ivette and Susy began working together, Susy began to open up and trust Ivette. In addition to making progress on Susy’s SSI application, Ivette helped Susy obtain two new hearing aids through Medi-Cal.

The collaboration between Susy and her multi-disciplinary team at Employment Services made a tremendous difference in Susy’s outlook on life and engagement in the CalWORKs program. Her confidence grew, she began to explore new ideas, and she became a willing participant in her work activities.

While the struggle may not be over, Susy now has the ability to hear once again and is in a much better position to determine what the best options are for her and her grandchildren.
MEASURING PERFORMANCE

With CalWORKs 2.0, Employment Counselors have embraced going “outside the box” to assist clients by addressing the family’s needs and barriers first. The end result of this flexible, Whole Family approach is more clients who engage in their employment plans.

Client participation in CalWORKs is very important, as the County may be subject to financial sanctions if it does not meet State and Federal requirements. The State and Federal governments have different systems for performance measurement of the CalWORKs program.

WPR is the measurement system required by the Federal Government, while Cal-OAR is the State’s new measurement system.

WPR

The Work Participation Rate (WPR) reflects the number of cases in which clients are meeting hourly participation requirements for Welfare to Work activities. There are two WPR measures, All Families and Two Parent Families.

The All Families measure is applied to single-parent households and requires participation from 50% of all clients. The Two Parent measure includes households where both parents live in the home, and requires participation from 90% of all clients.

In 2019, Santa Clara County maintained a Work Participation Rate of approximately 75% for All Families and Two Parent Families combined.

Due in part to innovative workgroups and a proactive outreach, Santa Clara County continues to be a statewide leader in WPR among large counties.

Employment Counselors from the Rapid Response Team use the collaborative, goal-oriented approach of CalWORKs 2.0 to form effective partnerships with parents. Through constant communication via text, phone calls, emails, and videos, participants are encouraged to remain engaged in their work activities.

To learn more about Cal-OAR and WPR, join the CalWORKs Advisory workgroup. See page 38 for the 2020 meeting calendar.
It is anticipated that Cal-OAR will reflect the program’s success in helping families out of poverty more accurately than the Work Participation Rate. Unlike the all-or-nothing measurement of WPR, Cal-OAR provides counties with the opportunity to measure the incremental progress of families striving for economic self-sufficiency.

The California CalWORKs Outcomes and Accountability Review (Cal-OAR) is a data-driven program management system that focuses upon both process and outcome measures. Process measures include components such as client participation and service delivery, while outcome measures focus on areas including the attainment of employment and education, program exits and re-entries, and familial well-being.

The three-year CalOAR cycle asks counties to take a critical look at the services provided by their CalWORKs program, looking for strengths that can be built upon as well as areas of opportunity. Following this review, counties will develop and implement a plan of program changes to address the findings of the review.

Counties will then engage in critical assessment of the outcomes achieved by the implemented changes, using the lessons learned to fuel a continuous cycle of program improvement.

To accomplish this task, counties will utilize outcome measurement data, as well as feedback from staff, community partners, and the clients served by CalWORKs. The activities of the Cal-OAR cycle are broken up into three phases: the CalWORKs County Self-Assessment (Cal-CSA), the CalWORKs System Improvement Plan (Cal-SIP), and the Cal-SIP Progress Report.

Santa Clara County has developed five stakeholder workgroups to help us with this effort, alongside a core workgroup. The stakeholder workgroups are focused on the main elements that make up the CalWORKs program: Welfare-to-Work, Cash Assistance, Education, Barrier Removal, and the Client Perspective.

To guide our Cal-CSA efforts, these groups will include members from community partners and the families we serve, ensuring that their valuable perspective drives program changes. Recruitment for these workgroups has begun, and we look forward to collaborating with our community to create a brighter future for all.
Applying for benefits is the first step in the CalWORKs process. Thirty years ago, when CalWORKs first started, applicants had to travel to a district office and participate in a face-to-face interview. There were no exceptions, even for those who did not have the means to travel.

Over the years, we have drastically improved access to benefits. Today, parents can apply for benefits online using the MyBenefits CalWIN mobile app and website, participate in a phone interview with an Eligibility Worker, submit and sign all required documentation electronically, and receive benefits in a matter of days.

Once approved for benefits, parents breathe a sigh of relief as they begin receiving cash aid, CalFresh food benefits, and Medi-Cal health insurance for each eligible member of the family.

Next, parents who are not exempted from work activities enroll in Employment Services where they meet with Employment Counselors to discuss their history, education, and goals.

