

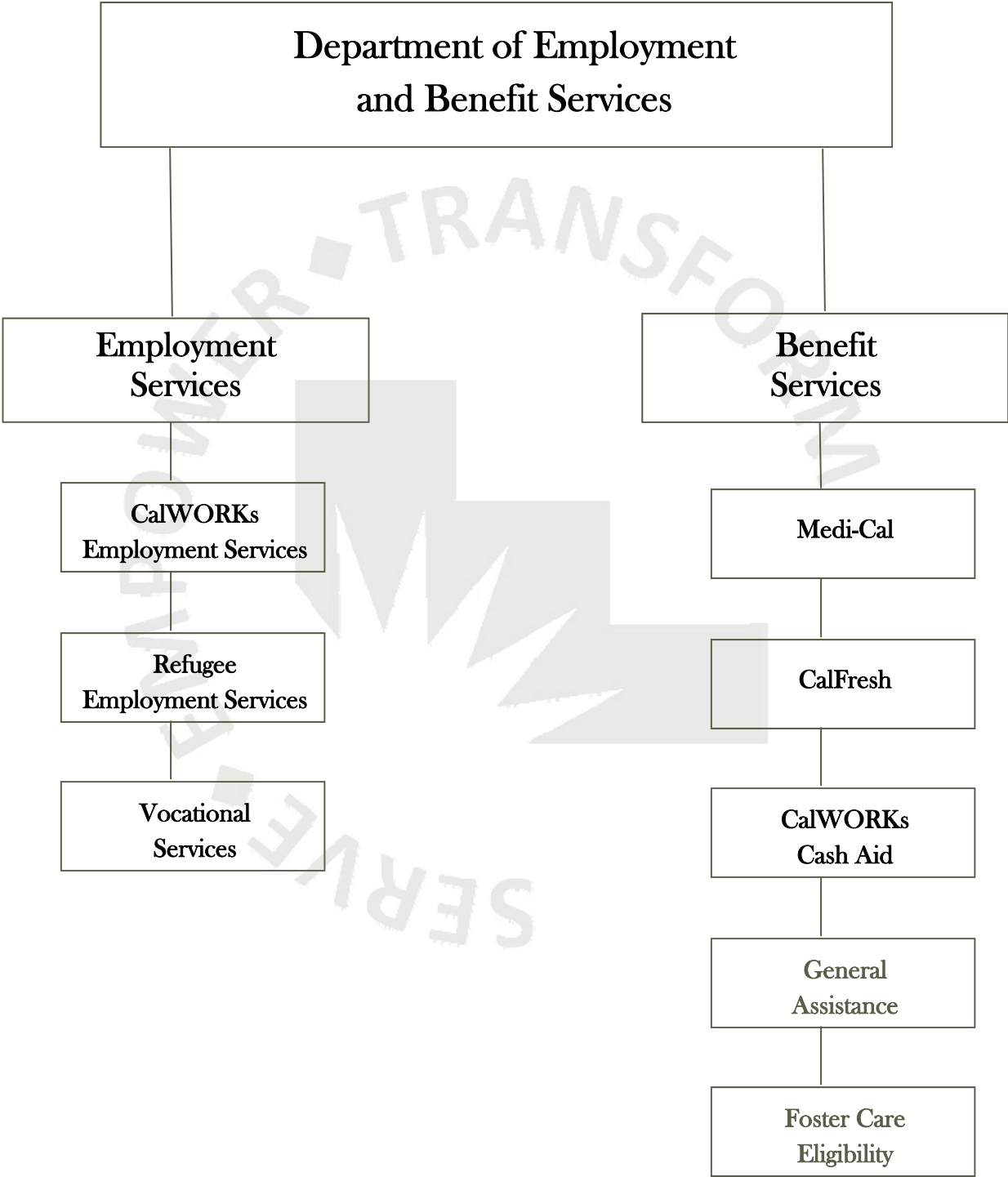
Department of Employment and Benefit Services



**Annual
Report
2017**

“Transforming Lives”

The mission of the Department of Employment and Benefit Services is to transition public assistance recipients to employment and eventual self-sufficiency and to ensure that low-income individuals and families receive necessary health, nutrition, and employment services.



Message from the Director

One emergency. One mishap. One crisis. That's all it takes to wreak havoc on the lives of some in our community. Santa Clara County's Department of Employment and Benefit Services exists to extend its helping hand to those in our community who need it most.

Benefit Services offers struggling individuals and families safety-net programs such as Medi-Cal, CalFresh, CalWORKs Cash Aid, and General Assistance to help them meet their basic needs. Meanwhile, Employment Services works with these community members to help them become employed and ultimately self-sufficient.

Throughout this past year, the Department has steadily improved its services and implemented new, creative programs that have a positive effect on the lives of affected community members. In the following pages, you will read about the Department's efforts to better assist individuals and families, including:

- An improved access to services model that enables community members to apply for and maintain public benefits from home or wherever they are, without having to come to district offices;
- Substantially reduced wait times for clients who call a district office or visit in person;
- Implementation of a new same-day service program that allows clients to walk into a district office, complete the application process, and leave with benefits;
- Sizable expansion of Intern & Earn, an employment program for CalFresh, CalWORKs, and Foster Care youth that helps combat generational poverty.

Proposed changes to federal funding appear to jeopardize our most important safety-net programs and the community served by them. We remain committed to the health and well-being of all members of our community no matter what changes may occur nationally.

I hope that you will enjoy reading our Annual Report and that it conveys to you the hard work and dedication of our staff, and the critical role that the Department plays in transforming the lives of community members in need.

Denise Boland

Director of Employment and Benefit Services

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Access to Services

A quick trip down memory lane for the Department of Employment and Benefits Services (the Department) may paint a picture of long lines in crowded lobbies with impatient and unhappy clients. Today, due to a combination of technological advances and strategic process innovations, the Department has been able to increase the accessibility and timeliness of services to members of our community.

As the use of technology in our culture has increased, so too have our clients' communication preferences. Today's society is not only more open to the use of technology to conduct business, but in fact prefers it. The use of mobile and internet technology, once reserved for a few, is now readily available to every segment of society and is a powerful tool to improve our clients' access to services.

Over the past few years, the Department initiated a strategic initiative to expand access to benefit programs for all members of the community. In our large and diverse county, this has meant bringing services to walking neighborhoods or to those clients who are unable, or afraid, to come to county buildings. Over time we have succeeded in establishing a multi-faceted intake process that allows the community to access services in the modality and location they prefer, including:

- Phone interviews that allow clients to apply for benefits from wherever they are, eliminating face-to-face interviews at district offices.
- Mobile apps such as MyBenefits CalWIN and FreshEBT that allow clients to apply for, maintain, and manage their benefits from home.
- Electronic signature and digital imaging technology that allows clients to sign or send documentation with their smartphones.
- Same-day or next-day service for benefit applications submitted in district offices.
- Outreach workers and community partners that help our neediest community members obtain benefits from locations such as food banks, rehabilitation centers, and homeless shelters.

(Please see Appendix A for a visual representation of our expanded access to services.)



**This team was instrumental
in developing Same-Day Service!**



Same-Day Service – “One and Done”

Same-day service is a new and successful approach that the Department created this year to improve access to services. Same-day service allows clients to walk into our offices, complete the application process, and leave with benefits, all in the same day. Eligibility workers affectionately refer to same-day service as “one and done”!

Same-day service has quickly become so popular with clients that the Department increased the number of staff involved from six to thirty-three. We anticipate that this number will grow as same-day service becomes an achievable standard for all.

“I found myself at rock bottom a couple of months ago. I got laid off from my job and lost health insurance for my entire family, which we desperately needed because my son has cerebral palsy and requires a lot of expensive medical care. I was so worried about not being able to take care of my son.



I finally went to the County Medi-Cal Office and I was so relieved when my case worker told me that she would take care of me and that I would be leaving the office that morning with Medi-Cal benefits for my whole family.

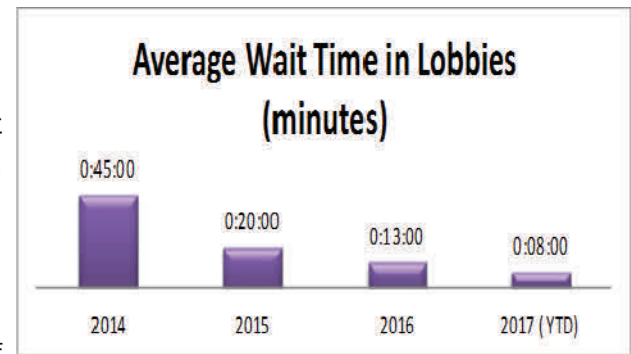
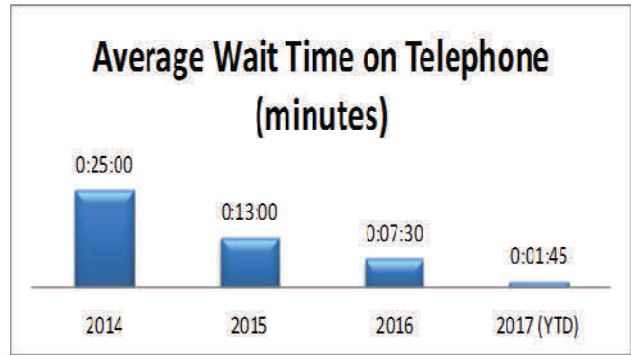
I always thought of government as being slow, so I was shocked that I could get benefits on the same day. My case worker told me this is a new program called same-day service. I am so grateful to her and to the County for giving me same-day service when my family and I needed it most.”

— Michelle (San Jose)

Reduced Wait Times to Apply for Services

In 2017, the Department substantially reduced wait times for clients, both in person and by phone. In the past four years, the average wait time in lobbies has been reduced by over 80%, going from a 45-minute wait in 2014 to **8 minutes** today.

Even more exceptional is the Department’s success with its telephone wait times. Remarkably, the average wait time on the phone has been reduced by over 90%, from 25 minutes in 2014 to a **2-minute** wait time today (figures shown at right). Indeed, the Department has made these improvements to wait times, despite a Medi-Cal caseload that has more than doubled since 2014!



Technology and the Benefits Process

An important strategy for FY 2017 was to increase the use of technology to help clients maintain their benefits. To that end, as of May 2017, applicants and recipients of CalFresh, CalWORKs, and Medi-Cal were able to use their personal smartphones to complete the entire application and recertification process.

“I’m so glad that I can turn in my verifications online instead of having to go all the way to the office and wait. I have a 10-month old baby and I take the bus, so traveling can be a real hardship. With online verifications, I’m never late turning in my forms. This takes one more worry off my shoulders, because I know that my benefits won’t be interrupted.”

— Sofia (San Jose)

The Department also expanded its use of technology so that clients could securely sign documents and forms using their phones. Staff encouraged clients to manage their accounts using MyBenefits CalWIN instead of traveling to district offices.

MyBenefits CalWIN is a website and mobile app that allows clients of CalFresh, CalWORKs, General Assistance, and Medi-Cal to view their notices, apply for benefits, check their benefit balances, and submit required documentation. MyBenefits CalWIN even allows clients to send digital pictures of their verifications to staff — an important feature that helps clients maintain their benefits without interruption.



Uninterrupted Benefits

Clients often receive benefits and then lose them a short time later because they fail to complete the required paperwork. One of the Department's primary access to service goals in 2017 was to help clients maintain their benefits on an uninterrupted basis.

This year, we took advantage of our clients' favorite methods of communication and employed technology to text, email, and robocall. Eligibility workers reported that clients tend to respond promptly via text with the missing forms or verifications, ensuring the continuation of benefits.

