



# Connecting CalWORKs with Home Visiting

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ISSUE BRIEF

**C**alifornia Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids ([CalWORKs](#)) program offers cash assistance and other support services to help eligible, needy California families with children attain self-sufficiency. Also known as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), CalWORKs includes short-term help for housing, food, utilities, clothing or medical care, as well as ongoing monthly assistance to help pay for housing, food and other necessary expenses. The program may also provide support for education, work experience and job pursuit—and applying for CalWORKs opens the door to a number of other potential services.

## WHY CONNECT CALWORKS WITH HOME VISITING?

The California Home Visiting Program (CHVP) recommends that sites train and collaborate with their county CalWORKs offices to assure that low-income families are served and that home visitors have the resources needed to facilitate services.

## ARE ALL HOME VISITING PARTICIPANTS ELIGIBLE?

Specific eligibility requirements take into account an applicant's citizenship, age, child(ren), income, resources, assets and other factors. Pregnant or newly parenting home visiting participants may qualify for programs and benefits by being on CalWORKs, particularly Welfare-to-Work and Cal-Learn.

## WHAT IS WELFARE-TO-WORK?

Most CalWORKs recipients participate in Welfare-To-Work, which is designed to assist in obtaining or preparing for employment. Welfare-To-Work participants receive an orientation and appraisal of their education and background employment. Services are based on the individual, but can include assistance finding a job, work experience, vocational training, or adult education or community college programs. Financial aid for school does not count against receiving CalWORKs aid. Also, Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) refunds are not considered as income when CalWORKs, CalFresh (formerly Food Stamp Program) or medical benefits are calculated.

Home visiting participants enrolled in Welfare-To-Work may be eligible for transportation for program activities, referrals for mental health/substance abuse treatment and domestic violence services. Other important benefits include:

- **Child Care:** Helps eligible families transition through short-term child care as the parent begins work-related activities and on to long-term child care for the family to remain off aid. Options are child care in a provider's home, the participant's own home or a licensed child-care center.



## GETTING STARTED WITH CALWORKS: WHAT TO EXPECT

Families apply for CalWORKs by completing application forms at their local county welfare office. They can ask for immediate help if they have little or no cash and need emergency housing, food, utilities, clothing or medical care.

The county welfare office will set up an interview to obtain facts and verify eligibility. Applicants must provide the county with

proof of income and property, citizenship status, age, social security number, residence, shelter costs, work or school status and other information. Similar information may be requested for all of the people in the home. Adult family members must also be fingerprinted and photographed. The county will advise applicants of the rules that must be met to be eligible for CalWORKs aid and CalWORKs programs.

### Welfare-To-Work Eligibility

Participants must be 19 years or older and participate in 20-35 hours of weekly activities, including one of more of the following: job search, GED/vocational training and/or unpaid work experience.

### Cal-Learn Eligibility

Participants must:

- Live in the same household as their child
- Be under 19 years old  
*Note: A teen 19 years of age who meets the other requirements may voluntarily participate with Cal-Learn until a high school diploma or its equivalent is earned or turns 20 years old*
- Not yet have a high school diploma or GED
- Not be in foster care
- Be pregnant or a parent

### CHVP CalWORKs Guidance

CHVP Guidance 700-10 recommends connecting with local CalWORKs agencies by cross-training, co-locating and inviting CalWORKs representatives to serve on Community Advisory Boards.

### Questions?

For additional information and to apply online, visit:

[cdss.ca.gov/calworks](http://cdss.ca.gov/calworks)

- **Housing Support:** Assists eligible families in obtaining and retaining housing. Services vary by county, but can include security deposit payments, furniture, moving costs and hotel/motel vouchers. Those who have received a Notice to Pay Rent or Quit or have no place to stay may apply for one-time homeless assistance support.
- **Family Stabilization:** Provides intensive case management and services for those experiencing crisis that jeopardize family stability and interfere with their participation in Welfare-To-Work. Some examples are lack of safety due to domestic violence, untreated or undertreated behavior needs, and homelessness or imminent risk of homelessness. Services vary by county, but can include emergency shelter, substance abuse treatment, residential treatment or non-medical outpatient drug-free treatment.

### WHAT IS CAL-LEARN?

This statewide program is for pregnant or parenting teens in the CalWORKs program. Although restrictions may apply, CHVP participants can also be enrolled in Cal-Learn and are advised to check with their local CalWORKs agency for eligibility.

The goal of Cal-Learn is to help parenting and pregnant teens graduate from high school or its equivalent, become independent and form healthy families. Coordinated services help teens become self-sufficient and responsible parents.

Cal-Learn may help pay for school materials, child care and transportation expenses to and from school. Other benefits include a \$100

bonus or sanctions based on report cards and \$500 graduation bonus.