Based on these in depth, one-on-one conversations, parents begin their journey to self-sufficiency via the employment path or the education and training path.

Statewide, fewer people are participating in CalWORKs. Lower unemployment rates are linked to lower CalWORKs caseloads, and California’s unemployment rate is at a historic low.

Finally, there are fewer Californians under the age of 18 now than in other recent years, largely because California’s birth rates are at a historic low. Because only families with minor children are eligible for CalWORKs assistance, fewer children generally means fewer CalWORKs cases.

This past year, approximately 5,500 families participated in CalWORKs in Santa Clara County.
ENGAGING CLIENTS

The CalWORKs Engagement Team is the welcoming committee of the program. It is committed to serve all families in need.

In order to increase participation in the CalWORKs program, staffers make frequent efforts to communicate with clients regarding their appointments at the Center and their employment activities.

“NO WRONG DOOR” POLICY

When a client is unable to attend an orientation at their place of residence (South County or North County), the Engagement unit reinforces the no “wrong door” policy by serving the client at our Central San Jose office. This ensures that the client receives timely service and that we are meeting our engagement and show rate goals.

By engaging clients with the CalWORKs 2.0 philosophy, staffers are able to help address issues related to mental health, domestic violence, and housing.

This practice results in more clients who successfully participate in orientation and complete their work plans.
PREREQUISITES FOR SUCCESS:

A combination of services, using the Whole Family approach
Because supportive services are often required for success in the CalWORKs program, we offer an array of services to help clients achieve self-sufficiency.

For more information about Supportive Services, join the CalWORKs Advisory workgroup. See page 38 for the 2020 meeting calendar.
To aid CalWORKs families through behavioral health issues, Employment Services jointly participates in the CalWORKs Community Health Alliance.

This alliance is a partnership between Santa Clara County’s Social Services Agency and Behavioral Health Services Department.

Through the partnership, Employment Services is able to provide comprehensive behavioral health services to CalWORKs clients and their family members.

The Health Alliance uses a behavioral health model that focuses on the health of the whole person by providing individualized counseling and other services to enhance and support self-sufficiency.

These holistic services address emotional well-being, behavioral issues, substance abuse issues, relationship issues, mental health issues, stress management, trauma and abuse, and psychosocial functioning.

Through comprehensive medical service provision, the Health Alliance provides full diagnosis of both substance and emotional health issues and offers options for outpatient mental health services, as well as transitional housing services, residential treatment services for women and children, and psychiatric services.

As clients address varying degrees of barriers, their Employment Counselors work with the Health Alliance team to monitor their progress, provide supplemental support services and work closely with the client to balance counseling services with other CalWORKs activities.

Employment Services and our partners in the Health Alliance are invested in addressing the root causes of client crisis and focusing on family stability before fully engaging in other employment-based aspects of the program.

Through mental health barrier removal and prevention, the probability of long-term success increases for families working their way through adverse issues.
HOUSING

Bay Area housing prices are a barrier to CalWORKs families trying to achieve self-sufficiency.

This year, the CalWORKs Family Services staff received over five hundred referrals for families seeking assistance with housing.

In some instances, families were assisted with the cost of a motel room to provide them temporary shelter while they sought housing.

For other families, staff provided financial assistance with past due rent payments to prevent eviction or the security deposit and first month's rent that enabled families to move from homelessness into a new home.

While the direct assistance provided by the Family Services unit addresses the needs of more than half the families referred to the unit, over two hundred homeless CalWORKs families each year require a higher level of housing assistance, which the CalWORKs Housing Support Program provides.

The CalWORKs Housing Support Program is a collaborative effort of the Employment Services, the Office of Supportive Housing, and the nonprofit housing service provider, Abode Services.

Through this partnership, participating families are provided with assistance in finding and securing affordable permanent housing for their family as well as employment and other services to support their efforts to sustain their housing once their rent subsidy period ends.

The CalWORKs Housing Support Program also provides housing-related services including interim housing, assistance with searches for housing, security deposits, rent subsidies, furniture, moving cost assistance, and utility payment assistance.
HOUSING SUPPORT PROGRAM

For the past five years, the CalWORKs Housing Support Program has placed an increasing number of families in housing.

Amy’s Story

Amy was referred to the CalWORKs Housing Support Program in late September 2018.

A single, unemployed parent, Amy was living in a homeless shelter with her one-year old daughter.

Soon after enrolling in Employment Services, Amy found a full-time job making $14 per hour.

