



Department of Employment and Benefit Services
Social Services Agency
County of Santa Clara



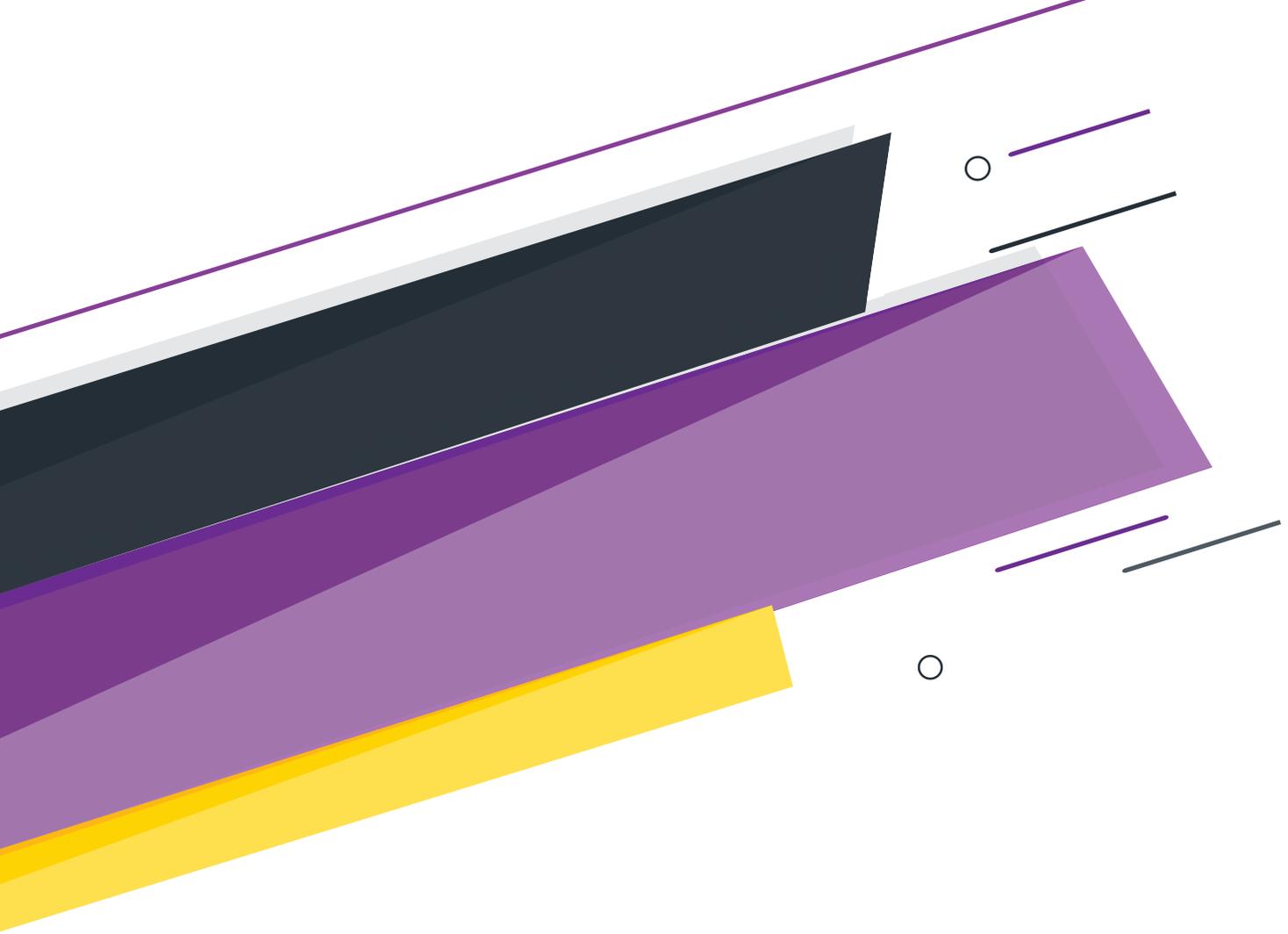
Employment Services Annual Update

2021



EMPLOYMENT SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT

TABLE OF CONTENTS



Director’s Message, Vision & Mission	01
Engagement & Linkages	05
Staying Connected	07
Work Participation Rate	09
Child Care	11
Community Colleges & Adult Education	13
Housing	15
County of Santa Clara Intern & Earn	17
Dress for Success	19
Vocational Services & Post-Aid Services	21
CalWORKs Achievement Awards	23
Demographics	25



Our Director's **MESSAGE**

The CalWORKs and Employment Services programs serve over 5,000 of the most at-risk families in Santa Clara County, offering hope and opportunity through temporary financial assistance and a path to economic self-sufficiency.

For clients and staff of the CalWORKs and Employment Services programs, 2020 was a year full of both new challenges and new opportunities. Restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic meant that our business model quickly pivoted from in-person training and assistance to a remote, internet-based model.

Staff and clientele both proved resilient in coping with these changes. Staff seized upon the opportunity to rethink, reinvent, and rework ways in which we can help families gain job skills, increase their earning ability, and become financially stable. Clients worked hard to meet their work requirements and personal goals.