The Department also launched a new social media campaign to help clients maintain their benefits. Every day, staff post benefits-related material on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Staff also post periodic YouTube tutorials showing clients how to fill out their forms in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese. Shown at right is an example of one of the social media graphics that we use to remind clients to turn in mandatory paperwork.

Our use of technology to help clients maintain uninterrupted benefits has made us a top performer in the state. For example, the most recent data from the California Department of Social Services shows that the percentage of recertifications (required when a client fails to submit the paperwork required to continue receiving benefits) for CalFresh was 11.7% statewide. Meanwhile, thanks in part to our innovative use of technology and improved service model, our 30-day average was an incredible **0.8%**.



Initiatives that Transform Lives

The pages that follow will introduce you to other initiatives that help our community. These initiatives are intended to empower households, providing them with the means to obtain and retain public benefits while they work, care for their children, and continue down the path to self-sufficiency.



Medi-Cal

Today, over one in four Californians is enrolled in the Medi-Cal program, increasing access to medical services and reducing the uninsured rate to a record low of **7.4%**. Locally, Santa Clara County provides Medi-Cal to nearly 400,000 residents, offering a broad spectrum of coverage such as preventive and primary care, pre-natal care, mental health services, long-term care, and both vision and dental coverage.



After several years of rapid growth, this past year the County had the opportunity to stabilize and maintain these critical services, as well as innovate new ways to provide these services more efficiently and with better customer service.

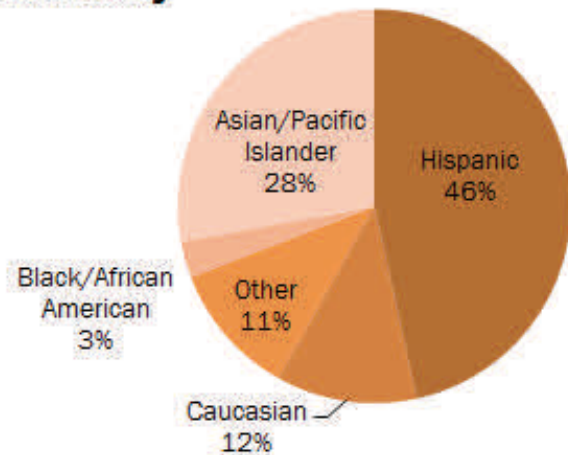
Medi-Cal Client Demographics

With the advent of the Affordable Care Act, single individuals between the ages of 18 and 60 are newly eligible for services. Despite this new category of eligibility, the largest recipient group of Medi-Cal continues to be children under age 17. Current data shows that almost half of the working-age Medi-Cal population is employed but lacks health coverage through their employer.

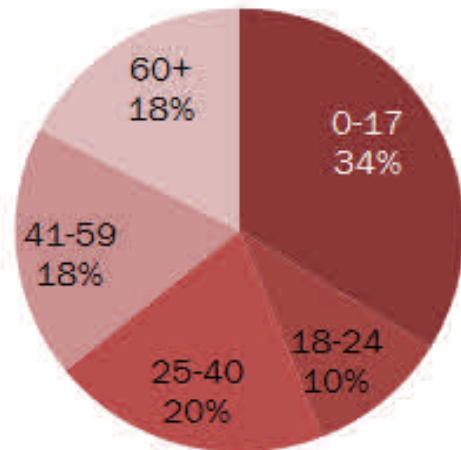
The client characteristics and demographics of Santa Clara’s Medi-Cal population have anticipated similarities and interesting variances from other benefit programs. Like the CalWORKs and CalFresh population, slightly over half of Medi-Cal customers are female (54%).

The ethnic breakdown of Medi-Cal customers shows a larger share of Asian/Pacific Islanders & Caucasian populations, while the Hispanic population maintains a representative percentage (46%) for the County.

Ethnicity



Age



I had a mini-stroke in August 2015, affecting my short-term memory and my concept of time. Somewhere I got the number for (Eligibility Worker) Anabel Torres. She took the time to help me with all my questions and helped me with all the steps that I would need to take from this point forward, making sure that I was writing down the information in a way that I could not forget! Although I have never met her in person, I will NEVER forget her.

-Mark (Morgan Hill)

Pictured at right is DEBS staffer Anabel Torres. Anabel has been an Eligibility Worker for three years.



Access to Healthcare Services

With the implementation of the Affordable Care Act, California created a new online marketplace, Covered California. Although Covered California was intended to help working families and individuals pay for insurance, its high visibility led many individuals who were eligible for Medi-Cal to apply for marketplace insurance. The Department’s “no-wrong door” policy allowed these applicants to seamlessly transition and speak to County staff within eight seconds! Pleasantly surprised, these applicants were then assisted and provided Medi-Cal benefits.

Based on the success of the “no wrong door” model, this year the Department decided to augment traditional methods of applying for services (mailing/faxing an application or completing an on-line application), by offering a new feature for customers who contact us by phone. Today, applicants who contact the general customer service line at **1-877-96-BENEFITS** are offered follow up phone appointments. After the initial call, a Phone Agent returns the call to conduct an interview and obtain any needed verifications. Friendly and knowledgeable phone staff are on hand to assist.

“I wanted to thank you personally for your help with my daughter’s Medi-Cal claim. Sadly, my daughter lost her battle with cancer last December but she was able to have good medical, palliative, and hospice care because of your help. Without that, she would have suffered needlessly. As her parent, it was hard to have her leave us, but again as her parent, I will be eternally grateful that you helped make her last days more comfortable.”

-Maria (San Jose)



Partnering to Provide Services in the Community

The Department maintains ongoing partnerships with numerous organizations and agencies in pursuit of accessible health care for all. Staff work closely with the Santa Clara County Health and Hospital System and Gardner Health Services for the continued health of residents by providing out-stationed Eligibility Workers at various clinic locations who are readily available to help patients in need of health coverage. Staff are also out-stationed at Valley Medical Center where they assist patients with their Medi-Cal and CalFresh applications.

To streamline the Medi-Cal application process for more sensitive populations, the County has established collaborative efforts with organizations such as San Andreas Regional Center (SARC), Health Advocates, Lenzen Valley Health Center, and the Juvenile Probation Department, focusing on ensuring continuity of coverage. These partnerships, and many others, ensure comprehensive services and result in medical coverage for hundreds of new applicants every month.

“Medi-Cal has been especially helpful for my son. He has persistent asthma that requires medication and a nebulizer, which we would not have been able to afford. Emergency visits for his other health issues have also been fully covered thanks to Medi-Cal. I can't express how much I appreciate all the help my family and I have received.”

-Tara (Cupertino)

Walk-In Services

Even with the option of access to professional workers over the phone, some clients feel more comfortable with a face-to-face interaction. With these customers in mind, the Department added a Medi-Cal triage worker to district offices.

Today, clients who choose to visit a district office in person without making an appointment first are greeted by a triage staffperson who is generally able to assist them within minutes of their arrival. This new system expedites Medi-Cal office visits and provides more time for staff to assist clients with complex situations.



Streamlined Processing

Since the advent of Health Care Reform, the Annual Redetermination process has been streamlined. Today,



PUTTING FEARS AT EASE

“Covered California was going to cancel my insurance assistance, could not explain why and could not help me. I called your office, explained my situation to your worker Jason who researched my situation and was able to get things ironed out and put me at ease within 24 hours.”

-Gabriel (Campbell)

approximately 42% of Medi-Cal cases are automatically approved through the “Federal Data Services Hub.” In 2017, an average of 5,600 cases per month were successfully updated through this method.

Clients who need to complete the redetermination process have the option of doing so by phone, ensuring minimal errors and a smooth continuation of service.

Some clients prefer to complete their redetermination electronically through MyBenefits CalWIN. This year staff implemented an electronic system which now provides an automated response assuring clients their information has been successfully submitted.

Transitioning Back into Society

In 2017, almost 1,700 clients received uninterrupted medical benefits as soon as they were released from County correctional facilities thanks to the Department’s efforts related to Assembly Bill 720.

Also known as the Inmates Health Insurance Affordability Program, AB-720 allows the Department to help inmates obtain medical access prior to their release. This important new bill ensures that incarcerated residents, many of whom received regular medical

and mental health care for the first time while they were in jail, will have the continuity of medical care and prescriptions needed to ease their transition back into society.

Another bill guiding California correctional facilities, AB-109, gives counties the opportunity to help citizens returning from incarceration access the critical assistance they need to find self-sufficiency as they reenter society.



In the past year, AB-109 has given the County the opportunity to help over 2,000 citizens returning from time in a correctional facility to enroll in Medi-Cal upon their release. Expedited Medi-Cal enrollment is just one small aspect of the County's overall strategy to aid incarcerated individuals in their transition back into society, thereby reducing recidivism rates and providing access to much needed medical and mental health services.

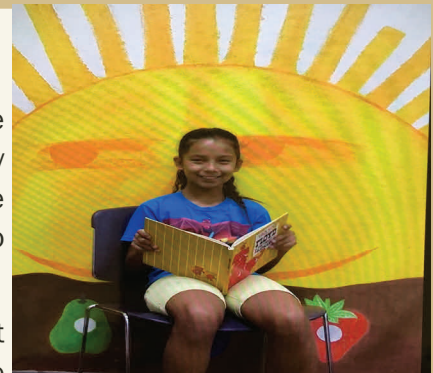
An Uncertain Future

The Department continues to monitor proposed changes to the Affordable Care Act which could affect the state Medi-Cal program. Proposed changes range from shortening enrollment periods to more drastic proposals. The County remains committed to the health and well being of its citizens no matter what actions may occur nationally.

Welcoming Everyone

Social Services Agency (SSA) staff is continually working to improve the experience of every member of the families visiting its offices when they come to apply for benefits. One example of this can be seen at the Benefits Assistance Center (BAC) where staff have created two areas to welcome children.

Families can visit the "Reading Is Fun" area in the lobby. This was first created in March 2015 by the BAC Clerical Staff and completed in June 2016 with the addition of a bright welcoming mural painted by local artist Michelle Munoz, who donated her services.



225:

Average number of children receiving a book or toy donated by staff every month

Children can also visit the Sharing Room while their parent or guardian is in an interview cubicle with a worker. This area was created in December 2016 by the BAC Beautification Committee led by Eligibility Worker Supervisor, Lillian Pryor. In both the Reading Is Fun Area and the Sharing Room, a child can choose a book donated by staff. After their visit, clients can take home their selected book. Both areas are restocked daily, and the BAC Beautification Committee puts out the word to staff when new donations are needed.



CalFresh

Silicon Valley is home to many with entrepreneurial spirits and innovative ideas. Paradoxically, their rise in fortune has increased rents for all, making it difficult for average working individuals and families to pay for basic services and put food on the table.

Those who struggle include single parents who work two jobs and skip meals so their children can eat; seniors who live on fixed incomes; and county natives whose friends, family, and jobs are all located here, but for whom the county's high cost of living has made it impossible to make ends meet.



CalFresh is the program that transforms lives by providing monthly food benefits to help low-income families get the food they need. Studies show that CalFresh reduces “food insecurity,” which occurs when households lack consistent access to nutritious food because of limited resources. CalFresh benefits are issued according to need and are determined by household size, income, and living expenses. According to the Department's demographics, almost 100,000 community members receive CalFresh benefits, approximately 40% of whom are employed. 48% of CalFresh recipients have families and almost 50% are children aged 0-17.