Three months later, Amy and her daughter moved into shared housing with another family. The Bay Area Furniture Bank and the CalWORKs Housing Support Program provided furniture for Amy.

By May 2019, Amy earned yet another salary increase that raised her wages to $23 per hour.

Taking her deposit from the shared housing arrangement, Amy was able to relocate to a new home for her daughter and herself with the help of the CalWORKs Housing Support program—a home that she continues to pay for independently without public assistance.

In less than a year, Amy moved from living in a shelter to living in her own home.

Reflecting on Amy’s story, the Abode Services staffer who worked with Amy said, “I am honored to have been able to watch Amy work hard from the beginning to the end. She has made the best use of the assistance offered by CalWORKs Housing Support Program and has put in the work to be successful. Amy has reminded me of why I do this job.”

For more information about Housing, join the CalWORKs Advisory workgroup. See page 38 for the 2020 meeting calendar.
The Housing and Disability Advocacy Program (HDAP) is the product of a collaboration of many different groups that include the County’s SSI Advocacy Unit, Abode Services, the Office of Supportive Housing, and the many agencies that constitute the County’s Coordinated Care System.

The Housing and Disability Advocacy Program has two goals: (1) assist homeless individuals in obtaining financial disability benefits; and (2) assist homeless individuals in securing affordable, permanent housing.

The SSI Advocacy Unit provides the assistance required for homeless clients to prepare their application for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits while Abode Services and the Office of Supportive Housing focus their efforts on securing affordable, permanent housing for program participants.

Through December 2019, the collaborative efforts of the HDAP team placed over 90 participants into permanent affordable housing and were successful in obtaining SSI benefits for 36 previously homeless individuals.

The future looks bright for the Housing and Disability Advocacy Program as the program partners move beyond the difficulties of creating a new program and embark on a journey complete with lessons learned and potentials realized.

Governor’s Proposed Budget

Governor Newsom’s proposed 2020-21 State Budget establishes the California Access to Housing and Services Fund and allocates $750 million in new funding to services that address the state’s homeless issues.

In addition to the proposed new funding for homeless services, the Governor’s budget maintains $95 million in CalWORKs Housing Support Program funding and $25 million for ongoing annual funding of the Housing and Disability Advocacy Program.
NURTURING CHILDREN

A child’s early experience of being nurtured and developing a bond with a caring adult affects all aspects of behavior and development.

In fact, research shows that a child’s relationship with a consistent, caring adult in the early years is associated later in life with better academic grades, healthier behaviors, more positive peer interactions, and an increased ability to cope with stress.

The CalWORKs program helps parents give their children the best possible start with three distinct programs: child care, home visiting, and academic advocacy.

CHILD CARE

Infancy and toddlerhood are periods of incredible possibility and opportunity. Children grow and develop more rapidly during the first five years than any other time in their lives. Their everyday experiences shape their development and lay a foundation for future learning.

Without access to affordable child care, parents may struggle to find and keep jobs or to go to school. Unfortunately, the cost of child care is prohibitively high in California for families struggling to cover basic expenses.

In a family with two working parents earning low wages, each parent would have to work 147 hours per week to avoid paying more than the federally recommended 7% of income on the cost of child care for their infant.

The CalWORKs child care program helps low-income families access immediate, short-term child care as the parents work or obtain the education or training they need to progress in their journey to self-sufficiency.

In Santa Clara County, the CalWORKs child care program is structured in a three-stage subsidized payment system.

Stage One is administered through the County of Santa Clara Social Services Agency. This stage begins when a family starts receiving CalWORKs cash aid. Families continue receiving Stage One services and are transferred to Stage Two when their cash aid is discontinued.

To learn more about Child Care, join the CalWORKs Advisory workgroup. See page 38 for the 2020 meeting calendar.
In 2019, Stage One of the CalWORKs child care program helped 987 families and 1,539 children receive child care with a provider of their choice.

Stage Two is administered through the local Alternative Payment Program (APP) agencies, Community Child Care Council of Santa Clara County (4Cs) and Choices for Children (CFC). This stage begins when a family has transitioned off cash aid and may continue for up to 24 months.

Stage Three is administered through the local APP agencies, 4Cs or CFC. This stage begins when a former CalWORKs family has been off aid for two years. Families remain in this stage until they exceed the income threshold or the child is over the age of 12.

Some CalWORKs participants are required to pay a share of their child care costs, known as family fees, based on their income relative to their family size. The family fee is approximately ten percent of the family’s income.

