



2020 Annual Report

*Making a difference through people,
service, and performance*

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

Table of Contents

2020 DEBS Annual Report

Our Programs



page 1

Serving Clients During COVID



page 5

Employment Services



page 17

Intern & Earn



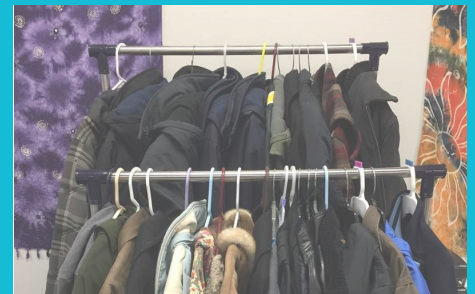
page 30

Disaster Service Workers



page 35

Community Service Highlights



Page 39

A Message from the Director



2020 has been a year of national and local trauma marked by the COVID-19 pandemic, economic devastation, social unrest, and wildfire disasters.

These events resulted in significant growth in the need for the services and programs offered by the Department of Employment and Benefit Services (DEBS).

From August 2019-August 2020, the caseload volume increased by 27% for CalFresh benefits, by 14% for General Assistance benefits, and by 5% for Medi-Cal benefits, much of that driven by COVID.

Just before the shelter in place order went into effect in mid-March 2020, DEBS served approximately 360,000 individuals. Today we administer public benefits to almost 400,000 individuals in need of Safety Net and Employment Services, including over 110,000 children aged 17 and under and over 70,000 adults aged 60 and over.

At the beginning of April, in response to Santa Clara County's shelter in place order mandating all non-essential businesses to close, we implemented telework as a new business model.

With approximately 80% of our staff teleworking and the remainder of employees working onsite to provide emergency and necessary clerical services to enable remote work, we were able to maintain full service offerings throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

With estimates reaching in the hundreds of thousands Santa Clara community members impacted by job or income loss due to COVID, we strove to never take our foot off the gas pedal—instead, we did our best to maintain high levels of service and to be flexible in our work processes.

You'll see in the stories in this report that DEBS staff continue to serve and excel with compassion, professionalism, and timeliness in the face of the many challenges of 2020. I hope that you will enjoy reading this report, and that it provides you with valuable insight about our clients, staff, and operations.

Angela Shing
Director

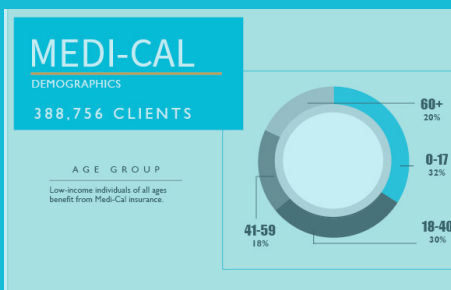
Department of Employment and Benefit Services

Housing



page 23

Demographics



Page 43

What We Do

The Department of Employment and Benefit Services (DEBS) is a department within the Santa Clara County Social Services Agency. DEBS serves almost 400,000 individuals and families in need of safety net and employment services – that’s 1 in 5 of everyone who lives in Santa Clara County!

Our mission is to ensure that low-income individuals and families receive necessary health, nutrition, and employment services. To that end, we administer vital Safety Net services including Medi-Cal, CalFresh, CalWORKs, and General Assistance and help recipients of public assistance transition to full-time employment and eventual self-sufficiency.

Health Care

Medi-Cal is the County’s largest health insurer and the largest benefit program that DEBS administers. In fact, almost 400,000 community members receive Medi-Cal, including over 110,000 children aged 17 and under and over 70,000 adults aged 60 and over. The remaining 48% of Medi-Cal recipients are adults, many of whom are employed but do not receive health coverage through their work.

The administration of Medi-Cal is critical to the well-being of our community, as it ensures that qualified individuals and families receive comprehensive medical services.

Nutrition

The CalFresh program is the County’s best defense in the fight against hunger. It provides individuals and families with greatly increased food purchasing power every month, helping to alleviate food insecurity and to improve the health of low-income residents.

Benefits are issued directly to recipients via an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card. Recipients use their EBT card at participating grocery stores and farmer’s markets just like cash. For those with limited mobility or who are unable to travel, EBT is accepted at Amazon, with free shipping for eligible orders.

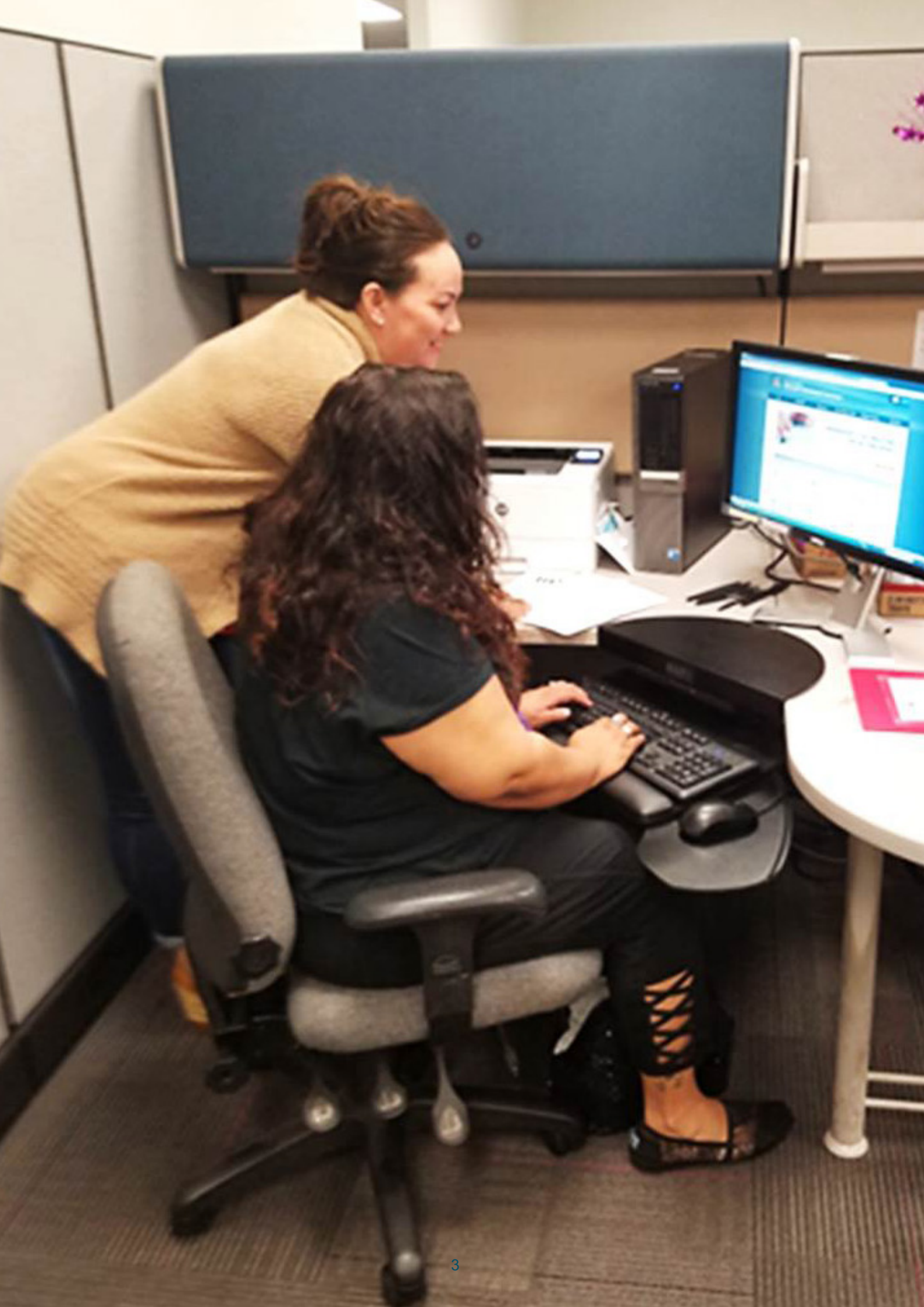
Over 100,000 individuals and families receive CalFresh food benefits—that’s more than 1 in 20 of all Santa Clara County residents. Our data shows that there is a significant amount of child and senior hunger in the County: 34% of CalFresh recipients are children aged 17 and under, and 27% are seniors aged 60 and over.