In California, the current average monthly benefit for each family member that receives CalFresh is approximately \$140, and the current average benefit per person per meal is approximately \$1.55. This may not seem like much, but it can transform a family's ability to purchase fresh, healthy food.

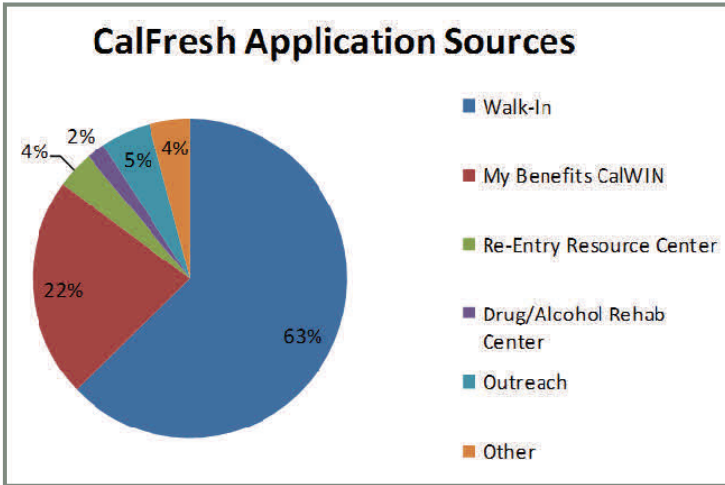


CalFresh households access their food benefits through an Electronic Benefit Transfer card (“EBT”), which looks and functions exactly like a debit card. EBT cards can be used at thousands of grocery stores and farmer's markets throughout the county to purchase food, seeds, and even plants to grow food. CalFresh has an amazing impact on families' lives, putting nutritious food on the table of those who need it most.



Different Ways to Apply

In 2017, 63% of all CalFresh applicants chose to visit an intake office and apply in person. Another 22% of applicants took advantage of the convenience of the MyBenefits CalWin website and mobile app in order to apply for benefits from the comfort of home.



An additional 15% of individuals also applied from where they already were—not from home, but from off-site locations such as outreach events, the Re-Entry Resource Center, substance abuse rehabilitation centers, and Valley Medical Center clinics. The Department has launched an awareness campaign to educate community members about its

new access to services model, and anticipates that increasing numbers of community members will apply for CalFresh where they already are instead of applying at district offices.

Applying Entirely by Phone

This year the Department added a new phone feature to its multi-faceted intake program that allows clients to apply for benefits from home or wherever they already are. As potential clients contact district offices to inquire about eligibility, they are given the opportunity to apply for CalFresh benefits entirely by phone. This new form of application is being rapidly embraced by members of the community because it allows clients to experience quick or even same-day service without having to travel to district offices!

“Excellent customer service. CalFresh has helped me and my family. I am so grateful that CalFresh services exist. If it weren’t for them, I don’t know where I’d be.”

-Raquel (San Jose)

Same-Day Service – “One and Done”

As part of the Department’s commitment to eliminate hunger in Santa Clara County, an enhanced triage process was created which allows staff to see CalFresh applicants on the day they apply for benefits.

Same-day service allows clients to walk into our offices, complete the application process, and leave with CalFresh benefits. To date, of the approximately 200 clients who have participated in this new program, almost 70% received their EBT cards with benefits on the day they applied, making them “one and done”!





As an Eligibility Worker in the Department’s South County District Office, Jacqueline Vandeutekom takes great pride in helping her clients. One of Jackie’s new clients was left to care for his three children by himself when the children’s mother unexpectedly left the country. Although her client had a job, his earnings were not enough to support the family of four.

Thanks to Jackie’s hard work, her client received same day service and was able to walk out of the office with CalFresh benefits for himself and his children. Jackie also determined that her client was eligible for CalWORKs benefits and Medi-Cal support.

Great job, Jackie!

Fresh EBT

Using CalFresh to pay for groceries is as simple as using a debit card. This year also saw the introduction of Fresh EBT, a free financial management and budgeting tool for EBT cardholders.



One-Mug Omelette

5 minutes

1 serving

You may need to cook this recipe for more or less time depending on your microwave.

Ingredients

- oil, butter, or cooking spray for greasing
- 1 large egg
- 2 tablespoons milk or water
- salt and black pepper to taste

Fresh EBT brings modern technology to the CalFresh program, enabling users to easily check their CalFresh balance through a free mobile app. With Fresh EBT, users can view transactions, find stores and farmers markets that accept EBT, connect to local food pantries and view tons of healthy recipes (as partially shown at left), all from their smartphone. Fresh EBT is available in English and Spanish from Google Play and the Apple Store.

Quality Control and Benefits Accuracy

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has established a quality control system for CalFresh that holds state and county agencies accountable for the accuracy of benefits that are issued. A representative sample of CalFresh cases is reviewed each month to check the accuracy of the eligibility and benefit

decisions of each state and county agency according to federal guidelines.



The USDA annually releases state and national error rates and subjects states to financial penalties if their error rates are consistently above the national average. In California, any financial penalty levied by the USDA is shared by each county that failed to meet the accuracy threshold. The Department's interest in maintaining its low, 5% error rate is twofold: it ensures that clients receive accurately paid benefits while also ensuring that Santa Clara County does not have to participate in the state's cost-sharing penalty.

Corrective Action

The Administrative Support Bureau conducts both mandatory quality control reviews and internal quality assurance reviews to identify problematic areas and trends before they have a chance to impact County error rates.



Pictured above are the "Magnificent 5," winners of this year's CalFresh Corrective Action gameshow. Congrats, ladies!

The Department's corrective action efforts include quarterly roadshows and an annual gameshow competition. The roadshows and gameshow are intended to educate eligibility workers on the serious matter of payment error in a playful, memorable, and entertaining way. Winners of the annual gameshow receive a trophy, intranet fame, and bragging rights for the entire year.

Client Education

In addition to making proactive efforts to educate staff about CalFresh payment errors, the Department also strives to educate clients about client-caused payment errors and consequent benefit delays.

The Department regularly posts videos and information to its Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube sites. These posts provide clients with helpful information such as how to identify financial changes that must be reported and step-by-step instructions on how to complete an eligibility status report. *(For more information about the Department's social media, please see Appendix B.)*

The efforts implemented by the Department to reduce CalFresh payment errors by both staff and clients guarantee that clients receive and (just as importantly, maintain) the food benefits needed to fight hunger.

Emergency Assistance Network Outreach

Eligibility workers out-stationed at Emergency Assistance Network locations continue to play a large part in increasing access to CalFresh for the most vulnerable members of our community. Since 2014, out-stationed staff have provided application assistance through a “CalFresh Quickly” model one day a week.

In partnership with the member agencies of the Emergency Assistance Network shown at right, staff offer regular and emergency CalFresh application assistance as well as connections to free food resources and other, non-agency resources available in the county.

Bringing workers into the community every week enables clients to learn about and apply for public benefits where they are. It also facilitates cross-education regarding benefits between departmental staff and our community partners in the member agencies. *(For more information about the Network and its member agencies, please see Appendix C.)*

Partnership with Second Harvest Food Bank

CalFresh has an incredible impact on individual families as well as the overall health of the community. The Department

has long recognized the value of partnering with the Second Harvest Food Bank in order to increase access to CalFresh benefits and fresh food for the most disadvantaged members of our community.

In 2017, Second Harvest Food Bank delivered almost 50 million pounds of food to 183,000 Santa Clara County residents. Half of that food was fresh produce, a luxury for those who are hungry or food insecure.



The Food Connection Hotline

County residents seeking CalFresh application assistance or referrals to food programs can call Second Harvest's Food Connection Hotline at **1-800-984-3663** to get information on how to access emergency and ongoing food assistance. Food Connection representatives also visit over 50 locations to host on-site assistance events, including libraries, schools, medical and WIC clinics, and community-based organizations. In 2017, the outreach partnership between Second Harvest Food Bank and the Department yielded phenomenal results:

- Approximately 22,000 food referrals were made and more than 9,000 households were served.
- Over 16,000 households were assisted with understanding CalFresh and the application process.
- Approximately 1,850 CalFresh applications were submitted. Of those applications, 731 households had someone who was working outside of the home. 456 were senior households and 72 were veteran households.
- CalFresh and Second Harvest Food Bank information was presented to 22 organizations and reached 357 staff members at those organizations.
- 1,676 CalFresh outreach events were conducted— that's between 30 and 35 outreach events held throughout the county every single week!



Department staff and Second Harvest Food Bank partners are proud to help clients like Randy, Patricia, and Aurora at Emergency Assistance Network locations.

Randy is a client whom staff have encountered at several different homeless shelters. He is an aging, former CEO of a high-tech company who lost his job and eventually exhausted all of his resources, including the loss of his home.

Patricia is a homeless 69 year-old from Tennessee with significant health problems. She's had three heart attacks since the beginning of this year. Aurora takes care of a disabled adult son. His special needs prevent her from working full time. Even with her earnings and his SSI benefits, they can't afford shelter because of the rents that have skyrocketed throughout the county.

All three of these clients applied for CalFresh and Medi-Cal benefits through the Department's outreach with the Emergency Assistance Network. This allowed them to meet their food and medical needs, and they were referred to other County departments and community agencies for assistance with their housing needs.

Thank you to all of our out-stationed eligibility workers and Second Harvest Food Bank partners who make a difference in the lives of the county's most vulnerable residents every week!



The Department and Second Harvest Food Bank geomapped the entire county and determined that the 95112 zip code contained the greatest number of Medi-Cal recipients who were not participating in CalFresh.

Second Harvest Food Bank designed a mailer (partially shown at right) that the Department printed and mailed to approximately 7,500 households in the 95112 zip code. As a result of the mailer, Second Harvest received almost 420 calls to the Food Connection Hotline—a response rate of 5%, far beyond the industry standard of a 1% response.

Summer Meals

Summer is a tough time for local families struggling to put food on the table because kids lose access to the free and low-cost meals they get during the school year. This year, Second Harvest Food Bank and its community partners, including the Department, explored new ways to connect more kids with summer meals.

Surprisingly, four out of five eligible kids don't participate in summer meal programs. In order to change this statistic for the better, the newly-formed Children's Nutrition



Coalition focused on raising awareness in the community and strengthening the summer meals network by optimizing federal funds.

The Coalition's efforts resulted in over 100 sites providing meals to children aged 18 years or younger. Countywide outreach included providing multi-lingual promotional materials and enlisting community volunteers and staff at medical clinics and faith communities to spread the word about available meal sites. Meanwhile, the Department did its part by placing robocalls to low-income families and using its social media sites to notify the community about summer meals.



Families Participating in Summer Meals

The 100+ summer meal sites were held in partnership with school districts, the YMCA of Silicon Valley, city and county libraries, community-based organizations, apartment complexes housing low-income families, and the Department.



The Santa Clara County Library District offered summer meals at three South County locations for the first time this year—the Morgan Hill and Gilroy Libraries and the Bookmobile at the San Martin Lion’s Club.

In North County, the Mountain View Whisman School District launched its new mobile meals program and delivered meals to kids at Rengstorff Park, Klein Park, and Mountain View Library, recently drawing over 400 participants (pictured at right). As a result of this program’s success, Second Harvest Food Bank is working with Stanford Medical



School to evaluate the mobile meal model of bringing food to places where kids and families already are.



Marie Kung is an amazing Local Hunger Fighter, aka Food Connection Specialist, at Second Harvest Food Bank. Marie shared this inspiring story: “One day when I was doing outreach tabling at a clinic in Sunnyvale, a lady came by and she was very excited to hear about our free food programs. She had a big family with ten family members and they were in constant need for more food.