**Family Stability**

Beginning in October 2019, a new state law allowed families to access twelve months of immediate and continuous child care eligibility as part of an intergenerational approach to end the cycle of poverty. This continuity of care ensures that families have stable child care and promotes parental choice.

**Governor’s Proposed Budget**

Governor Newsom’s proposed 2020-21 State Budget boosts funding for the state’s subsidized child care and early child development system. Significant investments include an increase to subsidies in Stages One and Two and an expansion of full-day pre-school.

The Governor’s budget proposal calls for a new Early Childhood Development Department under the Health and Human Services Agency that would restructure the governance of subsidized child care programs. This would result in the consolidation of many subsidized child care programs.

**Daycare allowed me to go to school full-time. Now that I’ve graduated, it helps me concentrate on my job search.**

My 3-year-old enjoys it there because he gets to socialize with kids his age and do fun arts and crafts. The provider is amazing, and I am very grateful for all she does.

Kimberly
The birth of a baby is an exciting time. It can also be overwhelming, especially for those without a positive parenting model or support network to guide them.

Research shows that home visits by a trained professional during pregnancy and in the first few years of life help to improve family outcomes by reducing child abuse and neglect, improving maternal and child health, and promoting child development and school readiness.

That’s why we implemented the CalWORKs Home Visiting Program in Spring 2019. The Home Visiting Program is a voluntary, evidence-based program designed for overburdened families who are at risk for adverse childhood experiences and exposure to domestic violence, substance abuse, and mental illness.

Through a partnership between the Santa Clara County Social Services Agency, the Santa Clara County Public Health Department, and FIRST 5 Santa Clara County, eligible families receive services from the following three program models designed to address the needs of families at every stage of early childhood.

Families who are pregnant with no other children are served by the Nurse Family Partnership of the Public Health Department, with a service focus on guiding mom and her child-to-be safely through pre-natal care and early childhood.

Families with children under 24 months of age receive services from the Strong Moms, Strong Babies program of the Public Health Department. This program provides additional services geared towards the health of parents and children along with educational resources so new parents don’t have to stumble through raising their new child alone.

Families with children older than 24 months of age receive services through the Parent Child+ program of FIRST 5 Santa Clara County. This model builds on knowledge that parents already have and provides resources and information to help parents access high-quality early childhood education.
ACADEMIC ADVOCACY

Picking up where the Home Visiting Program leaves off, the Academic Advocacy Program is open to CalWORKs parents with children in kindergarten through the eighth grade.

These participants often experience difficulty in completing their employment plan due to their children's unmet academic and developmental needs.

The Academic Advocacy Program gives families access to Student Study Teams, helps with Individualized Education Plans and 504 Plans, and provides assistance with children's Social Security Income (SSI) applications.

Academic Advocacy truly makes a difference in the lives of families with special needs children. By helping to meet children's developmental and academic needs, the program helps alleviate stress and enhance familial stability, while improving parental participation in Employment Services.

“We strive to help underserved children and families succeed emotionally and academically.”

STACIE NGO
SOCIAL WORKER II

“Working with the Academic Advocacy Team is a great opportunity to support and strengthen your child’s education.”

CHRISTOPHER WILLIAMS
SOCIAL WORKER II
Addressing the important connections between poverty, wellness, and neglect, the Linkages Program helps CalWORKs/DFCS parents overcome economic vulnerabilities in order to provide better lives for their children.

This effective, interdepartmental approach between the Department of Family and Children’s Services (DFCS) and DEBS encourages communication, streamlines service delivery, and increases positive outcomes for clients on the path to reunification.

Using tracking tools and quarterly matches to capture all common cases, the Linkages team coordinates clients’ court mandated participation in areas such as mental health counseling and employment.

Parents work closely with Linkages staffers to create an individualized action plan. The plan sets out goals and deadlines that must be met in order to achieve family reunification, and addresses issues and concerns that pop up along the way.

“I’ve been struggling for so long with so many different illnesses and problems in my life that I didn’t know what I could achieve or my self-worth.

But today, thanks to CalWORKs, my Employment Counselor, Social Worker, Attorney, my team at Dependency Wellness Court, and all the counselors and therapists that have supported me and believed in me, I have a safe living environment, the funds to take care of our daily needs, and the most wonderful gift of all, the confidence that I will succeed. Today, I have goals and I know that I can reach them!”

- Sonya

**192** Cases Served

**52%** Cases Successfully Closed
TRANSPORTATION

Santa Clara is a geographically expansive county, and transportation and vehicle costs can severely limit the mobility and budgets of working families.