Not only is CalFresh an effective weapon against hunger and food insecurity, it’s also a valuable part of the County’s economy. According to the Nutrition Policy Institute of the University of California, CalFresh contributes \$129 million per year directly into the County’s economy through CalFresh.

An additional \$103 million is generated by supporting farmers, grocers, truckers, packing sheds, and other local food-related businesses. Combined, that equates to a \$232 million influx per year for Santa Clara County, thanks to the CalFresh program.



Safety Net programs are essential to the well-being of the Santa Clara County community.



Employment

Helping job seekers find full-time, living wage employment is one of our most difficult and important tasks. In order to assist clients in the CalWORKs and General Assistance programs (GA) on their journey to self-sufficiency, we have developed a comprehensive Employment Services program. CalWORKs Employment Services assists adults with one or more children, while GA Vocational Services assists adults without dependents.

On average, approximately 4,000 job seekers per month participate in our core employment resources: training and mentorship from assigned Employment Counselors, job readiness and career enhancement workshops, access to the Employment Connection Centers, employer recruiting, job matching, and work opportunities in a variety of fields.

This year, CalWORKs participants earned an average of \$20.00 per hour and worked an average of 28 hours per week. Participants in GA's Vocational Services program earned an average of \$15 per hour and worked an average of 27 hours per week.

In addition to employment services for adults, we administer the County of Santa Clara Intern & Earn program, which provides youth in the CalWORKs, CalFresh, and Foster Care programs with paid summer internships and year-round employment services. After getting a raise for FY20-21, Intern & Earn youth earned up to \$3,960 this summer, working up to 30 hours per week at \$16.50 per hour.

Financial Assistance

Clients in the CalWORKs and General Assistance (GA) programs receive a monthly cash grant to help with the basic necessities of day-to-day living.

This year, almost 12,500 individuals (including over 9,800 children) per month were helped by the many services and programs available to CalWORKs recipients, including cash aid.

The CalWORKs cash grant is calculated based on family size and income. In 2019, the state gave families a much-needed increase to their grants. As a result, this year the maximum cash grant for a three-person family is approximately \$890 per month, about \$100 more than in previous years.

The General Assistance program assisted just over 4,300 individuals per month this year. GA clients without housing received \$150 per month for their personal needs, while clients with housing expenses received up to \$343 per month for their personal and housing needs.

Foster Care Eligibility

In addition to administering the core programs cited above, the Department provides eligibility determination and ongoing case management for clients shared with the Department of Children and Family Services. This year, the Department managed almost 4,500 highly sensitive benefits cases involving children and young adults in care.

Michelle Nguyen, GA Eligibility Worker, helps her client apply for benefits (pre-COVID).

Serving Clients During the COVID Pandemic

Telework as a New Service Model

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department had emphasized the ability to access services online at MyBenefitsCalwin.org, as well as by phone and mail, but the majority of our business still involved face-to-face transactions at our service centers.