We enhanced our communication practices, connecting with job seekers on an almost daily basis to help prevent isolation and ensure that their needs were being met. One-time Technology Support grants



allowed eligible CalWORKs job seekers to bridge the digital divide and apply for jobs online. Importantly, Technology Support grants also helped approximately 300 students enrolled in Community College or Adult Education programs participate in online coursework as they pursue their degrees.

We continued to offer paid summer internships to youth from the CalWORKs, CalFresh, and Foster Care programs. This year's group of 419 interns was broken up into four smaller cohorts, and internship opportunities were modified to ensure the safety of all participants.

Throughout this report, you will find quotes and stories about clients who persevered through tremendous hardships in order to achieve their goals of financial and familial stability. We hope that you enjoy reading about the inspiring individuals we serve, and the vital programs that we offer, as we look forward to a brighter future in 2021.

Rafaela Perez
Employment Services Director



Our Mission

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.



Our Vision

Every day, we strive to make a difference through People, Service, and Performance. We utilize the following Guiding Principles in our work:

- Responsive - “We Ask and Strive to Meet the Need”
- Compassionate - “We Are Empathetic & Respectful”
- Innovative - “We Are a Learning Organization”

Engagement

Social Distancing Has Not Disconnected Us from Our Families

Now more than ever, keeping clients connected to CalWORKs Employment Services provides a safety net and opens possibilities for families in terms of resources to sustain self-sufficiency, family stabilization and preservation.

To ensure no family is left behind, the Engagement Team successfully implemented a virtual Orientation and in-depth interview process so families can begin their Employment Services journey while sheltering in place. From April 2020 through December 2020, 1,446 families were engaged through the new virtual Orientation process. The Engagement Team was also able to lift 135 CalWORKs benefits sanctions from April 2020 to October 2020.

Starting in November 2020, the Engagement Team launched an intense outreach campaign targeting nonparticipating Exempt and Sanctioned clients to help them engage in services and begin receiving their full CalWORKs grant. Outreach efforts for both populations included marketing postcards and mailers as well as direct contact through phone, texting, and email. As a result of this new strategy, the Engagement Team was successful engaging 141 Sanctioned families and 60 Exempt families from November 2020 to January 2021.



2020 Engagement

1,446 Families Engaged

135 Sanctions Lifted

Linkages



Helping to Heal Fractured Families

These extraordinary times have necessitated a stronger partnership between CalWORKs Employment Services and the Department of Family and Children's Services. Our renewed efforts to work in collaboration to assist our families is demonstrated in the increase in attendance of remote Child Family Team Meetings and the completion rate of Coordinated Integrated Plans. The Linkages Team supports families with completing their court case plan by providing supportive services and referrals to meet their goals so parents and children can reunite and achieve self-sufficiency.



Linkages Success

**64% Video Attendance
at Child & Family Team
Meetings**

**78% Coordinated
Integrated Plans**

**We are an agency
that values
collaboration with
clients and other
organizations.**

Client Testimonial

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

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

— Sonya

Staying Connected

During a time when offices were forced to close and in person contacts were prohibited due to health and safety concerns, the importance of staying connected with families electronically became a top priority.

To enable families to stay connected, Employment Services staff made sure that eligible families received a Technology Support grant to help bridge the digital divide.

For client Alejandra R., the Technology Support grant was just what she needed. Before the grant, it was difficult for her to stay connected with program staff and meet her program requirements while sharing a tablet computer with her daughter. With the Technology Support grant, Alejandra purchased a new computer that is also helping her pursue an Associate of Science degree in the medical field.



Over 1,500 Families

received connectivity support. The Technology Support grant proved to be a key component in addressing digital inequality.