In order to alleviate transportation challenges for participants who are engaged in barrier removal services or employment activities, Employment Services provides funding for public transportation and/or reimbursement of personal vehicle-related expenses.

Public transportation funding allows eligible clients to obtain fares for VTA and CalTrain. Personal vehicle-related funding provides mileage reimbursements, parking related fees, and carpool expenses for families choosing rideshare options.

These options allow clients to select the method of travel that suits their needs and assists the family in maintaining successful participation in the CalWORKs program.

In FY 2019-20, almost 2,500 families utilized transportation services, making 10,000 trips to and from their mandated services and work activities.

ANCILLARY PAYMENTS

Successful participation in their employment or educational plan is always the goal for CalWORKs families; however, in the course of activity completion, clients may come across unanticipated costs that are outside of their budget limitations.

What may seem like minor expenses to many—such as the requirement to purchase uniforms or safety clothing for a job, or to purchase books for a course of study—may create a new barrier for CalWORKs families who are on the precipice of a breakthrough.

To ensure that their progress isn’t hindered, Employment Services is able to provide payments to help cover the costs of these unforeseen expenses.

Such expenses include work or training-related expenses, emergency rides, professional clothing, and uniforms required for employment. Included as a component of full wrap-around support, ancillary payments help ensure that clients are not prevented from achieving their goals by monetary barriers.
Educational deficiencies may pose a significant barrier for families seeking stability and self-sufficiency, often times limiting their employment opportunities to low-wage, entry-level work and reduced long-term earning potential.

Understanding that improved educational opportunities may be the key to linking families to a higher earning potential, Santa Clara County has developed a robust educational network that offers learning options for students at all levels.

Through collaborative partnerships with Adult Education and Community College providers, CalWORKs students can develop a workplan that includes attendance in an educational or vocational training program and the receipt of supportive services.

Currently, there are almost 200 CalWORKs students actively engaged with Employment Services and an educational partner.

Campus Liaisons: Onsite Resources to Support Success

Employment Services maintains partnerships at Adult Education and Community College campuses across the County to provide students with a campus liaison. The CalWORKs Liaisons offer clients a unique mentorship experience that combines expertise in navigating educational requirements and a firm understanding of CalWORKs regulations.

Liaisons are the critical link between the two programs, providing on-site support to students to ensure successful completion of their coursework and CalWORKs program requirements.

“Being a CalWORKs liaison has been a most rewarding and fulfilling experience for me. There is no greater satisfaction than seeing a client succeed to a better situation in life.”

Jim Wong, Mountain View Los Altos Adult School
Adult Education

Competing for jobs without a high school diploma can be a daunting experience, regardless of how good the economy is.

Employment Services is dedicated to helping families overcome the basic educational barrier by working closely with local Adult Education providers that offer an avenue to earn a High School Diploma, General Education Diploma, or Certified Vocation Training.

Adult Education providers also offer specialized learning programs like English as a Second Language and Adult Basic Education that help refine fundamental learning skills for those who need it.

In order to ensure academic accessibility to all clients, Employment Services collaborates with Adult Education providers to host a CalWORKs Liaison at twelve different campuses located throughout the County.

Community College

Participants who have achieved basic education levels may opt to attend one of the seven community colleges local to Santa Clara County.

Oftentimes, new participants enter the CalWORKs Employment Services program already registered in or actively attending courses. Employment Services partners with all seven local Community College districts to provide accessible options throughout the County.

Working within the CalWORKs time limit, each campus Liaison works closely with students to develop viable educational plans that are achievable during their time in our program.

Once enrolled in community college, students have the opportunity to attend a large number of vocational training programs, or a more traditional two-year degree program. Those hoping to jumpstart a career generally opt for short-term technical certification programs that can get them into a self-sustaining job in a shorter time frame.

Regardless of their individual plans, all CalWORKs students participating in post-secondary education have a great opportunity to increase their earning potential and truly achieve long-term self-sufficiency.

Cal-Learn

Cal-Learn is a statewide program for pregnant and parenting teens who receive CalWORKs. Cal-Learn is not a school; it is a program that helps teens graduate from high school, become independent, and form healthy families.

One of the exciting aspects of Cal-Learn is that parents who do well can earn a bonus! Those who receive good grades receive $100 for each report card period. Those who graduate from high school or earn their GED receive a one-time, $500 bonus.