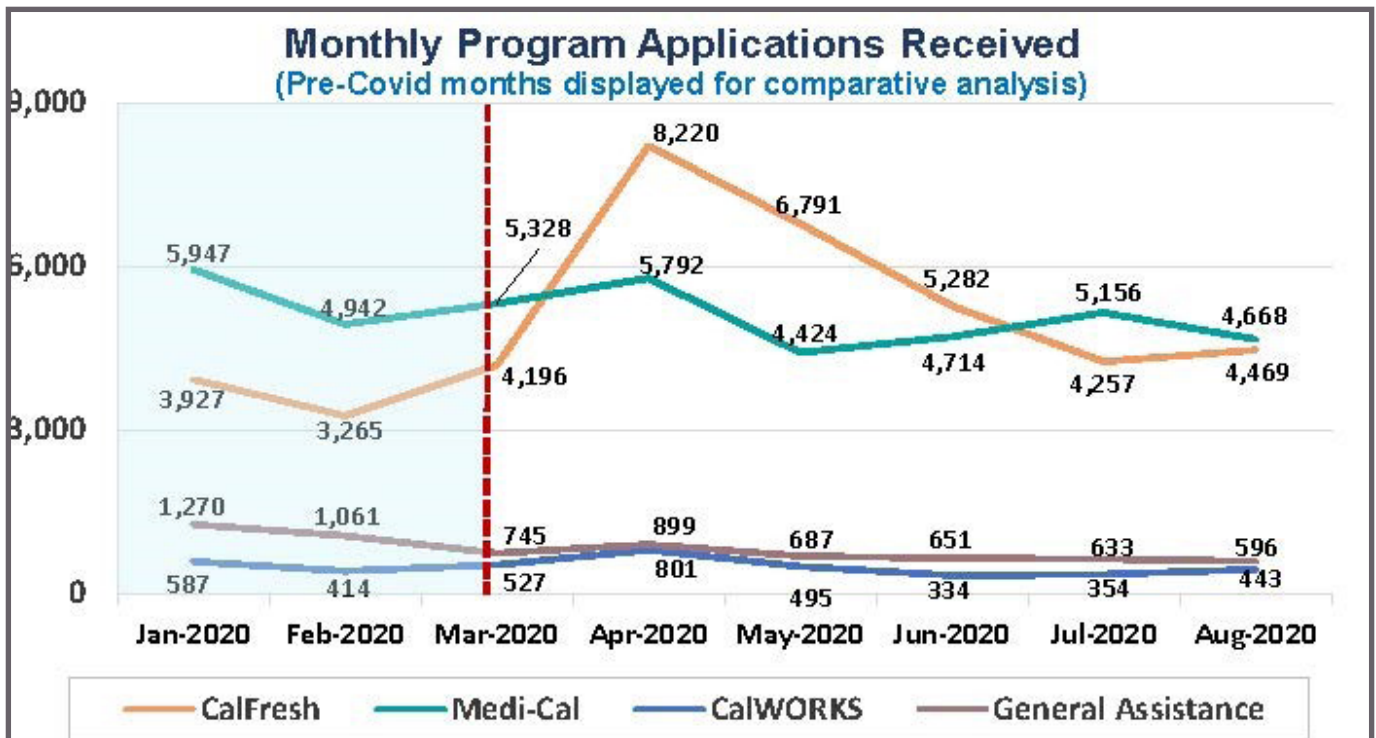
When Santa Clara County issued the first shelter in place order on March 16, 2020, legally mandating all non-essential businesses to close, we knew that we would have

to make drastic changes to our service model in a short period of time in order to keep serving clients.

Adding to our urgency was the fact that unemployment increased significantly due to business closures and mandatory social distancing measures. Thus, applications for public benefits began rising dramatically as soon as the shelter in place order took effect.

With our lobbies open only for limited services and our workforce sheltering at home, but thousands of hard-hit residents suddenly in need of food and other benefits, it became clear that we needed a new way of doing business—a method that would allow for the continuity of services, while still safeguarding the health and welfare of the Santa Clara County community.

Teleworking was borne out of this dilemma. A workforce that had been based on-site radically transformed



Telework allowed us to help slow the spread of the coronavirus while assisting thousands of community members who had lost their income and were in need of public benefits.

itself over the course of about three weeks.

Fortunately, the Department's work in developing online services and telephonic signatures paved the way for this rapid transition.

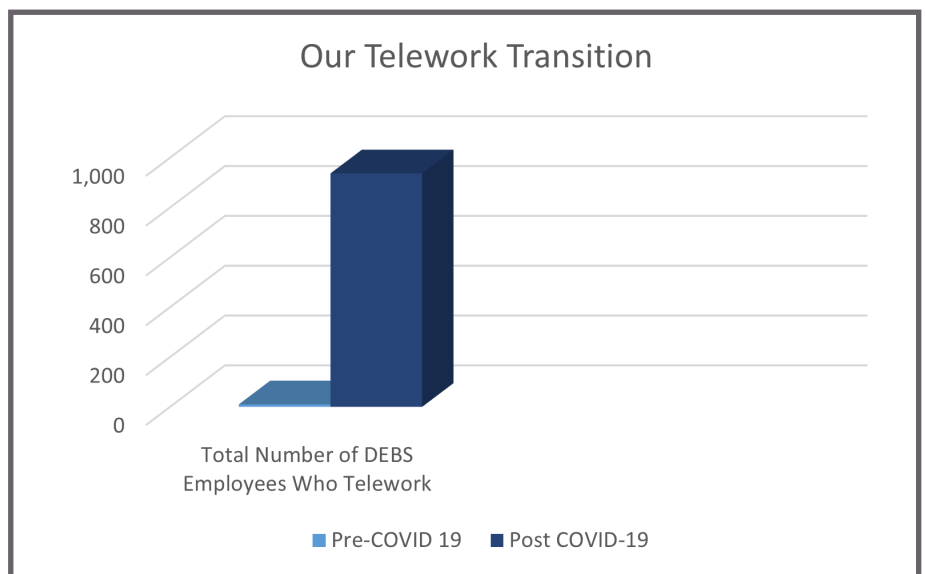
The infrastructure for virtual communication (including email, texting, Skype, telephonic signatures, and DocuSign) had been put into place well before the pandemic began, albeit for onsite use rather than telework.

With the foundations having been laid, the transition to telework occurred almost seamlessly.

Eligibility Workers quickly processed applications using clients' verbal attestations and electronic signatures. Hard copies of eligibility paperwork were converted into PDF documentation and uploaded electronically to secure shared drives.

The Department's first foray into telework was largely successful, as staff proved flexible and clients were served with the same timeliness and professionalism that they received pre-pandemic.

However, as with any service model, there is always room for improvement. As we contemplate the continued role of teleworking in the Department, we look forward to creating more efficient processes and opportunities for enhancements.



In three weeks, we went from 0 out of 1,143 employees teleworking full-time, to 937 employees teleworking full-time (82%). Prior to the pandemic, only 10 out of 1,143 staff worked from home part-time, for 1-2 days per week.

Clerical Staff Working On-Site Allowed DEBS to Maintain Full Services during the Pandemic



Pictured from left to right are Belinda Lopez, Monica Payer, and Linda Johns. Belinda, Monica, and Linda are part of the Clerical team that issued EBT cards to clients on a daily basis throughout the COVID crisis.

Our Clerical staff is the backbone of our operations. Their continued presence onsite at each of our service centers allowed us to maintain full services while the majority of staff worked from home.

Throughout the pandemic, about 200 Clerical staff members continued to report to the office.

Some of these team members were needed to provide emergency services to clients, such as the distribution of benefit cards to new recipients and outreach to homeless and other vulnerable community members with limited access to telephonic or online services.

Other members of our Clerical team performed essential functions behind the scenes, including opening, organizing,

and uploading all applications, eligibility verification documents, and other mail received via US Mail, Drop Box, Internal Pony Mail, and E-mail Boxes to the Document Imaging (IDM) system.