Partnerships

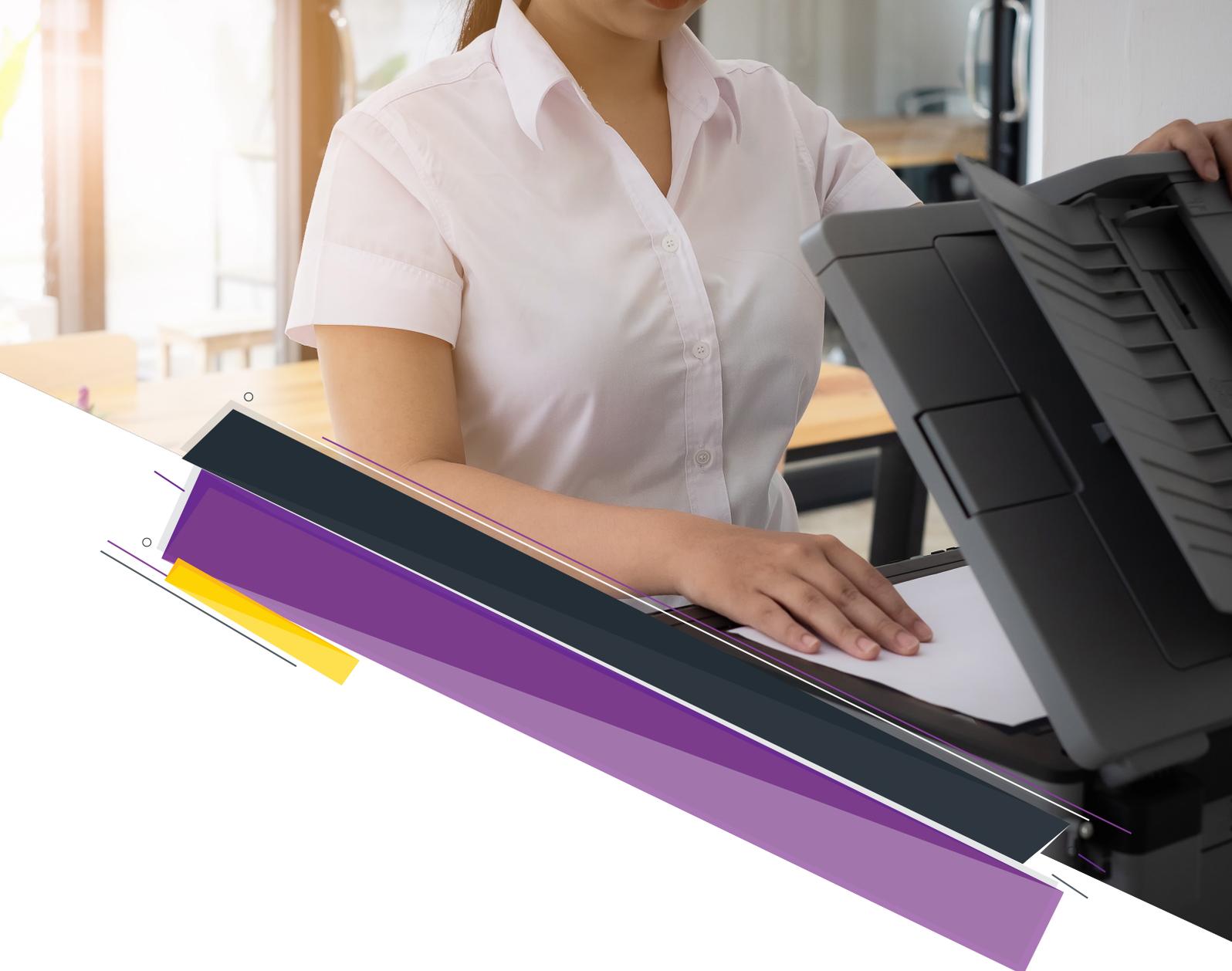
Pay Dividends

Through a partnership with the San Jose Public Library, families were provided additional support to bridge the digital divide.

- ✓ The San Jose Public Library held free giveaway events to help families address the lack of equipment to support remote learning and participation in Employment Services activities.
- ✓ At two giveaway events in December 2020 and February 2021, over 180 families received a free tablet/laptop and over 70 families received a free hotspot to connect to the internet.
- ✓ The San Jose Public Library Maker[Space]Ship (“mobile office” bus) visited sites to provide eligible families with a free refurbished tablet/laptop with detachable keyboard.



Since its launch in December 2016, the Maker[Space]Ship has brought high quality maker and tech related programs and assistance to 34,000 San Jose residents in all neighborhoods of the City.



Work Participation Rate

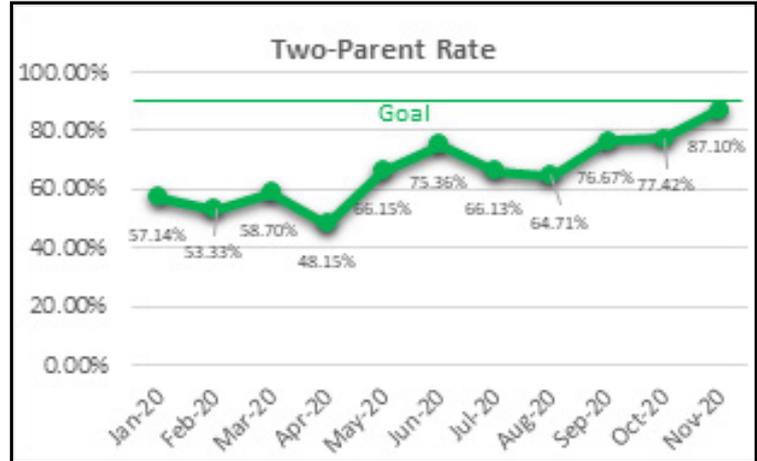
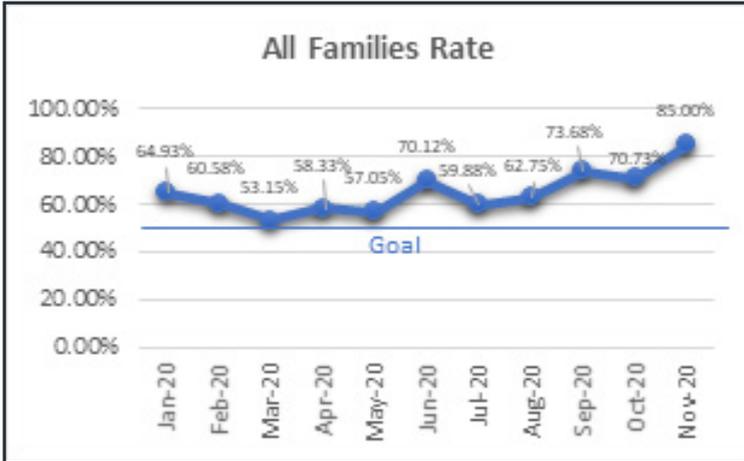
The Work Participation Rate (WPR) is a monthly audit of the participation level of families enrolled in CalWORKs. Information gathered from this audit serves as the primary performance indicator for Welfare-to-Work programs for every county in California.