Solidifying the Future

Santa Clara County is fortunate to have forged strong and lasting relationships with existing educational programs, teaching CalWORKs families about life-long learning options for themselves and their children.

Through Employment Services’ strong educational partnerships, we are able to capitalize on the wide variety of educational programs offered by local schools to help meet the varying needs and learning levels amongst CalWORKs families. While participating in one of our combined offerings, families receive wrap around support to ensure that they successfully achieve their goals.
The Center’s three locations in North, South, and Central County meet the needs of participants by providing a one-stop shop where they can access the resources they need to land a job.

Liza Giron-Espinoza,
ECC Manager
EMPLOYMENT CONNECTION CENTER

At the Employment Connection Center (ECC), participants prepare to look for work, are job matched, and receive employment counseling and coaching.

The ECC offers a variety of workshops to help clients brush up on their job search skills, learn new skills, and build confidence to impress employers. Job seekers learn about how social media can help—or harm—their job search, how to make a strong first impression, practice their interviewing skills, and create or update their resume, among other skills. An Employment Counselor works individually with each job seeker from day one to ensure they have someone to guide, coach, and cheer them on!

Based on the client’s experience and interests, Employment Counselors and clients jointly develop an employment plan of action. This includes which workshops clients may want to attend, goals for job search, resource referrals to mitigate barriers, and key actions that will lead to employment. The plan is reviewed and revised as needed, being responsive to the job seeker’s progress and evolving needs.
The Employer Relations Unit develops and maintains relationships with hundreds of employers to ensure that clients have a pool of quality job openings for which they can apply.

Many employers come to the Center to hold onsite recruitments. These recruitments allow the hiring managers to meet qualified candidates from the ECC and the general public onsite. Many times, they will interview and even make job offers on the spot.

One of the many employers that the Center partners with is the United States (US) Census Bureau. With the decennial US census beginning April 1, 2020, the Census Bureau has been in hiring mode for some time, partnering with the ECC along the way. The Employer Relations team has hosted the Census Bureau multiple times since late 2019, helping fill the many jobs related to this important work.

Certain onsite recruitment events, such as the ones for the Census Bureau, highlight one employer at a time and are individually tailored to meet the employer’s needs.

Other recruitment events are large scale job fairs, with the Employer Relations Unit recruiting numerous employers who interview and hire onsite.
One such large-scale event is the Summer Job Fair, an annual offering that boasts over 40 employers who welcome job seekers from the CalWORKs program and the community-at-large.

The Center engages in an intensive marketing campaign to promote the event, sending out flyers, mailers, posters, and mass text messages inviting clients and any interested job seeker to meet recruiters face-to-face.

Hundreds of job seekers capitalized on their work, as they participated in the Center’s many recruitment events.

**Subsidized Employment Program**

Subsidized employment is a great way for inexperienced CalWORKs participants to enter the world of employment, as it provides job seekers with a supportive environment to work and build skills.

In 2019, job seekers who found work through the ECC’s subsidized job opportunities earned an average of $18 per hour.

**Unclassified Employment Program**

Job seekers who are well-qualified for work and do not require extra support may participate in the Unclassified Employment Program. This unique program pairs qualified participants with designated County jobs.

After completing the required application packet with the help of their Employment Counselors, candidates work with the County’s Human Resources to find suitable employment opportunities within the program.

Once hired, participants attain probationary status; those who pass probation become permanent County employees. In 2019, nine job seekers from the Center achieved full-time employment with the County of Santa Clara thanks to this special opportunity.

**Employment Retention**

The ability to keep a job is just as important as the ability to find a job. That’s why Employment Counselors remain available to provide support, coaching, and assistance for employed clients.

As part of the effort to support job holders, the Employment Connection Center hosts the United Way Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program. From February to April, volunteers are on site weekly to help with filing tax returns.

As a VITA site, the ECC is open to the community, and all who qualify for the service are welcome to benefit from the services of a tax preparer. Each year, the VITA Program helps hundreds of wage earners claim hundreds of thousands of dollars in tax returns. The Center is pleased to continue hosting this valuable community service.

**Post-Aid Services**

It takes sustained hard work for CalWORKs participants to reach their goal of financial self-sufficiency. Post-Aid Services makes the transition easier by providing support services, retention services, and quarterly incentives to families for 12 months after their cash aid has been discontinued.

This year, the Post-Aid Services team increased outreach efforts to CalWORKs parents through emails, texts, and phone calls to remind them of the support services available to them.

Thanks to this work, over 120 job holders who had been unaware of their continued eligibility for transportation assistance were able to make use of this valuable service.