In addition, the Clerical team thoroughly identified each IDM document and created Task Management Tickets alerting Eligibility Workers to tasks that needed to be performed.

Without the important work of our Clerical team, benefit applications would not have been registered and Eligibility Workers and other staff members would not have received the information they needed to do their jobs remotely.

David Tran, Program Manager of the Continuing Benefit Services Center, explained: "The COVID-19

pandemic has had a profound impact on our community. Given the significant number of people we serve, working from home helps to keep the public and our staff safe from contracting and spreading COVID-19, and to prioritize the well-being of the Santa Clara community overall.

Most of our services can be provided virtually, with a small percentage of staff required to be available for processing and face-to-face triaging. Since the declaration of the pandemic, we have committed to rotating Clerical and other staff into the office and maintaining limited lobby hours, to ensure that clients can continue to receive and utilize their public benefits."

In Their Own Words: From Skyping to Teleworking

We are Joseph Salinas and Tiffany Tran, Intake Eligibility Workers at the General Assistance (GA) office. We are thankful to be able to telework during this pandemic.

We were members of the Skype Workgroup that developed the Remote Interview Project in March 2019. The Skype Workgroup started as a Unit-Based Team effort, the goal of which was to help North County clients complete their face-to-face interview without having to travel to San Jose, where the GA office is located. Many GA clients are homeless and do not have adequate means of transportation, so traveling 20 miles for their interview often represented a barrier to service.

In the beginning stages of the Remote Interview Project, we made site visits to Contra Costa County, which had recently implemented a similar initiative. After finalizing our business workflow and processes, we put our plan into action. Once implemented, the Skype Project was a great success, as it eliminated the need for clients to travel to San Jose, while maintaining the human touch through the helpful remote presence of our staff.

Little did we know that the experience we gained with the remote interview project would turn out to be a solid foundation to help us transition smoothly to telework.

Thanks to the Remote Interview Project, workers were already comfortable with processing tasks remotely, handling applications and documents in PDF format, signing via DocuSign, and utilizing other tools to remotely process their tasks. As a result, from the very start of the shelter in place order, we were able to timely process clients' applications and help them receive the benefits they need.

During the pandemic, we've also learned to connect with co-workers and other staff members in the office via IM chat, to participate in meetings by voice or video calls, and to present our screen or give

control of it to others. Teleworking has been crucial in allowing us to do our work while keeping the community and staff safe.

In conclusion, the experience we gained with the Remote Interview Project played a significant role in helping GA workers adapt to the "new norm," and set a solid foundation for the care of clients during this pandemic.



Joseph Salinas



Tiffany Tran

Maintaining Quality Service Throughout the Pandemic

We developed the COVID-19 dashboard to ensure that we maintained a high level of service for our clients and communicated key data to our stakeholders.

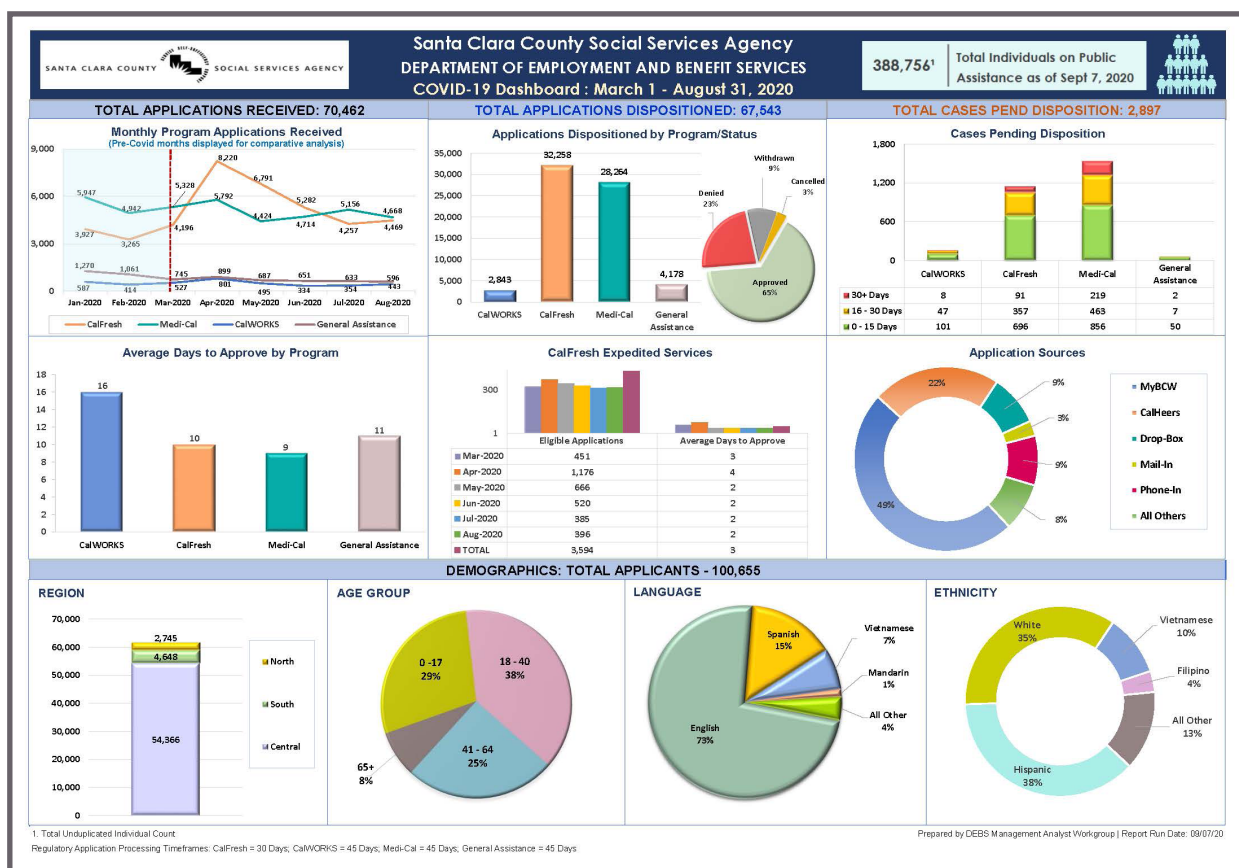
The COVID-19 dashboard tracks and monitors important application trends, including the number of applications received, number of applications dispositioned, number of applications pending disposition, average application approval time in days, the source of the applications received, and applicant demographic data.