There are two WPR measures: All Families and Two-Parent Families. The All Families measure is applied to single-parent households and requires participation from 50% of clients. The Two-Parent measure applies to families where two parents live in the home and requires participation from 90% of clients.

Every month, families are randomly selected to participate in the WPR audit and are contacted by the Rapid Response Team (RRT), who guides families through the audit process. This year has been especially difficult for the Rapid Response Team and the families we serve due to the COVID-19 pandemic. During the early months of the pandemic, all RRT work was being done from home, leaving the team unable to engage clients without internet access. Thanks to their unwavering dedication to service, RRT staff began volunteering to go into the office to mail out WPR materials to clients so no family was left unserved.

2020 Client Participation

Despite the dramatic changes caused by the pandemic, our WPR program was still able to find success through smart adaptations that allowed staff to continue meeting clients where they are at. We met or exceeded both WPR measures thanks to the hard work and perseverance of CalWORKs participants.





CalWORKs Child Care

Supporting Children During Uncertain Times

The availability of child care is an important factor in helping Santa Clara County families find and maintain steady employment or continue their education. Navigating the unexpected impacts of a global pandemic became another obstacle for these families and children on their journey towards self-sufficiency. The CalWORKs Child Care Program continues to provide essential services and support to assist low-income families and children in reaching their goals.

During the pandemic, the Child Care Program waived specified family fees through June 20, 2021. Additionally, child care providers who experienced delayed background checks received reimbursement for up to 180 days of service from the date of fingerprinting. Providers also received reimbursement for up to 14 days of nonoperation due to the pandemic.



Child Care Facts

- In January 2021, a new, online electronic data system, Guardian, began service. Guardian streamlines the background check process for all licensed child care providers and reports their status in real-time.
- Effective July 1, 2021, 15 child care programs currently administered by the California Department of Education will be transferred to the California Department of Social Services. The transition will have no impact on CalWORKS families.

For more information, please visit:
www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/cdss-programs/calworks-child-care/child-care-transition.

Stage One child care is provided to families while they are receiving CalWORKs cash aid. Stages Two and Three child care are provided to families who have become employed or gone off aid.

Beginning October 2019, CalWORKs families began receiving 12 months of uninterrupted child care. This helped create a stable environment for children and working families.



Families in need of a provider can get help from the Santa Clara County Office of Education.

www.childcarescc.org/child-care-application

Community Colleges and Adult Education

Community College and Adult Education programs have always served as important CalWORKs Program partners by providing training and education that enables CalWORKs participants to improve their employment opportunities.

The impact of COVID-19 forced our education partners to rethink their approach to providing services in new and creative ways to ensure equity of access and opportunity for all students.

- ✓ Digital inclusion: access to appropriate devices, connectivity, and digital skills instruction.
- ✓ Online intake and orientation and remote testing.
- ✓ In the past year, monthly enrollments for Adult Education programs increased by over 33% compared to the prior year.
- ✓ Last year, the Adult Education and Community Colleges served an average of 268 CalWORKs clients each month. For the current year, the total number of clients served each month has risen to over 300.



"I have a lot going with my kids, passing my intersession class, and staying on track to transfer in the Fall. I was ready to drop out. I am grateful for the opportunity and the support to keep me focused."— Angela

What Fields Are They Studying?

- High School Diploma/GED — 55%
- Adult Basic Education — 20%
- English as a Second Language — 14%
- Career & Technical Education — 11%

What Careers Are They Pursuing?

- Medical Assistant
- Medical Records Technician
- Office Administration
- Marketing/Entrepreneurship
- Social Work

Work/Study Ambassador Project



Work/Study allows participants to gain work experience and income to supplement their CalWORKs benefits while enrolled in Community College. However, with campuses closed due to COVID-19, work/study opportunities were few. Recognizing this problem, the staff at San Jose City College came up with a creative solution. In partnership with CalWORKs and Extended Opportunity Program & Services (EOPS), they created the Ambassador Project.

- Personal vehicles are professionally “wrapped” with images promoting CalWORKs.
- Clients serve as real-life CalWORKs “Ambassadors” in their neighborhood and local community.
- All Ambassadors speak first-hand about their CalWORKs experience and share with anyone interested in the program.