*For more information about Employment, join the CalWORKs Advisory workgroup. See page 38 for the 2020 meeting calendar.*
Helping young people gain work experience is instrumental to positive youth development.

The Intern & Earn Program provides eligible youth with paid summer internships and year-round services including job readiness and personal development workshops, as well as assistance in finding unsubsidized employment.

This past summer, over 500 youth from the CalWORKs, CalFresh, and foster care programs participated in paid internships in public and private agencies throughout the County.

Intern & Earn gives youth meaningful work experience, job skills, and helps them with personal development in an effort to combat and prevent intergenerational poverty.

During the summer, interns were placed in 8-week internships, working up to 30 hours per week, and earning $16 dollars per hour. With the County as the employer of record, administering the program and paying wages, worksite supervisors were able to focus completely on working with their interns.

This year marks the five-year anniversary of youth services. Each year, services offered to youth have grown and improved, including regular increases in the number of maximum hours and regular increases in pay.

Many interns return year after year, and go on to post-secondary education and successful, full-time employment. Whatever their choice, former interns can count on support from Employment Counselors they met through the Intern & Earn program.
Huong’s Story

Lead Employment Counselor Rita Sairs has taken several interns under her wing and continues to mentor them to this day.

Rita checks in on her interns regularly by phone or text to see how they are doing in school and for those who work, on the job.

She has gotten together with them as a group for lunch over the weekend or coffee in the evenings and makes herself available individually when they need her.

One of our interns, Huong, just began her freshman year at Stanford. Huong shared with Rita that it would take her 20 minutes to walk from the dorm to her first class, and that it was quite a distance between some of her other classes as well.

Rita took it upon herself to remedy the situation, and donated a bike to Huong. On a Saturday, Rita and her family delivered the brand new bike, took Huong to lunch, and spent the day with her on campus.

Huong now has a means of transportation around Stanford. She was very grateful for the bike, saying, “Rita really helped me out, she cares so much.”

To learn more about Intern & Earn, join the CalWORKs Advisory workgroup. See page 38 for the 2020 meeting calendar.

Worksite Participation

This year, 154 different worksites participated in Intern & Earn. Supervisors reported that they not only appreciated the extra help, they also enjoyed mentoring young people and providing them with options for career exploration.

I’m HAPPY with my interns. They’re a fantastic group and I think the program is great.

Kevin “Shifty” Griffin with Interns Owner of Shifty Cycles

2020 Recruitment

Employment Services staffers begin the recruitment process for Intern & Earn well ahead of the summer months. At the 2020 Spring Recruitment Event, which took place over the week of winter break in February, 210 youth walked into the Employment Connection Center to apply for jobs!

Given that the goal for 2020 participation is 550 youth, recruitment is going strong. Another recruitment event will take place in May of 2020, ensuring that all spots will be filled.
Intern & Earn partners with Second Harvest of Silicon Valley to make the Employment Connection Center in San Jose a “Summer Feeding” site.

Interns located at the Senter Road campus have a nutritionally balanced meal served to them onsite at the #Cafe every day, free of charge.

Summer meals at the #Cafe provide youth with the opportunity to network with staff and other interns from nearby offices.

Interns in other locations receive information about community Summer Feeding sites near them, so that they too can access lunch when available.

Employment Counselors at the ECC work closely with interns and worksite supervisors to make sure that the interns have a successful experience.

This year, the combined average completion rate for CalWORKs, CalFresh, and Foster Care youth was 88%.
Learning & Earning
CALFRESH EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

Since implementation in May 2018, the CalFresh Employment and Training program has helped over 1,000 CalFresh recipients gain employment while meeting their Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) work requirements.

CalFresh Employment and Training partners with agencies such as Goodwill of Silicon Valley, the Center of Employment Opportunities, Sacred Heart Community Services, the San Jose Conservation Corps, Working Partnerships USA and Gavilan College.

Participants receive services including job search training, work experience, vocational training, job retention training, apprenticeships and supportive assistance.

After training, job seekers may be placed at over 50 work experience sites, including the Southside Community Center, the City of San Jose, and the Second Harvest Food Bank of Silicon Valley.

1,100 Clients Served
"I was living life in the fast lane and became unsure about my future. After attending the CalFresh Employment and Training orientation my Employment Counselor, Attia, helped me gain a better understanding of my career path and setting achievable goals.

In addition, I received Job Search training assistance such as how to create a resume and learned about the importance of conducting yourself properly during an interview. Thank you for believing in me."