Using this data, the Department was able to determine and how to best allocate its resources during the pandemic. For example, after seeing that applications for GA benefits decreased sharply

at the start of the pandemic, the Department reached two conclusions.

First, many GA-eligible individuals did not have regular access to mobile devices or internet services and therefore could not apply for benefits online. Second, many GA-eligible individuals were unaware that our service centers were open for emergency services.

In response to this data, we significantly increased our outreach and partnership efforts to assist GA-eligible individuals with their applications.



The COVID-19 Dashboard helped us monitor our customer service and share information with community partners and stakeholders.

The COVID-19 Dashboard also facilitated rapid information sharing between DEBS and other organizations. This proved to be extremely important, as it allowed organizations to make quick decisions regarding disaster assistance.

Elizabeth Chan-Tung, the Management Analyst who developed the dashboard, explained: “The COVID-19 Dashboard provided a means to convey key data to DEBS leadership and stakeholders such as the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors, the County Executive Office, Emergency Operation Center, the City of San Jose, and Second Harvest Food of Silicon Valley.

In working with my supervisor, Senior Management Analyst Michael DiTore, to develop and continually improve the dashboard, I’ve tried to visually display data in a transparent manner that would be easy to understand.”



Elizabeth Chan-Tung


Effective Communication with the Community

Always striving to keep the community apprised about important information, including changes to programs and services caused by COVID, the Department utilized its newly redesigned website and its social media pages to communicate important information to residents in Santa Clara County.


The Department also sent texts, emails, and robocalls to clients informing them about program news, placed informational posters on lobby doors, and distributed fliers to the community with the help of local non-profit and community-based organizations.



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Rising to the Occasion at the General Assistance Service Center

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the dedication of General Assistance (GA) staff members, many of whom continued to offer in-person services to clients in desperate need of assistance.

In-Person Application Assistance at the Reentry Resource Center

Soon after the pandemic started, several thousand pre-trial detainees and inmates were released to help alleviate the spreading of the virus within correctional facilities.

In order to help those who had been released, the County re-opened the Reentry Resource Center, which helps individuals adapt to life after incarceration.

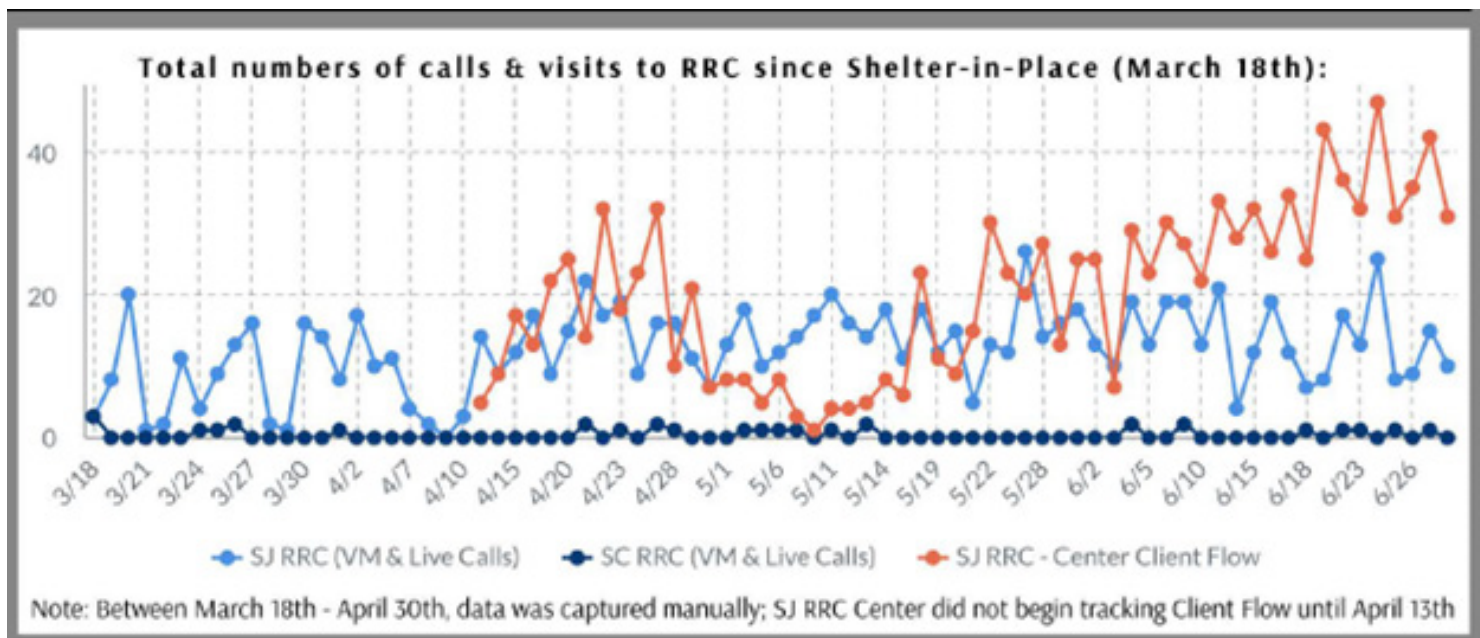
The GAAB109 clerical team began reporting to the Reentry Resource Center on April 13, 2020 to assist clients in person with a variety

of services including application processing, EBT card issuance and replacement, and temporary Medi-Cal card issuance.

With Social Services being the most requested service at the Reentry Resource Center, the clerical team helped an average of 25-30 clients per day.

Using Appointments for Safe, Emergency Service Delivery

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, GA staff members were committed to providing seamless emergency services to clients. In order to do this safely and efficiently,



Outstationed GA staff members played a key role in helping individuals, who had been released from incarceration due to COVID-19, apply for public benefits at the Santa Clara County Reentry Resource Center.

GA developed new appointment processes for critical services.

First, GA created an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card issuance appointment calendar to schedule homeless or special circumstance clients in need of an EBT card for access to cash and food benefits.

EBT cards were issued in person by appointment, following all recommended health and safety precautions to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

The GA office also accommodated clients who would walk in without having appointments, again while

remaining in compliance with all recommended health and safety precautions.

As case processing continued, another urgent need came to light: the ability for the homeless population to receive benefit notices and county related correspondence.