### OTHER PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

When home visiting participants qualify for CalWORKs, they may be eligible for programs in addition to Welfare-To-Work and Cal-Learn, such as:

- **CalFresh:** In most cases, eligible CalWORKs families qualify for food stamps to help meet their food needs. Often, the CalWORKs application is automatically used by the county to assess the family's food stamp eligibility.
- **Medical Coverage:** In most cases, each member of the family receiving CalWORKs will also qualify for Medi-Cal, which will pay for most medical costs.
- **Child-only:** In some cases, CalWORKs can help support children where the parent(s) is disabled and receiving Supplemental Security Income, is undocumented or has received the lifetime limit of CalWORKs.
- **Family Planning:** Any member of the family can receive information about methods for planning family size, deciding when to have children and preventing unwanted pregnancies.
- **Child Health and Disability Prevention:** Regular, preventive medical check-ups are available to help protect members of CalWORKs families under the age of 21.
- **Social Services:** If the family needs help with a family problem, such as drug abuse or legal problems, a social worker is available to help. The family may request that the county provide a telephone number that can be called 24 hours a day.



# Ways to Participate in CalWORKs

California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids ([CalWORKs](#)) provides temporary cash aid and other support and employment services to eligible, needy California families with children. It is also known as Temporary Assistance *for Needy Families* (TANF).

## Eligibility Factors<sup>1</sup>

- ◆ Age
- ◆ Deprivation
- ◆ Eligible child
- ◆ Income
- ◆ Parenting/pregnant
- ◆ Immigration Status
- ◆ Property
- ◆ Residency/citizenship

### Welfare-To-Work<sup>2</sup>

#### Requirements

- 19 years or older
- 20 to 35 hours of weekly Welfare-To-Work activities, including one or more of the following:
  - Job search, employment
  - GED/vocational training
  - Unpaid work experience

#### Possible Benefits/Services<sup>4</sup>

- Cash aid
- Housing support
- Child care
- Transportation support
- Educational assistance
- Family stabilization
- Other expenses
- Mental health/ substance abuse/domestic violence services

Age 19+

### Cal-Learn<sup>3</sup>

#### Requirements

- Under 19 years old (with some exceptions)
- Parenting/pregnant
- No high school diploma or its equivalent
- Resides with child
- Attends school
- Submits report cards

#### Possible Benefits/Services

- Cash aid
- \$100 bonus or sanctions based on report card
- \$500 graduation bonus
- Intensive case management services
- Child care
- Transportation reimbursement
- Educational expenses/ other services

Under 19

### Child Only Cases

#### Requirements

- Child was born in the United States
- Child is under the age of 18
- Child has legal residency
- Proof of family income and resources

#### Possible Benefits/Services

- Cash aid for U.S.-born children

Other

1. Applicants eligible for CalWORKs are also eligible for CalFresh and/or Medi-Cal.  
 2. In-depth appraisal of client strengths and barriers to self-sufficiency is completed with the eligibility worker using Online CalWORKs Appraisal Tool (OCAT).  
 3. Cal-Learn is statewide CalWORKs program designed to encourage pregnant and parenting teens to graduate from high school or its equivalent.  
 4. Varies by county.

# DETERMINING YOUR HOME VISITING PARTICIPANT'S ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for CalWORKs, a family must meet basic rules about their family situation, resources and income.

## Family Requirements

The parent or caretaker must:

- Be a U.S. citizen or meet residency requirements
- Be a California resident
- Not be a fleeing felon or a convicted drug felon
- Be taking care of at least one child who is under the age of 18 (or 19, if expected to graduate from high school before his or her 19th birthday)

Children must:

- Be "deprived" by having at least one parent who is unemployed, disabled, continuously absent, in jail or has died
- If under the age 6, have all standard immunizations
- If school-age and under the age of 16, be attending school regularly

## Resource Limits

The family can only get CalWORKs if they have \$2,250 or less in resources (\$3,250 if the family includes someone 60 or over). CalWORKs does NOT count these as resources:

- Your home
- Household goods (like furniture or appliances)
- Some types of trusts
- Car, if it's worth \$9,500 or less
- Assets in a tax-free ABLE account

## Income Limits

The family's income must be under a certain limit based on family size and where they live. Remember that CalWORKs may not include everybody in the family when it calculates your family size and income.

Families can't just add up paychecks and benefits checks to determine income and figure out if they'll qualify for CalWORKs. CalWORKs doesn't count some things as income, including:

- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Loans and grants
- The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)
- Federal Relocation/Disaster benefits

## Application

To apply for CalWORKs, the participant should go to their county welfare office or [apply online](#). There is a simple initial eligibility form to fill out. Then, if the family meets the basic eligibility requirements, someone from the county will schedule an appointment with them, give them more forms to fill out, and ask that they submit other documents, like identification and birth certificates. While applying for CalWORKs, they can also apply for CalFresh (formerly Food Stamps) and Medi-Cal. If they are not eligible for CalWORKs, they may apply for General Assistance/General Relief. Also, they may be able to get some money immediately if they are in an emergency situation. If accepted for CalWORKs, they will get a letter that explains how much they will get each month and the program rules.