Through this innovative project, eligible CalWORKs students complete their work-study duties safely while promoting the college and CalWORKs in the community. It is a unique opportunity to maintain a flexible schedule that accommodates both school and family responsibilities while enabling participants to add to their financial security.



Ambassador Testimonial

“There are a lot of single moms in my neighborhood. I am happy to promote the college and program. I hope they get motivated to go to school like me.” — Denise

Housing for Families

Housing is a fundamental need for every family. For CalWORKs families, stable and secure housing provides the critical foundation that enables families to achieve financial self-sufficiency.

CalWORKs Family Stabilization Housing Assistance Program

The CalWORKs Family Stabilization Housing Assistance Program (FS) provides aid to prevent families from becoming homeless as well as aid to families who have entered homelessness.

Aid is provided in many forms, from help with past due rent and utility payments, to help finding a new home and paying the first month's rent and security deposit.

In order to bring immediate relief to families who have entered homelessness, the program's Temporary Housing Assistance pays for a motel for up to sixteen days while the family searches for affordable housing.

In 2020, the Family Stabilization Housing Assistance Program helped over 300 families in need.

CalWORKs Housing Support Program

The CalWORKs Housing Support Program (CHSP) serves homeless CalWORKs families through a collaboration of the program's nonprofit partner Abode Services, and Employment Services staff.

Team members from Abode Services assist families with the housing search, landlord negotiations, rent subsidies, basic household furniture, and housing case management support.

The Family Services Unit connects families to a wide range of support services from childcare to domestic violence support. At the same time, staff members at the Employment Connection Centers link clients to the all-important job search services that enable them to secure employment.

For the past five years, the CalWORKs Housing Support Program has served an increasing number of families. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 and FY 2020, the program housed 111 and 146 clients respectively, continuing the trend of steady growth.

Housing and Disability Advocacy Program

Three years ago, the Housing and Disability Advocacy Program (HDAP) was established with a dual purpose: to help chronically homeless individuals obtain Supplemental Security Income (SSI) disability benefits and to help move them from the streets into permanent housing.

Thanks to HDAP, 40 participants have been awarded SSI benefits and 180 chronically homeless individuals have been placed in permanent housing, exceeding the program's three-year goal.

The program's success is a product of the supportive, collaborative relationship between the program's partners—the Office of Supportive Housing, Behavioral Health Services Department, Abode Services, and our Department's Supplemental Security Income Advocacy Unit.

During the quarantine, the team focused its efforts on supporting existing program participants. HDAP continues to work collaboratively with the Office of Supportive Housing to identify new clients who may qualify for SSI and who can benefit from housing provided through HDAP.

 **CHSP families receiving rent subsidies increased by over 30% compared to last year.**



Effects of Covid-19 on the CalWORKs Housing Support Program

During the past year, amid a growing number of homeless CalWORKs families and faced with the challenges of securing housing for clients amid the pandemic, Abode Services housed 146 CalWORKs families— a 32% increase over the previous year.

Abode Services staff members maintained their productivity from March through June despite the challenges of having to work from their homes and conduct lengthy intake interviews over the phone.

To their credit, during this most challenging time in the program's history, their performance was not compromised by their changing work environment and they maintained the same level of productivity that they had established in the first eight months of the program year.

The CalWORKs Housing Support Program team understood that their work had become even more critical for clients in light of the pandemic. Homeless shelter space was significantly reduced as

shelter providers introduced physical distancing at their facilities; this resulted in fewer bed spaces with shelters transitioning to non-congregate housing.

Previously available motel units that had served as interim housing suddenly disappeared when many motels closed due to a drastic reduction of clients. These conditions highlighted the urgency to find affordable housing for homeless CalWORKs families as quickly as possible.

As we move into the new year, the CalWORKs Housing Support Program must address new challenges. With many clients still out of work, the program will extend rent subsidies to ensure that families remain housed. The program will continue to provide ongoing housing support to over 150 CalWORKs families, almost double the number from a year ago.

Despite significant challenges, the entire CalWORKs Housing Support team continues to be optimistic and hopes for increased funding to serve even more CalWORKs families in need.



County of Santa Clara Intern & Earn

Intern & Earn gives youth and young adults receiving CalWORKs or CalFresh benefits, as well as current and former foster youth, the opportunity to develop employment readiness skills and connect to job opportunities. Workshops are offered year-round on topics including completing applications, interview techniques, resume development, financial education, social media do's and don'ts, and exploring opportunities for post-secondary education.

As a result of the shelter in place order that took effect in March 2020, the Intern & Earn program underwent significant changes to continue serving the needs of our young participants. This year's group of 419 interns was broken up into four smaller cohorts, and internship opportunities were modified to ensure the safety of participants. Due to the success and positive feedback received, Intern & Earn will continue to use the four-cohort approach for next year's event.