While we were filling out the paperwork for Family Harvest, she shared with me the wishes of her children. They said that it would be wonderful if all the trees on the streets were fruit trees and people were allowed to pick them whenever and wherever they needed them at no cost.

At this point the mother looked at me and said, ‘Oh, I think the Second Harvest Food Programs and distribution system are like a dream comes true for my kids. Your food is free and it is available to us at no cost when we need them.’ I think unless one goes through the tough time of being unable to provide food on the table when it is desperately needed, one would hardly understand and appreciate these words of thanks.”



CalFresh Employment and Training Program

Last year the Department and Gavilan College embarked upon an innovative new employment and training program called Fresh Success. This program was designed to help CalFresh participants acquire, through employment and training, marketable job skills that will allow them to earn a living wage and leave the Safety Net. In order to qualify for Fresh Success, applicants had to be Gavilan College students who were either receiving CalFresh or timed-out of CalWORKs.

In addition to their CalFresh food benefits, Fresh Success participants received up to \$100 in transportation assistance each month, as well as emergency housing and textbook vouchers. Participants also received the benefit of academic and career counseling and educational plan development meetings.

Based upon the positive effect of Fresh Success on its participants (as shown in part by the student testimonials below) this year the Department began planning to expand the Fresh Success program beyond Gavilan College. The Department's goal for FY 2018 and beyond is to collaborate with different organizations to offer skill-building activities and job search strategies for CalFresh participants—helping them to ultimately become self-sufficient and “income out” of our local CalFresh program.



“Fresh Success has helped fill the gap in my education. It helps provide transportation and supplies. I would normally struggle to provide for myself financially.”

“Relieves a lot of stress off me. Fresh Success staff and counselor are very understanding. I wouldn't be able to succeed as well without them.”

“The program is very helpful and I am grateful for the assistance to further my education.”

(Fresh Success staff are pictured at left.)

Become a Hunger Fighter! Join the Safety Net Committee

The Department is dedicated to serving every hungry family in Santa Clara County and will continue to be involved in numerous different efforts to reach them. If you are interested in joining CalFresh or any of the County's other anti-hunger projects, please join the Safety Net Committee at its meetings on the fourth Thursday of every month (see *Appendix D* for details). For a general overview of the CalFresh program, consider attending CalFresh 101 (*Appendix E*).



of SANTA CLARA and
SAN MATEO COUNTIES

CalWORKs

Focused on whole family solutions, CalWORKs is composed of two primary elements: a monthly cash grant to aid families through short-term monetary hardship and employment services to empower families with the building blocks of long-term self-sufficiency. The Department offers wrap-around support that presents a unique opportunity for participants to transform their lives while securing the future for themselves and their families.

CalWORKs Caseload

Largely reflective of the area's economic conditions, the CalWORKs caseload generally expands and contracts in direct relation to local unemployment rates, which are presently hovering at a low 3%. While a large number of residents are capitalizing

on the strong employment market, a sizeable proportion of low-income families are struggling to get by on limited budgets amid some of the nation's highest living costs.

Over the course of this past year, 7,100 families in Santa Clara County have participated in the CalWORKs program. The program's transforming effects are most beneficial to the County's youngest residents—the children of low-income families represent four out of every five CalWORKs benefit recipient. Children are eligible to receive aid until age 18, while adults in the program are limited to a lifetime limit of 48 months. CalWORKs is making strides in improving the living conditions, general health and long-term well-being of impoverished children in Santa Clara County.

Financial Grants

A CalWORKs cash grant is available to help families meet their minimum basic needs. The maximum grant allotted for the average family size of three is \$714. During the past fiscal year, the state took a step forward with a small increase to cash grants, raising the allotment by 1.43% (an average of \$7.60 per family per month).



Benefit Services

Devoted to the CalWORKs population, a skillful team of Eligibility Workers help determine a client's initial program eligibility and provide ongoing case maintenance and support. Diligently overseeing their family cases, each Eligibility Worker helps their families navigate regulations, coordinate redetermination appointments, and ensure that they fulfill their responsibilities to meet state and federal guidelines.

Additionally, Eligibility Workers provide a seamless link to other programs such as Medi-Cal for low or no-cost health care coverage, and CalFresh benefits that may add up to an additional \$511 to the food budget for a family of three each month. Providing the financial resources to stabilize families, CalWORKs benefits is the starting point from which many have started their transformation.

Employment Services

The foundation of change necessitates a fresh new perspective, free from obstructions with a steady base from which to build a new beginning. For CalWORKs families, this transformation is often realized within the realm of Employment Services.

Working collaboratively, each family is able to access personalized services designed to address complex barriers, attain supportive services and gain access to employment and education opportunities. Through internal channels and an extensive partner network, Employment Services is designed to deliver the elements vital to attain self-sufficiency and establish a bright new outlook.



As an Eligibility Worker (EW) in Santa Clara County, Vanessa Phong finds happiness in serving her community and helping others. Vanessa works one on one with her client base to ensure that families have access to all the program support needed to help get them back on their feet.

Thank you, Vanessa!



Those Seeking Services

The Department maintains extensive client demographic information to identify the primary client base and design a service delivery aimed to meet its needs. Each client’s needs are addressed individually, but taken all together the data suggests the following story of an average client:



She is a woman:
 83%: Female
 17%: Male

She is a single mom:
 Half of client families are lead by a single mother with two children

She is Hispanic:
 41%: Hispanic
 37%: Asian/Pacific Islander
 14%: Caucasian
 8%: Black/African American

She is 26-35 years old:
 40%: 26-35
 30%: Under 25
 21%: 36-45
 9%: Over 45

As part of their responsibilities in receiving CalWORKs cash grants, clients attend an Employment Services orientation where they learn about the myriad of support services available to them. Over the past year, 2,799 families enrolled in Employment Services and participated in a wide array of employment-based activities designed to increase their employment opportunities.

Planning Success

While often complex in nature, the barriers facing clients are not insurmountable. Through a comprehensive service-based approach, client families are able to work with an Employment Counselor to design an Employment Plan to help them overcome their challenges.

Plans consist of a combination of activities that bolster educational deficiencies, develop employment experience, or obtain crisis intervention services to stabilize the family. These activities may also be paired with supportive services to ensure successful participation like mental health services, child care, transportation, professional attire outfitting, or ancillary services to obtain the tools needed to complete an activity.





A young mother with big dreams, Kiara attended college at Evergreen Valley College to build a future for her child and sought assistance from the CalWORKs program. She worked closely with her Employment Counselor to develop a work plan that allowed her to pursue her A.A. degree in Administration of Justice while receiving the supportive services that would help her succeed.

During a progress review, Kiara requested to develop a sequential plan that included enrollment in a Public Safety Law Enforcement certified training course. Kiara successfully completed the training module and her A.A. and enrolled at San Jose State, where her certified training and educational goals helped her obtain a job with the San Jose State University Police. Kiara is no longer on aid and is earning a living wage while still pursuing her degree.

Whole Family Focus

When developing an employment plan, Employment Counselors examine the general state of all individuals in the family to determine if there are opportunities to assist other immediate family members that have an impact on participation or family goals. Through service inclusion and shared responsibility, the family receives the support they need in order to contribute to long-term success of the whole family with lowered inclination of sanction and cyclical poverty.

Under One Roof

With rapidly increasing rental rates and an upsurge in competition for housing, many of the area's low-income families are finding themselves priced out of the rental market and unable to find an affordable home for their family. The 2017 census of Santa Clara County's homeless population totaled 7,394 homeless individuals, including 294 families. Homelessness remains a critical barrier for families struggling to attain self-sufficiency and well-being. Fortunately the Department is working with families to find a resolution to this difficult challenge.

Family Stabilization Homeless Prevention

In working with the Family Stabilization Unit, families that are having difficulty keeping up with their rent are able to explore homelessness prevention services to help them maintain their current home or get through a financial crisis that is threatening their long-term housing. These services may include assistance in paying overdue



utilities, back rent, or moving costs and security deposits if a move is necessary. This year, the Department has provided Family Stabilization Housing prevention assistance to 59 families. This one-time housing service has been a lifeline for those overcoming a housing crisis.

Housing Support Program

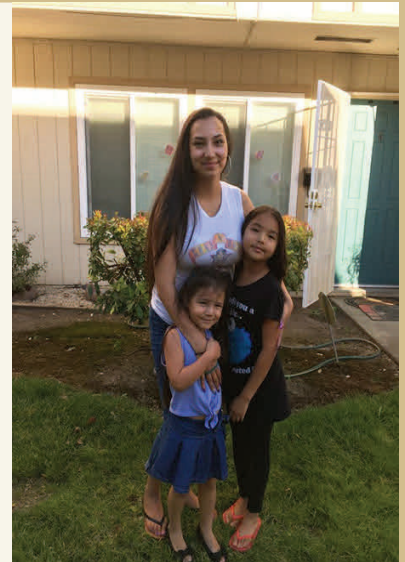
Many struggling families do not reach out for help until their home is gone or staying is no longer an option. For those battling homelessness, the CalWORKs Housing Support Program offers more comprehensive services that link both short and long term housing resources with employment support.

Through the program, the partners at Abode Services assist families in finding affordable housing and provide subsidies to help pay move-in and rental costs. Focusing on sustainable housing solutions, Abode's Housing Specialists ensure that each rehousing placement is in a financially sustainable home so families are able maintain their housing costs following their short-term rental subsidy. The Housing Support Program has provided rehousing and emergency housing solutions to 137 families and housed 86 families throughout the course of this past year.

Monique and her family found themselves homeless after they were evicted from a relative's apartment. Monique was referred to the CalWORKs Housing Support Program, and began to work with her Housing Service Coordinator to set up a housing plan and look for emergency housing. The family was placed in interim housing, which relieved the nightly stress of finding a place to stay.

Monique's husband had full time employment and enough income to sustain the family, but credit became a barrier and after weeks of searching, attending open houses, and meeting with landlords, the family began losing hope that they would ever find a permanent home.

With the assistance of their Housing Specialist they were finally able find a landlord willing to give them chance. Monique and her family moved in to their new home on June 1st. They love their new home with enough room for their kids to play.



Homeless Assistance Program

Families also have another option through the CalWORKs Homeless Assistance Program which provides assistance in meeting the reasonable costs of obtaining permanent housing, and/or temporary shelter while seeking permanent housing.



Temporary homeless assistance can provide payments for a shelter or hotel or motel for families who are homeless and actively searching for permanent housing for up to 16 days. Permanent homeless assistance can provide a payment to cover security deposit costs including first and last month's rent, legal payments, fees, deposits or move-in charges that are required by a landlord as a condition of assuming occupancy. Assistance is also available to cover utility deposits (turn-on fees) required for gas, electricity and/or water.

Although initially designed to be a once in a lifetime benefit, the state recognizes the growing challenge of housing families. Taking effect on January 1, 2017, the Homeless Assistance Program policy was updated to allow recipients to receive the benefit once every 12 months. Additionally, families may also receive an exception that allows them to receive the benefit more than once within a 12-month period.

Housing Relief for All Eligible Families

With the average 2-bedroom apartment renting for a median \$2,800 each month, most CalWORKs families are

allocating larger portions of their monthly budgets to help with housing costs. Leaving families in a tough predicament, many are forced to balance their family's needs against each other, resulting in tough decisions between paying for food or utilities or paying rent on time.