As a result, GA developed a Homeless Mail workflow that included an appointment calendar to schedule homeless clients to pick up mail, thereby increasing access and reducing barriers to service.

Additionally, the GA Service Center developed a signature appointment calendar to help clients who were

unable to sign their paperwork electronically.

By taking advantage of the appointment process to submit a wet signature, clients could be approved for a longer certification period than existed pre-pandemic, and optimize shelter in place protocols.



GA staff members used appointment calendars to provide safe face-to-face appointments for individuals who were not able to access services remotely during the COVID pandemic.

Compassion on the Front Lines

Eligibility Work Supervisor Carla Magana had a compassionate response when a client who did not have an appointment dropped in to apply for benefits at the GA Service Center.

The official process for walk-in clients was to schedule them for an appointment, likely meaning a return visit on another day if there were no same day appointments available. However, Carla chose to help this client immediately.

Explaining her decision, she said, “It felt terrible to know that we are in the middle of a pandemic and here is a man who just got released from jail and had spent the night on the street with nowhere to go. The client expressed that he was thirsty and hungry and had no money. He was carrying all of his belongings in a duffle bag and had no phone.

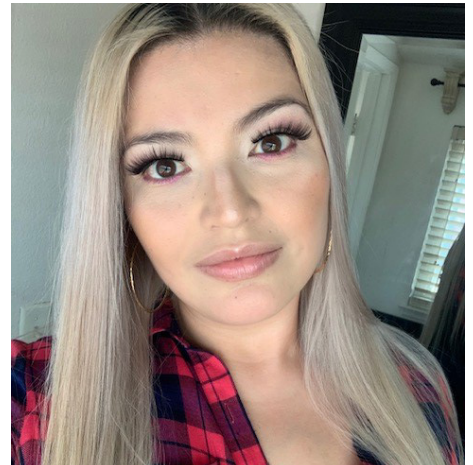
At GA we commonly work with a population who is unstable and very difficult to contact. I knew that if we asked the client to come back for an interview by appointment, he wouldn’t eat for another day and maybe wouldn’t have the resources to come back at all.

So, I spoke to an Eligibility Worker who agreed to take the client as his next application for the day. We provided the client with personal protective equipment to come into the office and talk to the Eligibility Worker using one of the lobby phones.

Based on his application and his interview, the client received same-day benefits. I was just glad that we were able to get him benefits so quickly. I think in the midst of the times we are in, people are experiencing anxiety and stress and I think we can all be a little more compassionate and flexible with each other and with our clients.”

Carla was not alone in showing compassion toward drop-in clients. Mila Caparas, Office Specialist III at the GA Service Center, shared her experience, saying: “The distribution of EBT cards and homeless mail was designed for appointment only.

However, we do get walk-ins all the time requesting EBT replacement cards and we do accommodate these clients as well, GA clients or not. Some people ask for copies of their IDs, or simply have questions about their benefits. We always try to assist them the best we can. Those clients always expressed to us their appreciation and gratefulness.”



Carla Magana



Mila Caparas

Compassion towards our clients and flexibility in our work processes guided us during the COVID crisis.

Community Outreach

Not only did the GA Service Center send staff members to the Re-Entry Resource Center and develop new processes to deliver emergency services, it also increased its outreach efforts to help ensure that vulnerable members of the community were able to access our host of public assistance services.

Soon after the pandemic began sweeping across the county, GA staff members contacted shelters and local community-based organizations. The goal of this effort was to optimize exposure for the General Assistance program and remove barriers caused by a lack of information about how to access services.

Lily Vazquez, Program Manager of the GA Service Center, said, "We knew that we could not succeed in our effort to outreach to all eligible individuals on our own. That's why it was vital for us to collaborate with local community-based organizations and partner agencies."

As a result of GA's quick response and commitment to partnership, applications increased by 20% at the beginning of the pandemic, from 745 applications submitted in the month of March to 899 submitted in the month of April.

GA partnered with the following organizations during the pandemic.

HomeFirst—a local shelter that provided paper General Assistance applications to their single adult members and assisted members with the application process.

The GA Bureau provided pre-paid postage for more expedient service.

Second Harvest of Silicon Valley—a local food bank that helped clients submit applications for CalFresh, General Assistance, CalWORKs, and Medi-Cal.

Sunnyvale Community Services—a local community organization that provided single adults with online information and support in submitting online applications for GA benefits.

211.org—a local non-profit that helped to reach a wider audience in Santa Clara County by providing information about General Assistance and other public benefit programs on their website.

Office of Supportive Housing—a County department that outreached to individuals who had been displaced into shelters or motels due to COVID-19 and assisted them with submitting applications for public benefits.



My Challenging Story by Maribel Hernandez



Maribel's four young charges

Seven months ago, I was presented with a challenging yet rewarding opportunity. The opportunity to be a mentor and a guide to four beautiful children—my own two, plus two whose mother, a single mom in the military, was deployed out of the country on a very important mission.

My undertaking brought many challenges at first. Having my friend's kids adapt to a new home with my kids was a learning experience. Once all of the kids adjusted to their new way of life, the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions hit.

I immediately had to learn to telework and become a teacher overnight. I was able to schedule the kids' Zoom meetings around my breaks and my lunch time.

This was a difficult task; yet seeing all of the children excel in their classes and being able to provide needed resources to my clients was very rewarding. I loved seeing the kids happy, safe, interacting

with each other, and helping one another out.

Reaching out to clients and learning about their struggles has helped me in dealing with the challenges we are all facing right now.

I have been able to assign clients to different activities and connect them with resources even during these difficult, uncertain times. Clients are very grateful to know they have someone to talk to and give them a helping hand when needed.

My friend, the mother of the two children I cared for, is finally home and reunited with her children. My journey finally ended, and I am glad that I was able to help out in a very important way.

I will continue reaching out to my clients, engaging them to participate in welfare-to-work virtual activities, assisting them, and providing them with all the useful resources that CalWORKs Employment Services has to offer.

My Story

by Mayra Figueroa



Working from home is an experience which opened new opportunities to think outside the box.

It provided the opportunity to be comfortable with the uncomfortable and allowed me to think of new ways to organize myself to be efficient and creative with the space I have.

It also required me to discipline myself with time management, and make sure to utilize my resources wisely considering that I still had to take care of business as a mom.

During the pandemic, clients were aware that I was working from home and understood that we wanted to keep them and our own families safe.