Internship Structure

- 1 One week of onboarding (Including online workshops)
- 2 7-week paid internship, either onsite or remote

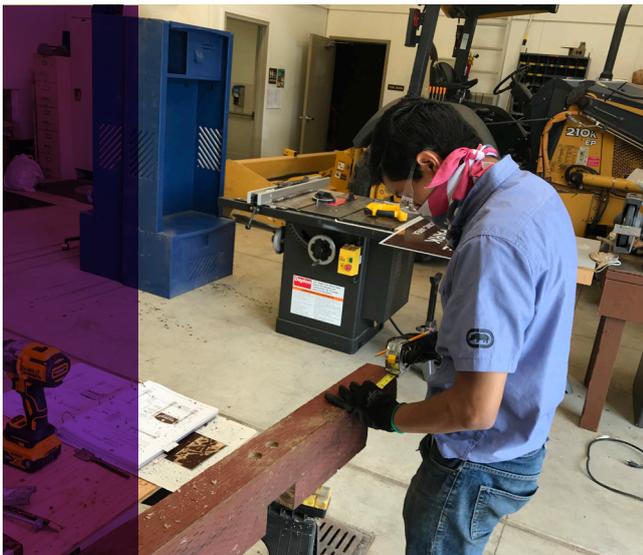
“

I love it! Everything is going good. I show up every day on time. I have amazing bosses who actually care and listen if I need anything and answer any questions I have...I decided to stay in college. I'm getting my RN degree and I even did a presentation in my internship about it and I felt good about it. I really like my internship! I love how they give advice and they take the time to get to know us. —Jennifer

”

Internships Provide Opportunities for Mentorships and Career Exploration

The Internship program was designed to allow participants to explore career interests. It includes a speaker series on various career paths and a final career project presented to other interns.



“I’m really thankful

that I was able to get into a program with counselors that are supporting us like you, Frank, Ted, Sinclair and Victor. THANK YOU!” – Annette

“I feel like a lot of us stress

over school and having this time together with our four counselors really helps us get through to the end of the day.” – Jennie

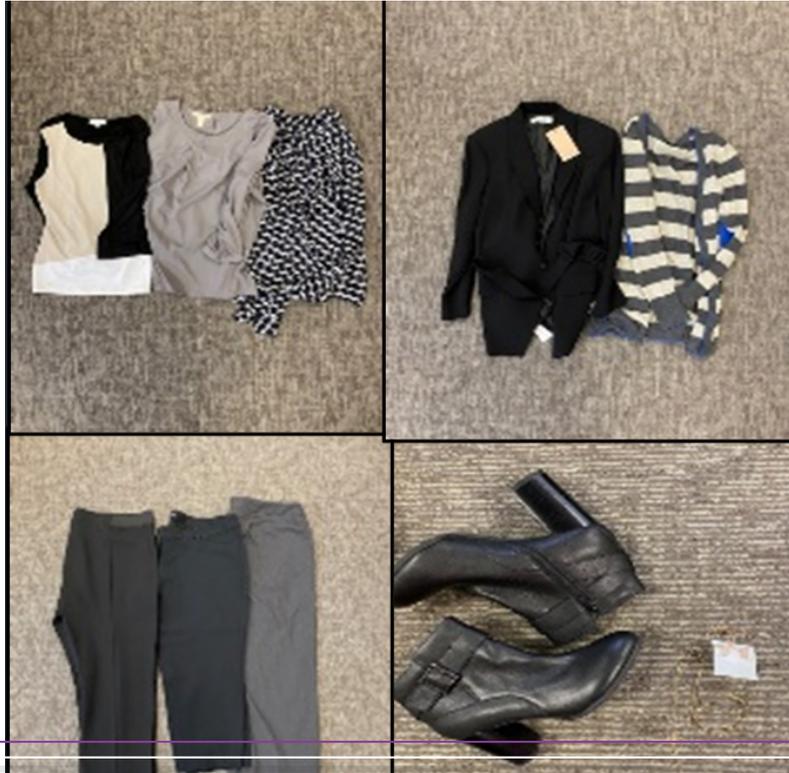


“I had no human interaction

so this helps more than anything.” – Amber



For more information about the Intern & Earn program, please visit: ecstaffing.sccgov.org/services/county-santa-clara-intern-earn.



Dress For Success

Although the global pandemic changed the interviewing landscape from in-person to virtual interviews, candidates still need to dress appropriately for the job they are seeking to demonstrate their understanding of the job requirements to their potential employer.

Prior to the pandemic, participants would visit the Dress for Success boutique for an in-person consultation to help them pick the perfect interview outfit. With their office being closed due to County regulations designed to reduce the spread of the coronavirus, Dress for Success came up with a creative solution — shipping a box of clothes on a weekly basis to participants' homes.

Home Clothing Delivery

Each box that Dress for Success ships contains a complete outfit in the participant's size (the shipment also includes larger and smaller sizes to ensure the best fit possible), a pair of shoes, and jewelry.

In addition, a personal stylist assists clients with putting outfits together by connecting with each participant remotely.

As of January 2021, thirty-two CalWORKs participants benefitted from the Dress for Success box service.

Until in-person services are available again, Dress for Success will continue shipping clothing and coming up with innovative ideas to provide their valuable services for participants pursuing financial self-sufficiency.