**WINTER
RELIEF
HOUSING
PAYMENTS:**

\$750: PAYMENT AMOUNT
3,990: PAYMENTS ISSUED TO FAMILIES CURRENTLY ON AID
2,269: PAYMENTS ISSUED TO WORKING FAMILIES OFF AID WITHIN THE LAST 12 MONTHS

To provide relief and stabilize housing costs for eligible families in Santa Clara County, the Department offered eligible families Winter Relief housing payments toward the families' housing costs. The issuances provided a bit of breathing room and extended each family's ability to pay their rent while still making timely payments toward their other monthly living costs.

“My situation was bad. One of my two jobs moved to Fremont and it was too far for me to go on the bus. I was now only working one job and I didn't know how to pay rent. I had to borrow money to make all of it. I was feeling so desperate. Then we received the housing relief payment and I was so happy and relieved. I was able to pay the rent the next month and didn't have to borrow money from friends. It was like a solution fell from the heavens. We struggle every day and receiving the money was a great help. Thank you to the County. ”

-Esmeralda (San Jose)



Work Participation Rates and Performance

Each month the State monitors every county's CalWORK's Work Participation Rate (WPR), which measures clients actively participating in employment activities and is the primary performance indicator used for all state Welfare-to-Work programs. To meet the Federal and State standard, WPR measures must exceed the required minimum 50% threshold for single-parent families and 90% threshold for two-parent families to avoid financial sanctions.

Santa Clara County has distinguished itself as one of the top performers in the state, regularly surpassing the 50% threshold for single-parent families and achieving rates into the 70% range several times each year. The trend over the past five years illustrates the County's commitment to developing and maintaining a program that meets the needs of client families with an emphasis on effectively performing its duties.

The Department's performance ratings have garnered attention from counties throughout the state. In response, Santa Clara County has shared its strategies and hosted WPR symposiums where insight, tools and infrastructure are presented to visitors hoping to replicate this success.

Although two-parent families represent a small portion of the overall CalWORKs population (8%), the State has renewed its focus on meeting the 90% federal threshold for participation. With a shift in focus, Santa Clara County has expanded its efforts to reach the goal. In the last annual measure, the Department reached a WPR level of 70%, representing a steady trend increase in performance since 2012.

Evolving to Meet Customer Needs

The Department is constantly engaged in self-evaluation and strives for continual improvements. Most recently, the Employment Services team performed an operational evaluation of the case management infrastructure and developed a plan to optimize the client experience.

After more than 30 years of separate Intake and Continuing Case Management assignments, Employment Services has restructured its operation around a "one-worker" concept. This new model has streamlined client support and proven to minimize worker handoffs, ensured timely wraparound family services, and help to build trust and improve client engagement and success.



"It is an honor to serve our clients and to be able to take part in their transformation process."

- Joseph Conway, Employment Counselor



Employment Connection Center

Having access to work opportunities, as well as the skills, resources, experience and confidence required to reach them, is crucial for families and individuals who are working towards self-sufficiency. The Employment Connection Center (ECC) aims to provide these to CalWORKs job seekers to prepare them to enter or return to the workforce.

Pathway to Work

All clients work with an Employment Counselor who can provide them with valuable one-on-one guidance and coaching sessions to help clients develop their personalized job search experience, tailored to their work history, skills and needs. From there, they have access to the Employment Connection's Job Club and Supervised Job Search activities, where counselors help them polish their resumes and improve application and interview techniques. Over the past year, the Employment Connection has helped 319 clients find jobs through placement into both the private sector and subsidized employment with an average hourly wage of \$13.30 per hour.

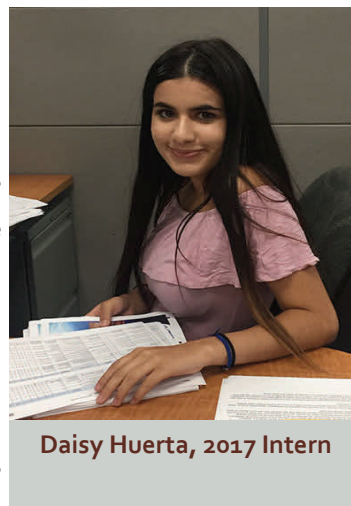
County of Santa Clara Intern & Earn

Research indicates that youth who are employed during their teenage years will have more employment success as adults and earn more over their lifetime. Focusing on the whole family approach, the Department has developed an employment program to help reduce the effects of generational poverty by providing low-income and disadvantaged youth with employment based opportunities that foster safety, career exploration, and exposure to public service. Serving youth aged 16-24, the County of Santa Clara Intern & Earn Program offers a two-component program for youth enrolled in the CalWORKs, CalFresh, and Foster Care programs. *(Please see Appendix F for more information.)*

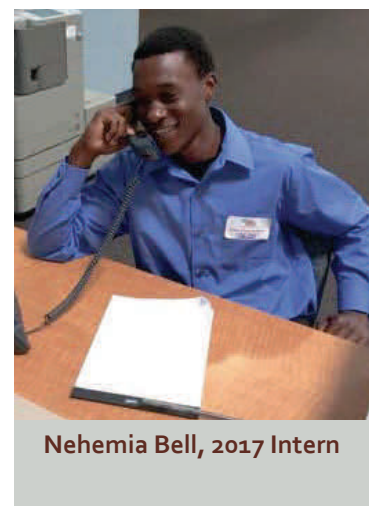
Year Round Employment Engagement

Available to all CalFresh, Foster Care and CalWORKs youth, a variety of employment based workshops are

helping young people prepare for the world of work. Engaging youth participants throughout the year, these workshops provide youth with a safe and interactive environment to encourage personal growth. Since February 2017 when the workshops were rolled out, over 200 teens participated in these employment workshops and began building the skills they need to attain their first job.



Daisy Huerta, 2017 Intern



Nehemia Bell, 2017 Intern



Paid Summer Internships

Expanding from the previous year's goal of 200 internship positions, this year the County doubled the number of youth by extending internships to 421 youth in both the CalWORKs and Foster Care programs. This summer, youth were placed into six-week internships, working 20 hours per week, and earning \$15 per hour. Young people were matched to internships in County offices, non-profit or community-based organizations, and private employers. Interns were able to develop and enhance skills, build positive work habits, and earn up to \$1,800 over the course of their internship. Worksite supervisors were able to get some much needed help around their operations and feel good about mentoring young people with career exploration opportunities. With the County as the employer of record, handing the administration of the program and paying wages, worksite supervisors could completely focus on working with their interns. It's never too early to start thinking about hosting an intern for the summer of 2018; interested employers can call **408-758-3797** to speak to an Employer Relations Specialist.

Let's Do Lunch

This summer saw several innovations that helped to make the summer intern program more robust and more in tune with the needs of the youth participants. Throughout the internship period, the Social Services Agency partnered with Second Harvest Food Bank to make the Senter Road Employment Services Office a "Summer Meals" site. This meant that every day, nearly 50 interns placed on the Senter Road campus had a nutritionally balanced meal served to them on-site and free of charge. Staff converted a general break area into the "#Cafe" and interns regularly came in early for an afternoon shift or stayed after their morning shift to enjoy a meal with friends. Encouraged by staff mentors, youth networked with each other while sharing information about their jobs and swapping stories about their days.

A Stronger Tomorrow

The enthusiasm and energy that youth brought generated immeasurable inspiration and reverence for both participants and the staff. Through their participation in the program, youth developed greater awareness of their potential, explored career paths and cultivated a path to a successful future. Staff are thrilled about the opportunity to help guide them on their journey. *If you're interested in learning more about CalWORKs, see Appendix G for the calendar of CalWORKs Advisory meetings.*



Phu Le, Office Management Coordinator, gets ready for lunch at the #Cafe.



Refugee Employment Services

Flee your home. Travel to the U.S. leaving your family and loved ones behind. Arrive in the U.S., find a place to live, get a job and become financially self-sufficient within eight months of arriving. This is the kind of transformation refugees face with the support of the Refugee Employment Services Program.

Each year Santa Clara County resettles 200-300 refugees from countries as diverse as Iran, Afghanistan, Iraq, Ethiopia, Russian Federation, Pakistan, Somalia, Bhutan, Republic of Congo, El Salvador, Syria, and Burma. Refugees enter this country as victims of human trafficking, survivors of torture, and victims of sexual/gender-based violence.

Despite the adversities faced by these individuals and families, they begin to transform their lives in their new home with the help and support of the Refugee Employment Services Program and a community of service providers and supporters.

With the help of Jewish Family Services and the International Rescue Committee, the Refugee Employment Program, through a grant from the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement, provides new arrivals up to eight months of financial assistance, medical benefits, language training, legal services, skills development, job training and placement to support their transition to their new life here in Santa Clara County.



“Being a part of the program has definitely helped me succeed in the United States. I know there is a better future and a better life, but I have to work very hard to achieve this. It pushes me. I also am eager to gain more skills and really be a leader. I think about my family and their future, about education for my kids. I want to see them succeed here. The future is for them.”

- Husam (San Jose)

During the past year, the Refugee Service Provider network assisted 188 refugees with resettlement services and placed 113 clients into employment. The average wage earned by a Refugee Employment Services client was \$11.63 per hour.



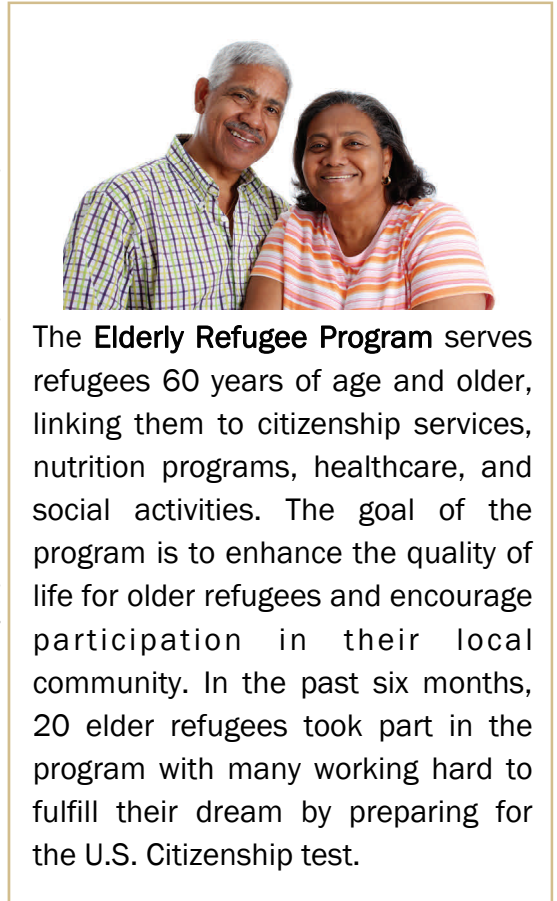
Emergency Fund

During the past year, the Silicon Valley Community Foundation awarded the Refugee and Immigrant Forum a grant of \$50,000 to serve as an emergency fund for local refugee families. Recipients of these funds must be recent arrivals who have lived in Santa Clara County for less than a year. Refugee families use Emergency Fund assistance to help with rent, car payments and other basic household expenses.

Santa Clara County Refugee & Immigrant Forum Job Fair

A focus of the Refugee and Immigrant Forum (RIF) during the past year was the development of a plan to assist educated refugees and immigrants who settle in Santa Clara County. The Plan connects educated refugees with employment opportunities that enable them to maximize the use of their knowledge and expertise and take significant steps to become financially self-sufficient.