"I first met Edward in October of 2019. I noticed he was struggling with finding a career path. After reviewing options, he decided that being a full-time driver was always his dream. Together, we set attainable goals such as completing his resume, submitting job applications and conducting mock interviews.

I enjoyed working with Edward due to his positive attitude and determination. We met frequently for over a month. The result was that Edward earned a full-time position with FedEx as a driver. His dream is to one day receive his Class A license so he can do cross-country driving. Thank you, Edward, for letting me be part of your journey."

VOCATIONAL SERVICES

The Employment Services program provides Vocational Services (VS) to more than 1,400 homeless and indigent participants in the General Assistance program each month.

VS guides participants toward self-sufficiency by providing employment opportunities, workshops, and job readiness skills, while simultaneously building participants’ confidence and providing positive reinforcement.

An Employment Counselor is assigned to work with participants in a group or individual setting during their work with Vocational Services.

In 2019, Vocational Services created a new Orientation video and Participant Guide and now offers services via Skype conferencing to clients located in North County. Almost 120 participants entered employment, earning an average wage of $13.36 per hour.

This year, VS plans to expand Skype services to South County participants, create a “ban the box” workshop for clients with a conviction history, increase Workfare sites that can accommodate clients with disabilities, and update Job Search Training workshops.

"Vocational Services revived me. I now have a purpose," said Michelle, a former client. Michelle participated in workfare and was hired by that worksite as a full-time employee thanks to her work ethic and positive attitude.
CalWORKs Demographics
A Statistical Overview

Caseload

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Caseload</th>
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<tr>
<td>2016</td>
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<td>2017</td>
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<td>5,996</td>
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<td>2019</td>
<td>5,066</td>
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The CalWORKs caseload generally expands and contracts in relation to unemployment rates. Due in large part to the economic recovery, the CalWORKs caseload has declined by 38% since 2016.

Region

Over 80% of CalWORKs Employment Services participants live in the San Jose area. 11% of families live in South County, while the remaining 8% live in North County.
Most CalWORKs Employment Services participants are 35 years of age and under.

Over the past few years, the number of clients in the 26-35 age bracket has increased, while the number of clients aged 18-25 has decreased.

![Age Distribution](image)

The ethnic make-up of CalWORKs Employment Services families reflects the County’s rich diversity.

The largest group of participants is Asian/Pacific Islander, followed closely by Hispanic.

![Ethnicity Distribution](image)

The typical CalWORKs Employment Services family is a single-parent household led by a mother with two children.

This year, men accounted for 16% of the program’s population—a 1% reduction from last year.
## CalWORKs Advisory

### 2020 Meeting Calendar

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>January 8</td>
<td>11:30 – 1:30</td>
<td>Social Services Agency 1879 Senter Road – Orientation Room</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 5</td>
<td>11:30 – 1:30</td>
<td>Social Services Agency 1879 Senter Road – Orientation Room</td>
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<td>Social Services Agency 1879 Senter Road – Orientation Room</td>
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<td>* NO MEETING THIS MONTH *</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 5</td>
<td>11:30 – 1:30</td>
<td>Social Services Agency 1879 Senter Road – Orientation Room</td>
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<td>October 7</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 4</td>
<td>11:30 – 1:30</td>
<td>Social Services Agency 1879 Senter Road – Orientation Room</td>
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<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td></td>
<td>* NO MEETING THIS MONTH – CALWORKS ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS</td>
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</table>

For future meeting location contact Anita A. Casillas @ 408-755-7732 or email: Anita.Casillas@ssa.sccgov.org
SAFETY NET MEETING INFORMATION

The Safety Net Committee is co-chaired by Santa Clara County Social Services Agency and Second Harvest Food Bank. It is comprised of Community Based Organizations (CBO's) that come together in partnership to educate, access, strategize, develop and implement service recommendations to strengthen food and other services provided to those in need throughout Santa Clara County.

Safety Net meetings are held at the Second Harvest Food Bank on the 4th Thursday of each month from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. This is a brown bag lunch meeting.

For more information about Safety Net Meetings and/or to request that discussion items be placed on the agenda, please contact Mariela Moncayo at: (408) 755-7187 or Mariela.Moncayo@ssa.sccgov.org.

### Location
Second Harvest Food Bank  
750 Curtner Avenue  
San Jose, CA 95125  
(Upstairs, Going Room)

### Time
11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

### Meeting Dates

<table>
<thead>
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<td>22</td>
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