 **During the past 18 months, over 270 CalWORKs participants benefitted from Dress for Success' styling and delivery service.**



Vocational Services

Vocational Services (VS) guides employable General Assistance (GA) recipients to financial stability through informational workshops, developing their job readiness skills, and connecting them to employment opportunities.

Since the start of the pandemic, GA clients have been granted a waiver from having to participate in Vocational Services. The VS team, however, has continued to work diligently to engage clients who are seeking employment by continuing to offer virtual resume development, application and job lead assistance, and by maintaining monthly contact (at minimum) with all clients.

From March 2020 through December 2020, over 1,020 clients engaged in virtual orientations and other voluntary Vocational Services activities.



Post-Aid Services

The Post-Aid Services (PAS) program provides ongoing support to families who have transitioned off aid. As soon as CalWORKs parents become employed, PAS program staff reach out to identify any barriers families may have in maintaining their new jobs.

PAS program staff work with families to overcome these barriers, connecting them to the supportive services and support agencies families need to continue reaching for their goals. Post-aid resources include transportation assistance, child care, housing assistance, mental health resources, vehicle repairs, youth internships, and many more. Almost 400 families are served every month!

As part of our commitment to assist families in maintaining their self-sufficiency, the PAS Unit will soon be implementing a brand new rapid re-employment program. This new program will provide post-aid clients who have lost their jobs with the opportunity to rapidly secure new employment and maintain their hard-won success.

Client Testimonial

"I very much appreciate all your support. The Post-Aid Services program has enabled a smooth transition back out to the workforce. The child-care assistance, counseling, and financial aid for gas have been very helpful and have continued to give me financial relief, especially in these uncertain times. I am very grateful for all your assistance. Thank you!"

— Ingrid



2020 Achievement Awards

The Annual CalWORKS Achievement Awards ceremony honors the outstanding achievements of five CalWORKS participants whose efforts at overcoming their family's barriers mark them as special among a group of already extraordinary individuals.

From amongst all of our CalWORKS families, 53 individuals were nominated for their hard work and an ability to go above and beyond all expectations. Within this group of nominees, Angela DeLuna, Belinda Pacheco, Hande Tuncer, Bezawit Yesuf, and Jeselyn and Drake Ames were chosen as honorees for demonstrating perseverance and a determination to overcome all challenges.

Representing each of our five County districts, this group of individuals stands out for their singular dedication to providing a better future for their families, refusing to let anything, even COVID-19, stop them from reaching for their dreams.

In previous years, CalWORKS Achievement Award honorees were invited to participate in a Board of Supervisors meeting during which they would be presented with a certificate of achievement and their achievements would be recognized by members of the Board.

This year, in order to keep our honorees and the public safe during the pandemic, a short video was prepared to highlight each honoree's accomplishments. This video was presented at the Board of Supervisors meeting on December 8, 2020. Anyone wishing to relive the excitement of the event can watch the video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ID6uiRMZKpU&feature=youtu.be>.

Award Winners



Bezawit Yesuf

"Don't give up! Be strong and work hard!"



Hande Tuncer

"Sometimes I feel very bad because for some cultures it is hard to ask for help and I'm one of them—that's why I can't forget your help and your kindness."



Angela De Luna

"I'm proud of myself...I know I'm going to have a fulfilling career that I chose, that I'm happy with."



Drake & Jesselyn Ames

"Being enrolled in the CalWORKs program changed my life for the better because tomorrow is not for certain, and we were going through tough times. A lot of times we were not able to eat because we only had enough food for our daughter. Being with CalWORKs really helped us to finally be set, to be housed, and gave us the steppingstone that we really needed to get back up."



Belinda Pacheco

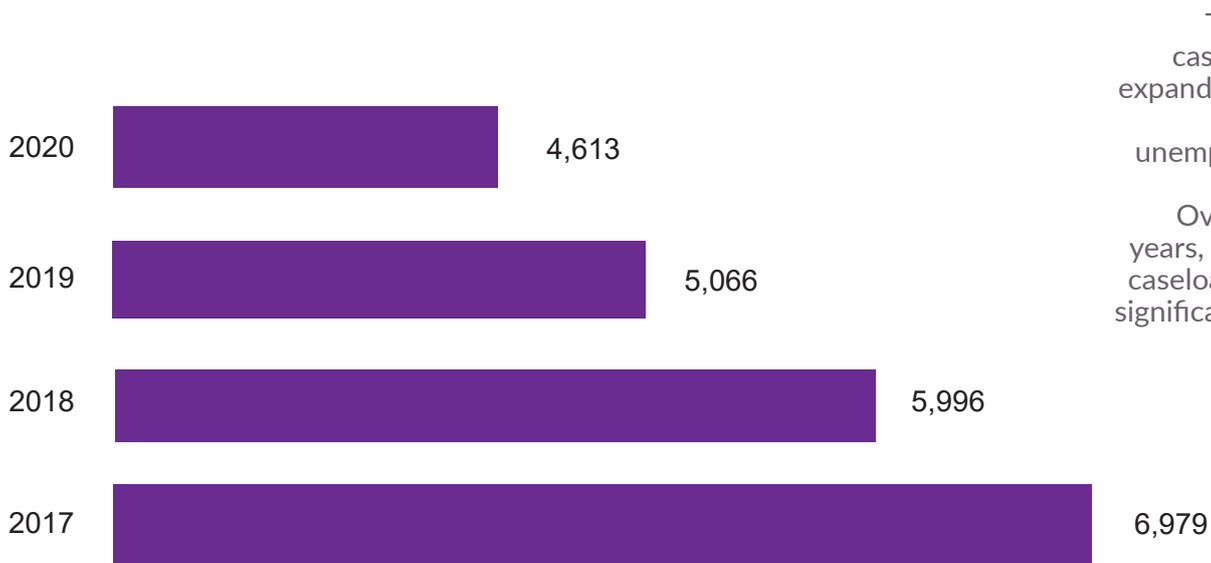
"You need to set your goal and don't get discouraged when it does not happen quickly. I had to go through that journey, my own journey, to get where I'm at."