One product of this plan was the first RIF collaborative job fair held in April 2017. Twenty-two employers and 140 job seekers with a wide variety of professional backgrounds participated in this “Meet & Greet” event. Several employers indicated that the job fair yielded a number of qualified candidates whom they hoped to hire. RIF is planning for similar events in the near future, and hopes to be able to take advantage of this great wealth of knowledge that this community brings with them to the US. *(Please see Appendix H for more information about the Refugee and Immigrant Forum.)*



The **Elderly Refugee Program** serves refugees 60 years of age and older, linking them to citizenship services, nutrition programs, healthcare, and social activities. The goal of the program is to enhance the quality of life for older refugees and encourage participation in their local community. In the past six months, 20 elder refugees took part in the program with many working hard to fulfill their dream by preparing for the U.S. Citizenship test.

“Santa Clara County is home to one of the most diverse populations on earth, and we consider our diversity an asset. Immigrants make up 37 percent of our workforce, and account for 44 percent of our economic productivity. Nearly 40 percent of our residents were born in another country. On any given day, 100 different languages are spoken in our County, and 50 percent of our residents speak a language other than English at home. Immigrants come here chasing the American dream, they want to be free, pursue and education, be safe, provide for their families and build a better life for themselves and their children.”

- Dave Cortese, President, Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors, February 7, 2017



GENERAL ASSISTANCE

In Santa Clara County, the General Assistance Program provides monthly cash grants to qualified individuals who have no other means of support.

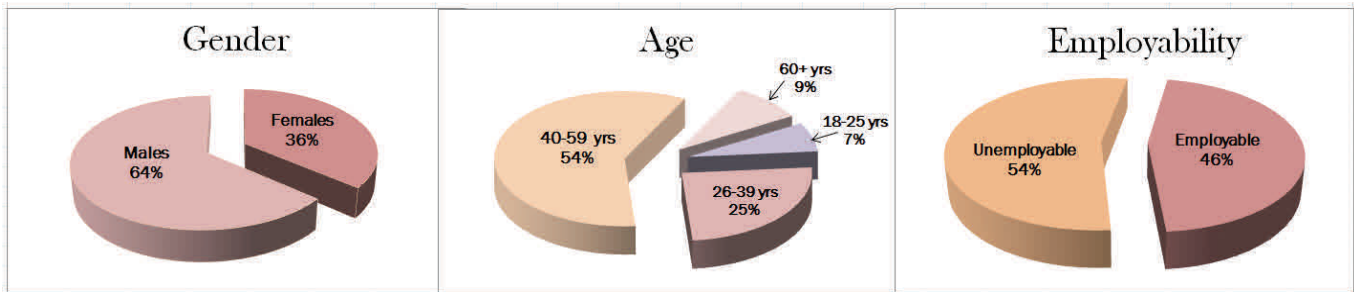
General Assistance Bureau - A Helping Hand



For those seeking help with the basics of daily living, the General Assistance Bureau (Bureau) serves as a place where people receive the attention and assistance they need to begin transforming their lives for the better. Each month the Bureau extends its “helping hand” to over 5,000 indigent adults on a continuing basis. During the past year, the Bureau processed an average of 1,265 new applications each month and totaled over 15,000 new applications for the year. The typical General Assistance (GA) benefit for a single person living alone in Santa Clara County is \$343 per month.

GA Client Profile

On average, General Assistance clients assisted over the past year were male and between 40 to 59 years of age. Over half were unable to work and homeless.



Reaching the Target Population

One of the challenges of providing GA services is reaching the program’s target population. With many of the population homeless, a central focus of the Department’s ongoing transformation has been to make it easier for clients to access services, to reduce the barriers to maintaining benefits and to work with community partners to provide benefits beyond the scope of the Department.



With the transition to individual caseload assignments last year, clients receive personalized service from staff specifically assigned to guide them through the application processes and address their questions and concerns. Indigent clients without a mailing address can have their mail “delivered” to the Senter Road office.

The average lobby wait-time is less than **6 minutes** per visit.
The average wait-time for a phone call is **2 minutes** per call.

“Skip the Line” Reminder Card

In order to continue to receive GA benefits, clients must periodically demonstrate their eligibility for the benefit. The Skip the Line card reminds clients that they can maintain ongoing benefits through a phone call instead of a trip to district offices. The reminder cards are part of an ongoing effort to increase the awareness of these alternative methods of meeting program requirements. They are designed to simplify the actions required of clients and save time for staff and clients both.



Employability

After qualifying for benefits, staff determines whether recipients are able to work. Clients who are able to work are expected to “give back” to the community through participating in “Public Works” projects through the Vocational Services Unit (see more on the following page). Individuals who are unable to work because of age or a disability are referred to the SSI Advocacy Unit for assistance in qualifying for federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits.

SSI Advocacy Unit

Qualifying for SSI can be a life changing event for a GA client because it represents a life-long monthly benefit in an amount far greater than General Assistance. SSI can enable a client to stabilize their living situation and improve their quality of life.



Applying for SSI can be a long and difficult process. When denials and appeals are part of the process, approval of a client’s SSI application can often take as long as two years to successfully complete. For many of the indigent population served by the SSI Advocacy Unit, lack of a permanent address makes maintaining contact between client and advocate during the application process very challenging. Despite these challenges, last year SSI Advocacy Unit workers guided over 700 clients through this complex process and provided the support and assistance required to help the most vulnerable individuals obtain benefits to support their basic needs.



“Stacie is not only doing her job well but she is doing it with a heart.”
 - Rose (San Jose)

Stacie Ngo, a member of the SSI Advocacy Unit worked on behalf of Rose’s son, Fred, for a year arranging the necessary pieces to help Fred qualify for SSI benefits. His application for SSI was first denied in December 2016, but because of Stacie’s determination, the necessary medical information was obtained. In June 2017, a full twelve months after being assigned Fred’s case, Fred’s SSI application was approved. As her supervisor states, “Stacie is an outstanding social worker and a treasure in our unit!”

Vocational Services Unit

Half of the individuals who qualify for General Assistance benefits are determined to be employable and must engage in a work activity to qualify for their benefits. These individuals are referred to the Vocational Services Unit where they are provided assistance to enhance their employability.

The purpose of the Vocational Services Program is to guide clients toward employment opportunities in order to end their dependence on GA. In pursuit of this goal, clients are provided with Employment Readiness Preparation workshops, job search assistance and work project assignments through the Public Works Project.

Through partnerships with local government agencies and nonprofit, community-based organizations, clients are engaged in work that serve the public interest through the Public Works Project. In addition to benefitting the community, the project reengages clients back into the world of work and provides opportunities to receive positive feedback and references for their work efforts. Employable individuals referred to the Vocational Services Unit must

Average number of Vocational Service clients entering employment each month: **137**

Average starting hourly wage: **\$17.48**

work the hourly equivalent of their cash benefit divided by the State’s minimum wage (\$10.50 per hour).



Collaborations

The Vocational Services Unit regularly collaborates with community-based organizations to support the efforts of clients seeking employment. This year the Department hosted a Partner Appreciation Event at a Public Works Project site to show our appreciation and celebrate the efforts of our partner organizations.



Partners, clients, and staff had a blast at this year's luau-themed Partner Appreciation Event!

Reentry Resource Center: One Stop Shop

The Reentry Resource Center is dedicated to assisting county residents transitioning from the criminal justice system back into the community. In the past year, over 4,100 benefit applications were processed through the Department for three of these residents' highest priority needs - income (General Assistance), food (CalFresh) and healthcare (Medi-Cal). A quick and streamlined access to the reentry benefits service model assisted over 2,100 clients.

Moving Forward

Moving forward, the Department will be adding staff to the Vocational Services Unit to increase the employment support services available to GA clients and will continue development of a collaborative infrastructure with other county departments and community-based service providers to expand the Department's holistic approach to address client needs.



Foster Care Eligibility

The Foster Care Eligibility Bureau is comprised of a team of Intake and Continuing Eligibility Workers, Clerical



Staff, and Social Work Coordinators all working in unison, to ensure that the needs of each foster care child and provider are met. Services provided by the Department include eligibility determinations and ongoing case management for benefits such as Foster Care payments, Adoption Assistance payments, and Medi-Cal services.



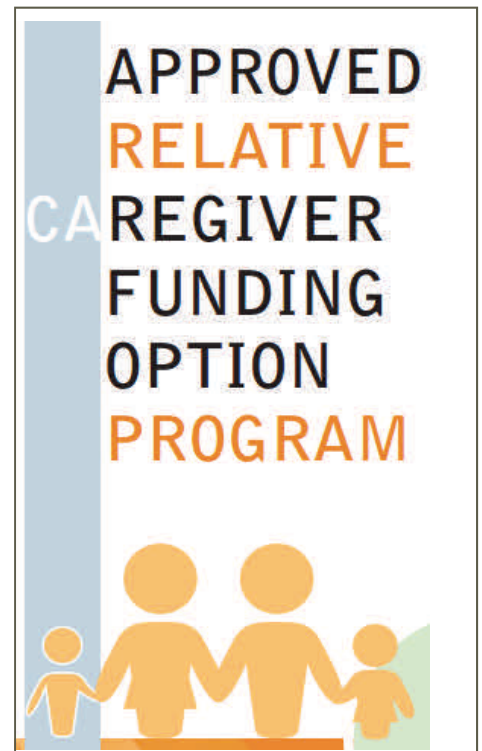
In addition to these basic benefits, the Department administers payments under the Approved Relative Caregiver Program, Kinship Guardian Assistance Program, Transitional Housing Placement, Wraparound Service, Extended Foster

Care for Non-Minor Dependents and staffs the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Advocacy program. Each year we process more than 5,000 highly sensitive cases involving some of our community's most vulnerable members, foster youth.

Approved Relative Caregiver Program

The transition to foster care is frequently more successful when a child is placed in the care of a family member with whom a trusting relationship has been established. Recognizing the effectiveness of this practice, in January 2017, the state increased the foster care fees paid to approved relative caregivers to equal the amounts paid to non-family caregivers. Evidence of the effectiveness of this practice was aptly demonstrated during the past year.

In January 2017, sixty-five families were enrolled in the program; by May, the number was reduced by half due to children either returning home, being adopted, or having their relative caregiver become their legal guardian through the Kinship Guardianship Assistance Payment Program (Kin-GAP).



SSI Advocacy

Each month, Social Work Coordinators in the Foster Care SSI Advocacy Unit screen an average of ten foster care youth, 16½ years of age and older, for SSI benefits and assist those who are eligible with the application process. In approved cases, the County is named as the authorized payee and a Social Work Coordinator manages the youth's monthly benefits. The child or young adult's monthly placement costs are paid out of these benefits and any remaining funds are held in reserve for other expenses, such as school tuition or supplies. There are currently over 100 foster youth receiving SSI benefits. All are strongly encouraged to continue with the Extended Foster Care program, which provides three years of additional support, through age 21. While under the extended program, youth receive the training and guidance they need to become self-sufficient and independent.

Former Foster Youth Program

The Former Foster Youth Program ensures that youth who were in foster care on their 18th birthday or later continue to receive Medi-Cal benefits until they are 26 years old regardless of their income. With the help of the Medi-Cal Eligibility Workers, youth exiting foster care are ensured of receiving uninterrupted Medi-Cal benefits. This benefit has assisted aged-out, foster care youth to maintain their independence and transition into adulthood.