A benefit of telework is that clients became more proactive in their own cases and learned to utilize different methods of communication with the County.

Clients who did not previously use emails to communicate with their workers became comfortable doing so. The clients who never learned to use email began to use it with the help of their oldest children.

Some clients now prefer to communicate via email because they don't have to make the trip to the office and spend time waiting for a worker. And we as Eligibility Workers are always available by phone.

Working from home has meant that clients and Eligibility Workers must both work together. Obstacles may present themselves, but we deal with them as they come up and make adjustments.

Taking things one day at a time, working collectively, is how we have succeeded in meeting our clients' needs during the pandemic.

Employment Services



The Department's Employment Services Bureau offers employment assistance for clients in the General Assistance and CalWORKs programs.

Vocational Services

The General Assistance (GA) Vocational Services (VS) program guides participants toward self-sufficiency by providing employment opportunities, workshops, and job readiness skills. Employment Counselors strive to build participants' confidence by providing positive reinforcement along with their job skills training.

During the pandemic, VS transitioned its delivery services from in-person assistance to remote services. Employment Counselors outreached to over 2,000 participants by phone and email to share employment opportunities

and help with resume development and application assistance.

Employment Counselors developed a virtual orientation to engage GA recipients who began participating in Vocational Services while our service centers were closed.

"Vocational Services revived me. I now have a purpose," said Michelle, a former recipient of GA benefits. Michelle participated in workfare and was hired by her worksite as a full-time employee, thanks to her work ethic and positive attitude.

Since March 2020, employable GA participants have increased by 60%, from 1,359 to 2,172 participants.

CalWORKs

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

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

An important feature of CalWORKs is that it allows participants to set goals that are both meaningful to them and realistic given their strengths and challenges.

Claudia Ramirez-Nazemian, Program Manager in the Employment Services Center, explained: "By empowering clients to create their own goals, we are helping to create a sense of ownership and commitment to the program."

This year, almost 3,000 parents participated in Employment Services. During the pandemic, applications for the CalWORKs program spiked by 60% in the month of April, rising from an average of 500 new applications per month to an average of 800 applications.

Getting Clients Ready to Work

Individualized case management is an important part of the CalWORKs program. Clients work one-on-one with specially trained Employment Counselors. Together, they collaborate on a range of strategies tailored to the individual's unique set of employment circumstances.

Service-Focused Employment Preparation focuses on clients who are difficult to employ due to barriers such as homelessness and criminal histories. It addresses the needs of each individual and provides targeted interventions including referrals to mental health services and conviction expungements.

Employment-Based Experience provides short term, subsidized jobs with public and private employers. The client's assigned Employment Counselor makes regular on-site visits and provides guidance, ensuring that the client successfully earns a paycheck while gaining valuable work experience.

Education and Skill Development is designed to increase the skill level and earning potential of participants. It allows clients to earn a specialty certification or degree.

Supportive services provide assistance with childcare, transportation, and clothing, as well as referrals for housing and mental health resources.

At the Employment Connection Centers (ECC), participants receive employment coaching and job matches, attend job fairs, and apply for work. The three locations in North, South, and Central County meet the needs of job seekers by providing a place where all the resources they need are complemented with the support of their counselors.

During the pandemic, Employment Services staff members quickly pivoted to virtual offerings, thus ensuring that the ECCs continued to connect job seekers to hiring managers during the pandemic.

Homelessness Did Not Stop Me

Angela's Story



Angela and family

I am a 31-year-old mother of four beautiful children. One of my biggest struggles as a college student is being a mother. I was a senior in high school when I found out that I was expecting my first child, and to my surprise it was twins.

During my high school years, I was determined to finish school because dropping out was not an option for me. Becoming a mom at a young age required a tremendous amount of time and dedication to my children. It was then when I chose to put my college education on hold to focus on my twins.

I knew I wanted to go back to school. For a while I procrastinated, but mainly I did not have the confidence within myself to take that leap of faith to apply to college. I was in an abusive relationship, and it took me a couple of years to have the courage to leave, due to my financial struggles.

Afterward, I had to work multiple jobs and be the only provider for my children. Unfortunately, it was still not enough money, and we became a homeless family sleeping in my car.

This is not a situation I ever imagined experiencing, and I knew then that college was my only way out. I was able to find permanent

housing, which removed the hardest stressor out of our lives and allowed me to focus on my goals. After giving birth to my fourth child, I blossomed mentally and emotionally and gained the self confidence that was missing within me.

Caring for four children, paying bills, living in the Bay Area, and being in college, taught me to manage my time wisely. I have been able to maintain a 3.4 GPA. It has not been easy for me to do well academically but I've learned to use my resources, like the CalWORKs program, that have encouraged me to not give up.

Instead of feeling like a failure I feel empowered, and I love to share my story with younger students. I am learning everyday to manage my money, to care for my family, and to also teach my children so that one day they can attend college themselves to have a better life and help others.

I am currently a volunteer for the Office of Student Needs where I've had the chance to help students like me on campus. I am excited for my next achievement in life, which will be transferring to Santa Clara University in Winter 2020. Thank you for taking the time to read my story.

My Inspiring Client by Paula Perez



When my client Erika made the choice to separate from her spouse, it was one of the toughest decisions she had ever made. The relationship left her struggling with her self-worth, which spiraled into a lot of self-doubt.

As you can imagine, she had a lot more questions than answers. How was she going to provide for her two kids and reach her educational goal?

Although it was going to be a financial struggle, Erika made the commitment to chase her dreams (in a calculated manner) to pursue her career. The first step was to enroll in school in hopes for a better future. Erika's dream job was to help people, specifically in the healthcare field.

When she started at Mission College, another single parent told her about the CalWORKs program. Erika applied for CalWORKs and found that the supportive services offered by the program made her goal seem more attainable.

She would have to work hard day and night to succeed; but she did, and she excelled! As the days passed, Erika became more and more confident—there was a new Erika emerging.

Erika obtained high marks at community college and earned a spot in the nursing program at the University of San Francisco. This was truly a showcase of all her hard work and dedication!

The acceptance letter also recognized Erika's academic achievements and she was selected to receive a Transfer Academic Scholarship to help with her tuition (\$15,000 per year).

Erika's future looks bright and filled with success. Soon, she will obtain her Bachelor's Degree and begin her career as a Lactation Specialist.

Being able to provide financial support for her children while encouraging them through her own success is such a strong foundation that is being built for her family and their independence.