We look forward to continuing to celebrate the achievements of our clients in 2021 and beyond.

CalWORKs Demographics

A Statistical Overview

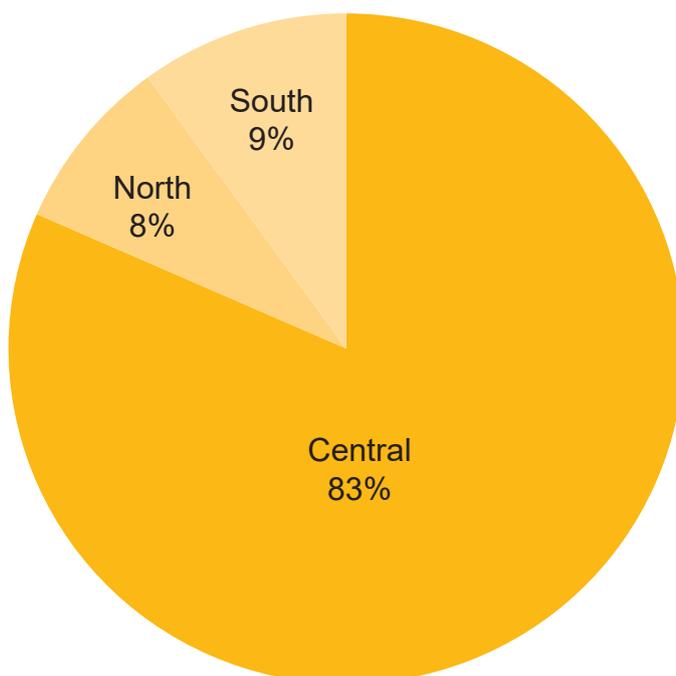
Caseload



The CalWORKs caseload generally expands and contracts in relation to unemployment rates.

Over the past few years, the CalWORKs caseload has declined significantly statewide.

Region



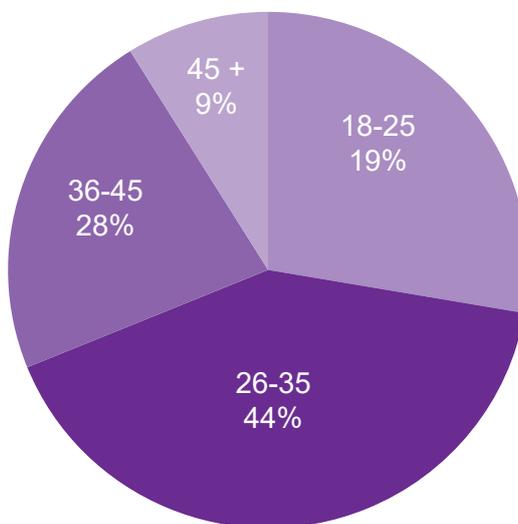
Over 80% of CalWORKs Employment Services participants live in the San Jose area.

9% of families live in South County, while the remaining 8% live in North County.

Age

Over 60% of CalWORKs Employment Services participants are 35 years of age and under.

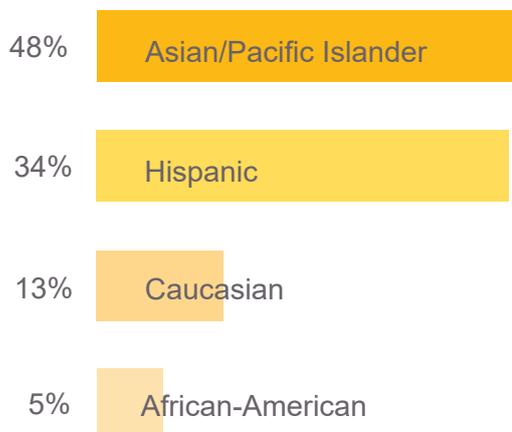
This year, the number of clients in the 36-45 age bracket has increased, while the number of clients aged 18-25 has decreased.



Ethnicity

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

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



Gender

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

This year, men accounted for 19% of the program's population—a 3% increase from last year.



81%



19%



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