Continuum of Care Reform

Foster Care services continue to evolve with the state's Continuum of Care Reform. On January 1, 2017, the new foster care rate structure went into effect that standardizes the basic rates paid for children placed in approved homes. Age of the child is no longer the sole factor used to determine the amount of the basic foster care rate. Another objective of Continuum of Care Reform is to limit the use of congregate care providers. Group Homes are transitioning to a new licensing category referred to as Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Programs (STRTPs) which will provide more intensive and individualized services and supports for youth. The intent is to use STRTPs as a last resort intervention to help youth return home. Along with the Department of Family and Children Services and our partners in Probation and Mental Health, we continue to develop tools and strategies to improve the foster care system. The focus remains on home-based care and the inclusion of the foster youth becoming an equal partner in contributing to all policies and decisions affecting their lives.



Staying Connected

The Department has revolutionized the way that it stays connected to members of our community. No longer do we rely only upon letters that frequently fail to reach clients who have moved or lack a stable residence. Rather, this year we used modern tools such as social media, texts, emails, and robocalls to help us stay connected.

We also expanded the role of the Office of the Ombudsman, which assists community members who need help navigating the benefits process. Engaging with community members, creating a two-way dialogue that increases community trust, resolving important benefits-related issues – these are ways that we stayed connected to our community in FY 2017.

Social Media

In February, the Department launched a social media campaign to increase our ability to educate and connect with clients. To many of our clients who use social media regularly, our posts are a welcome and effective way to share information.

In just six months, we've utilized social media to engage community members on a diverse number of issues ranging from reminders about due dates to material about new programs such as Double Up Food Bucks and Bike Share for All to information from partners including Second Harvest Food Bank, Valley Medical Center, and the Valley Transportation Authority.

The social network provides a mechanism to share

information about our diverse community partners. By creating a collaborative channel to share user-generated content to promote shared initiatives, we are expanding our reach into the community and connecting with clients on the platforms that they use every day.

SANTA CLARA COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICES AGENCY
DEPT OF EMPLOYMENT AND BENEFIT SERVICES

Follow us | Like us | Share us | Tweet us |

- Follow us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram: [@scssadebs](#)
- Find our videos on YouTube: [Santa Clara County Social Services Agency– DEBS](#)
- Online Application: [MyBenefitsCalwin.org](#)
- Mobile App: [My Benefits CalWIN](#)
- Visit our website: <https://www.sccgov.org/sites/ssa/debs/Pages/debs.aspx>

See what's happening!

Facebook | Twitter | Instagram | YouTube

SERVE * EMPOWER * TRANSFORM



The Ombudsman

Navigating the world of benefits can be confusing, intimidating, and many times frustrating to members of our community.

The Department created the Office of the Ombudsman two years ago in order to help clients who are in lost within the system and need extra care to help guide them during a period of hardship. This year, we expanded the Office of the Ombudsman to include services for foster care families.

In addition to helping clients, the Ombudsman highlights systemic issues and processes within the Department that need improvement, and earmarks them for future action. By doing so, the Ombudsman plays a key role in helping the Department continue to strive for optimal customer service and ease of use.

If you, or anyone you know, needs help with a benefit issue, please call the Office of the Ombudsman at **408-755-7187** or visit www.sccgov.org/sites/ssa/debs.



“My sister lost custody of her kids. It was heartbreaking seeing my niece and nephew being placed in the foster care system. I couldn’t bear to think about them living with strangers, so I asked to become their legal guardian.

I didn’t regret the guardianship for a second, but my wife and I were having a lot of trouble accessing the kids’ Medi-Cal benefits.

I asked the Ombudsman’s Office for help and they were able to step in and work with the district office to resolve my situation. It’s still a challenge some days, but it’s great to know that my wife and I can rely on the Ombudsman to help us with situations like this. The kids are happy and that’s what really counts.”

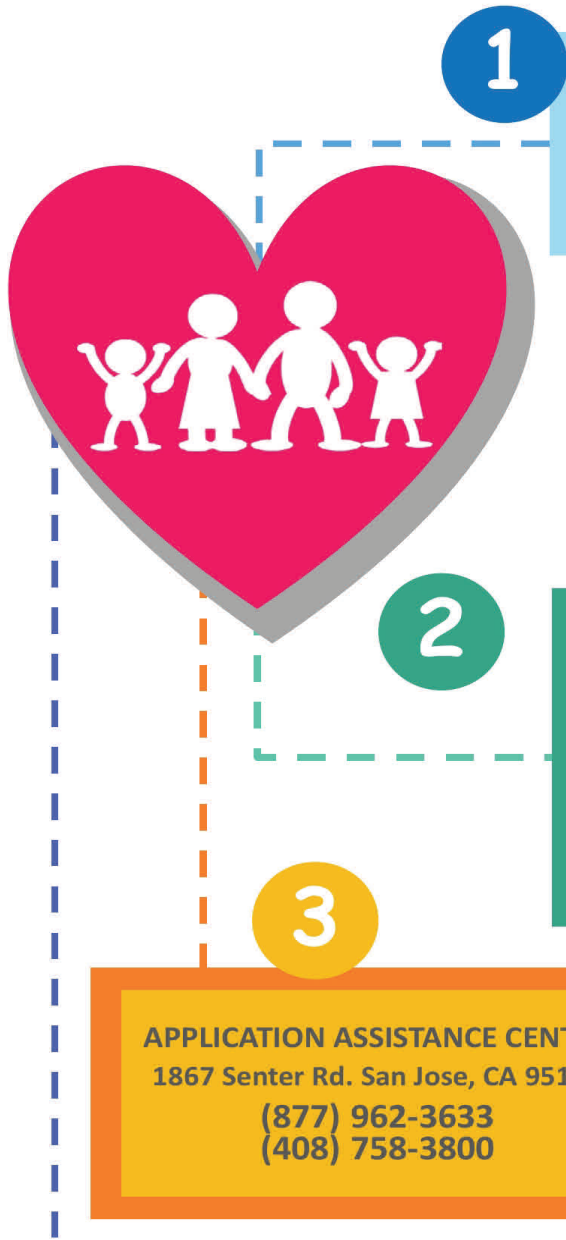
-David (Mountain View)

Appendix

Those working with low-income families are strongly encouraged to learn more about our programs, explore the information in our Appendix, and actively participate in the Safety Net Committee and/or CalWORKS Advisory. By working with the Department to promote the employment services and benefit programs that help clients attain economic self-sufficiency, we can help combat the effects of poverty and transform the lives of our clients together. The following pages contain additional information about the community meetings, resources, and services mentioned in the Annual Report.

- A. Access Points to Services**
- B. Social Media**
- C. Emergency Assistance Network**
- D. Safety Net Calendar**
- E. CalFresh 101**
- F. Intern and Earn**
- G. CalWORKs Advisory Calendar**
- H. Refugee Immigrant Forum**
- I. District Office Directory**

YOU MAY QUALIFY FOR MEDI-CAL, CASH OR CALFRESH (FOOD STAMPS) BENEFITS.

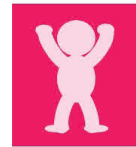


1



If you have a child under the age of 18 living in your home, you may be eligible for...

CalWORKs, CalFresh and Medi-Cal benefits.



2



You can apply by phone or in person at any of the offices listed below.

3

APPLICATION ASSISTANCE CENTER
1867 Senter Rd. San Jose, CA 95112
(877) 962-3633
(408) 758-3800

SOUTH COUNTY
379 Tomkins Ct.
Gilroy CA 95020
(408) 758-3300

NORTH COUNTY
1330 W. Middlefield Rd.
Mountain View CA 94043
(408) 278-2400

4



You may also apply for benefits online at:
<https://www.mybenefitscalwin.org/>



| Follow us | Like us | Share us | Tweet us |



See what's happening!

Follow us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram:

@sccssadebs

Find our videos on YouTube :

Santa Clara County Social Services Agency- DEBS

Online Application:

MyBenefitsCalwin.org

Mobile App:

My Benefits CalWIN

Visit our website:

<https://www.sccgov.org/sites/ssa/debs/Pages/debs.aspx>

Community Services Agency of Mountain View & Los Altos

204 Sterlin Rd.
Mountain View, CA 94043
(650) 968-0836

Assistance in:

94022 Los Altos
94024 Los Altos
94040 Mountain View
94041 Mountain View
94043 Mountain View

LifeMoves Commercial St. Inn

260 Commercial Street
San Jose, CA 95112
(408) 271-1630

Assistance in:

95035 Milpitas
95131 San Jose
95133 San Jose
95134 San Jose

LifeMoves Opportunity Center

33 Encina Avenue
Palo Alto, CA 94301
(650) 853-8672

Assistance in:

94301 Palo Alto
94303 Palo Alto
94304 Palo Alto
94305 Stanford
94306 Palo Alto

Sunnyvale Community Services

725 Kifer Rd.
Sunnyvale, CA 94086
(408) 738-4321

Assistance in:

94085 Sunnyvale
94086 Sunnyvale
94087 Sunnyvale
94089 Sunnyvale
95002 Alviso

Sacred Heart Community Services

1381 S. First St.
San Jose, CA 95110
(408) 278-2160

Assistance in:

95008 Campbell
95110 San Jose
95111 San Jose
95112 San Jose
(S. of Santa Clara St.)
95113 San Jose
95116 San Jose
95117 San Jose
95118 San Jose
95120 San Jose
95123 San Jose
95124 San Jose
95125 San Jose
95126 San Jose
95128 San Jose
95136 San Jose

Salvation Army

359 North 4th Street
San Jose, CA 95109
(408) 282-1165

Assistance in:

95037 Morgan Hill
95112 San Jose
(N. of Santa Clara St.)
95119 San Jose
95121 San Jose
95122 San Jose
95127 San Jose
95132 San Jose
95135 San Jose
95138 San Jose
95139 San Jose
95148 San Jose

Salvation Army

3090 Homestead Road
Santa Clara, CA 95051
(408) 247-4588

Assistance in:

95050 Santa Clara
95051 Santa Clara
95054 Santa Clara

Emergency Assistance Network OF
SANTA CLARA COUNTY

St. Joseph's Family Center

7950 A-Church St.
Gilroy, CA 95020
(408) 842-6662

Assistance in:

95020 Gilroy
95046 San Martin

West Valley Community Services

10104 Vista Drive
Cupertino, CA 95014
(408) 255-8033

Assistance in:

95014 Cupertino
95030 Los Gatos
95032 Los Gatos
95033 Los Gatos
95070 Saratoga
95129 San Jose
95130 San Jose



Participating Police Departments:

Gilroy Police Dept.
(408) 846-0323

Morgan Hill Police Dept
(408) 779-2101

Milpitas Police Dept.
(408) 586-2400

Mt. View Police Dept.
(650) 903-6350

San Jose Police Dept.
(408) 277-5450

Santa Clara Police Dept.
(408) 615-4700



About the Network

Everyone experiences emergencies from time to time. For some Silicon Valley residents, however, each day is a struggle for financial stability and independence. When an emergency hits, they need somewhere to turn for help. The goal is to stabilize individuals and families during times of trouble and help them return to self-sufficiency.

The Emergency Assistance Network (EAN) provides a variety of services to prevent homelessness and act as a safety net for residents facing eviction, utility disconnection, and hunger. The EAN offers assistance to help families and individuals recover from emergency situations, often providing case management and financial education in conjunction with:

- Food Assistance
- Rent and Mortgage Aid
- Utility Assistance
- Medical and Transportation Aid
- Direct Financial aid for special issues - funeral expenses, etc

Levels of Financial Assistance

- Direct Financial Aid to a Vendor (direct payments to landlords, utility companies, doctors, transportation passes etc.)
 - Other Direct Financial Aide Assistance(gift cards, vouchers etc)
- * This does not include in-kind support to these families of food, clothing, etc.

Guidelines for Assistance

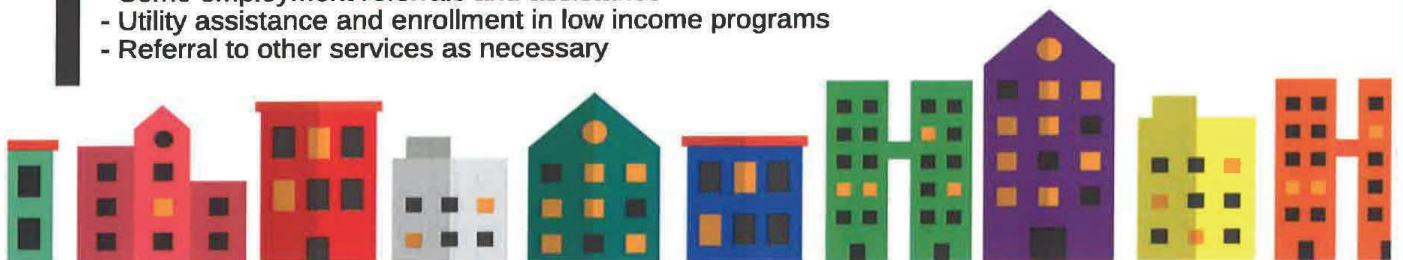
- Assistance from agencies is based on zip code
- Income eligibility guidelines related to Low and Very Low Income
- Strict Criteria for rental assistance is followed - Payments are made to landlords not to the client
- Direct financial assistance for transportation, utilities, medical, funeral etc
- Limits on the amount of funding (ranges anywhere from \$500 to \$1,500)
- Limits on the time span in which funding is received—most agencies give one time only assistance but some make exceptions within a 2 year span

Services beyond Emergency Assistance

- Provide financial planning assistance to help with budgeting, credit coaching, etc.
- Support for Enrollment in Cal Fresh, MediCal, General Assistance, and other support programs
- Access to food pantry and other food services
- Some case management
- Some employment referrals and assistance
- Utility assistance and enrollment in low income programs
- Referral to other services as necessary

Emergency Assistance Network OF SANTA CLARA COUNTY

Member Agencies





Safety Net Meeting 2017-2018 Calendar



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 Perez at: (408) 755-7187 or mariela.perez@ssa.sccgov.org

<p>Location</p> <p>Second Harvest Food Bank 750 Curtner Avenue San Jose, CA 95125 (Upstairs, Going Room)</p>
<p>Time</p> <p>11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.</p>

Meeting Dates
September 28
October 26
November (No Meeting)
December 7
January 25
February 22
March 22
April 26
May 24
June 28
July 26
August 23



You are invited to the CalFresh 101 Training

This training will equip you to assist clients with their CalFresh applications and be part of the efforts in eliminating hunger in the community.

- Overview of the CalFresh Program
- Ways to Apply for CalFresh
- Documentation Needed
- Semi-Annual Reporting and Recertification Process
- Tour of the Application Center

Upcoming Sessions

Location: 1877 Senter Road,
San Jose, CA 95112
Stanford Room

Time: 9:00-12:00

Dates: 09/13/17
12/13/17
03/14/18
06/13/18

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Email: calfresh101@ssa.sccgov.org



Please send in questions about CalFresh prior to the training.

Mission of Santa Clara County Social Services
"A culturally sensitive and socially responsible public agency providing high quality professional, financial, and protective services for residents of Santa Clara County."

SANTA CLARA COUNTY

The Employment connection Center hosted an Intern & Earn celebration on July 28th. The event turnout was phenomenal; in attendance were:

- 193 CalWORKs interns,
- 47 DFCS/HUB interns,
- 64 Worksite Supervisors and
- 51 family members that came to support their working children or siblings.

Each guest speaker's words and emotion shed light on the intangible impact of the program on youth, their families and the community. This SSA Today is Part-one of a two-part series sharing their experiences.

Click to Submit Your "SSA Today" Story for Consideration

NEXT ISSUE:

SEPTEMBER 2017

SERVE Client Focus

EMPOWER Empower and Engage

TRANSFORM Innovate

COMMENTS ON SSA TODAY? CONTACT DANA MCQUARY 408.755.7768

SSA Today

SERVE, EMPOWER, TRANSFORM

VISION—Commitment to Serve, Empower, Transform—It's what we do!

August 14, 2017

Youth Celebrating Growth, Strength and Success

In honor of their final day at work, CalWORKs and Foster Care youth participants in the Intern & Earn program gathered to share their experiences and say one last goodbye to their supervisors and co-workers.



Garnering a heartfelt applause, Acsa Cordova moved the crowd as she shared her experience working at Emma Prusch Park and the profound effect it had on her future.

"Before this internship I dropped out of school and was struggling to find the motivation to go back. I couldn't keep a job and would find any reason to call in sick. Honestly, this internship didn't even feel like a job, I loved it from day one. I found my motivation in this job over the summer and I'll be returning to school in the fall."

Deputy Director, David Flamm from the Office of Emergency Services, hosted three interns and shared some of their unique contributions to the community.

"This was our second year hosting interns from the program. Last year they helped us organize shelter equipment that was actually used during the recent flooding event. The work these interns did helped us deploy the equipment in an efficient and expedient manner. They liked the job so much that they came back for a second year and assisted us with public outreach and disaster preparedness.....they even got to try on an E.O.D. bomb suit"



Intern, Anthony Watson, worked at Green Mouse Recycling Center and his employer was so impressed with his work ethic that they offered him a full-time job starting at \$15 per hour. His mom Kandee shared the impact that his job has made on the entire family.

"I'm so proud of him and I'm so happy he found a job. He has two brothers at home and neither of them are working. They've had a chance to see him going to work everyday and earning money. Now they're inspired to get out there and find jobs too."

SANTA CLARA COUNTY

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SERVE

Client Focus

EMPOWER

Empower and Engage

TRANSFORM

Innovate

COMMENTS ON SSA TODAY?
CONTACT DANA MCQUARY
408.755.7768

SSA Today

SERVE, EMPOWER, TRANSFORM

VISION—Commitment to Serve, Empower, Transform—It's what we do!

August 15, 2017

Youth Celebrating Growth, Strength and Success—Part-Two

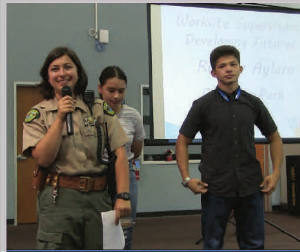


Luana Rivera Palacio, Education Program Manager at Guadalupe Park Conservancy opened their worksite up to six summer Interns and she shared a few words on her motivation for hosting them.

"When we were invited to participate it was an easy YES! I work in environmental science and sadly there isn't a lot of diversity in this field. An opportunity to bring these young people in, to experience nature and understand their place in it was very important to me."

Kookie Chavarria is majoring in Administration of Justice and spoke about the perfect job placement for her 6-week internship.

"I worked at the District Attorney's office with D.A. Josue Fuentes and I was able to participate in every aspect of the judicial system. I went on ride alongs with the police, I sat in on trials, I met the mayor and sat in on council meetings where we discussed gang and crime prevention measures. I worked really hard and they offered to extend my internship for another 6-months! I don't think it could have been any better and I am grateful for this opportunity."



Ranger Aylara Odekova from Santa Clara County Parks inspired the crowd with a sincere acknowledgement to all of the interns in the program.

"The fact that you are here demonstrates that you have deep aspirations in life, it demonstrates that you have ambition. This program sets you up for success, so congratulations to each and every one of you."



CalWORKs Advisory 2017–18 Meeting Calendar

DATE	TIME	LOCATION
September 6	11:30 – 1:30	Social Services Agency 1879 Senter Road–Orientation Room
October 4	11:30 – 1:30	Social Services Agency 1879 Senter Road–Orientation Room
November 1	11:30 – 1:30	Social Services Agency 1879 Senter Road–Orientation Room
December	NO MEETING THIS MONTH – CLIENT ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS	
January 3	11:30 – 1:30	Social Services Agency 1879 Senter Road–Orientation Room
February 7	11:30 – 1:30	Social Services Agency 1879 Senter Road–Orientation Room
March 7	11:30 – 1:30	Social Services Agency 1879 Senter Road–Orientation Room
April 4	11:30 – 1:30	Social Services Agency 1879 Senter Road–Orientation Room
May 2	11:30 – 1:30	Social Services Agency 1879 Senter Road–Orientation Room
June 6	11:30 – 1:30	Social Services Agency 1879 Senter Road–Orientation Room
July	* NO MEETING THIS MONTH *	
August 1	11:30 – 1:30	Social Services Agency 1879 Senter Road–Orientation Room

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



2017/18 MEMBERS

- American Red Cross
- African Community Health Institute
- Asian Americans for Community Involvement
- Asian Law Alliance
- Campbell Adult & Community Education
- Catholic Charities
- Healthy Kids Foundation
- International Rescue Committee
- Jewish Family Services of Silicon Valley
- Milpitas Adult Education
- PARS Equality Center
- Refugee Transitions
- Santa Clara County Office of Human Relations
- Santa Clara County Social Services Agency
- Santa Clara Valley Health & Hospital System
- Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority
- Upwardly Global
- and Individuals
- Hatixhe Grbeshi
- Jamila Ghanm
- Karita Hummer
- Sabby Kaur
- Susan Stasi
- Nhu-Hanh Tonnu

P.O. Box 28621 ♦ San Jose ♦ CA 95159-8621

Chair: Sead Eminovic
 Vice-Chair: Ellie Clelland
 Treasurer: Zoya Lazer
 Secretary: Hawley Rising

**Refugee & Immigrant Forum
 2017 – 2018 Calendar**

July 19, 2017	January 17, 2018
August 16, 2017	February 14, 2018
September 20, 2017	March 14, 2018
October 18, 2017	April 18, 2018
November 15, 2017	May 16, 2018
December 20, 2017	June 20, 2018

Meeting locations are rotated among member agencies.
 For meeting locations call Mylene Madrid at 408-792-5619.

The Mission Statement: “Refugee & Immigrant Forum facilitates the successful integration of refugees and immigrants into local communities through collaboration, resource sharing and fostering community awareness.”

District Office Directory

Office Name	Address	Phone	Services
Benefit Assistance Center	1867 Senter Road San Jose, CA 95112	(408) 758-3800	Application Center for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health Coverage • Food Assistance • Financial Assistance
Continuing Benefit Services	1870 Senter Road San Jose, CA 95112	(408) 758-4100	On-going Public Benefits
Victor Calvo North County Office	1330 W. Middlefield Road Mountain View, CA 94043	(408) 278-2400 (650) 988-6200	Full Service Center including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application Center for all Public Benefits • Continuing Benefit Assistance • CalWORKs Employment Services
South County Office	379 Tomkins Court Gilroy, CA 95020	(408) 758-3300	Full Service Center including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application Center for all Public Benefits • Continuing Benefit Assistance • CalWORKs Employment Services
General Assistance	1919 Senter Road San Jose, CA 95112	(408) 796-8900	Service Center for Indigent Adults Seeking: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Assistance • Cash Assistance Program for Immigrants • Vocational Services
CalWORKs Employment Services	1879 Senter Road San Jose, CA 95112 1330 W. Middlefield Road Mountain View, CA 94043 379 Tomkins Court Gilroy, CA 95020	(408) 758-3500 (408) 278-2402 (650) 988-6200 (408) 758-3300	Service Center for CalWORKs Employment Services Clients



**SANTA CLARA COUNTY
SOCIAL SERVICES AGENCY**