Erika is thankful for all the support that the CalWORKs program has provided. The CalWORKs team at Mission College has always supported her and guided her. The encouragement she received from CalWORKs has truly supported Erika in her road to self-sufficiency.



Erika and family



The Health Alliance is a partnership between Santa Clara County's Social Services Agency and Behavioral Health Services Department.

Through this partnership, Employment Services is able to provide comprehensive Behavioral Health Services to CalWORKs family members.

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

The Health Alliance

Supporting Families with Innovation and Compassion

Dealing with the stress of living in poverty is no easy feat. The simple material burden of not knowing how the rent is going to be paid, not having gas money to look for work, and not knowing whether or not your children will have enough to eat brings with it immense fear and anxiety, often adding to existing concerns. With COVID-19 changing the way CalWORKs families live their lives, the Department has had to find new solutions to help families cope and thrive during the shelter in place order.

The Health Alliance has been a leader in this effort, modifying business practices and adopting telehealth to suit the needs and safety requirements of CalWORKs families. Starting as an experiment with two Health Alliance providers, telehealth has proved extremely successful in continuing to provide vital therapy to families who would otherwise be left without support.

Not content with audio only therapy, the Health Alliance has increased their technological capability, enabling providers to offer sessions via Zoom. This has had the immediate effect of increasing the quality of therapy interactions while also meeting the needs of patient privacy and safety through thorough legal and technical vetting of the Zoom platform.

Due to the varying availability of technology resources and knowledge among CalWORKs families, Health Alliance personnel have made themselves available to help clients set up Zoom on their devices, including in-person support at a Health Alliance office that meets all social distancing guidelines.

In addition to technical support, the Health Alliance continues to offer medication support through a drop-in clinic. Using social distancing procedures, clients can continue receiving medications, including medicines that require injections.

This provides clients with peace of mind in the knowledge that they will not have to worry about the potentially fatal side-effects of going without their medications. In the event clients are unable to make use of the drop-in clinic, Health Alliance personnel provide psychiatric support by linking clients to appropriate and convenient providers.

Due to school closures required by shelter in place and social distancing guidelines, many CalWORKs families struggle to find the time and privacy to participate in therapy sessions during regular office hours. With this in mind, Health Alliance therapists have dramatically increased their availability, working outside of their normal schedules and making themselves available for emergency triage sessions.

This has been a vital resource for patients like Sally, a 24-year-old woman who has been in treatment for depression and anxiety. One Wednesday, Sally was out running an errand when she was pulled over due to a traffic violation.

Sally began to feel the onset of a panic attack and called her therapist for emotional support. Her therapist stayed on the phone while Sally spoke to the police officer. With the therapist's help, Sally felt safe and supported enough to maintain her composure and avoid the panic attack.

COVID-19 continues to change our community, altering how we support each other as we look for new ways to survive and thrive. At a time when we must stay apart to protect each other, CalWORKs families can feel safe knowing that support from the Health Alliance is just a phone call away.

Housing



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, the Family Services Unit, and the staff of the Employment Connection Centers.

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 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.

As with the CalWORKs Housing Support Program, HDAP is a collaborative effort comprised of the SSI Advocacy Unit's Social Workers, the housing staff of Abode Services, and the homeless team of the County's Office of Supportive Housing.

Thanks to HDAP, 39 participants have been awarded SSI benefits and 155 chronically homeless individuals have been placed in permanent housing, exceeding the program's three-year goal.

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.



FS
300 families
assisted
(FY 2020)

CHSP
146 clients
housed
(FY 2020)

HDAP
155 clients
assisted
(FY 2017-20)

Daniel and family pose
in front of their new
home.



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 program 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.

Kenisha enters her new apartment for the first time.

CalWORKs Home Visiting Program

Supporting Parents While Fighting on the Front Lines of a Pandemic

Being a parent is one of the toughest jobs on the planet.

Parents act as a teacher, role model, caretaker, and guardian twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, with no pay and often very little support. When schools closed in response to the pandemic, that job became even tougher.

To help CalWORKs parents and the community navigate this challenging time, our partners at the Santa Clara County Department of Public Health have been doing double duty—serving participants in the Home Visiting Program and acting as Disaster Service Workers.

The CalWORKs Home Visiting Program provided CalWORKs families with innovative service

delivery modifications that align with safe social distancing practices.

Instead of putting CalWORKs families at risk by continuing in-home visits, Public Health Nurses and Early Learning Specialists (also called home visitors) met with families over the phone and through teleconferencing.

This change allowed staff to continue providing parents with



as well as connections to resources for physical health, mental health, food needs, and other vital services available in the community.

To ensure that CalWORKs families continued to have access to all resources in the CalWORKs Home Visiting Program, home visitors drove to clients' homes to drop off educational books and other materials.

All program materials were safely packed in airtight bags, so families were never at risk of infection.

As an enhancement to these resources, the Home Visiting Program also began providing CalWORKs families with information and resources related to Covid-19, giving families the knowledge they needed to stay safe.

For the County's Public Health Nurses, caring for CalWORKs families did not stop in between visits. Because of their valuable skillset, Home Visiting Program nurses were called upon to support all of Santa Clara County as Disaster Service Workers.

Home Visiting Program nurses assisted the Public Health Department with case intake for people who reported confirmed or possible cases of Covid-19.

Using the information provided by individuals, the nurses assisted with contact tracing, identifying and reaching out to everyone who may have come into contact with someone carrying the coronavirus.

In addition to providing intake services, a group of home visitors assisted the Provider Response Group.

This team worked with healthcare providers to gather information on suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19, confirmed virus deaths, and patient discharges.

This valuable information allowed Public Health officials to make informed policy decisions, implement countermeasures to limit the spread of the virus, and provide vital information to the public.

Pictured below are our CalWORKs Home Visiting Program partners.

Front Row left to right: Charadine Dore, Carmen Nguyen, Jacqueline Pedroza, Wendy Plancarte, Kathryn Amoroso, Jane Capili. Back Row left to right: Jennifer Amaya, Ruby Tobing, Joanna Ramos, Whitney Evans





Emmanuel, Claire, and Kathryn stand next to a sign they refurbished and installed.

Paid summer internships provide youth with meaningful work experience and help mitigate generational poverty.

County of Santa Clara Intern & Earn



The County of Santa Clara Intern & Earn Program serves eligible youth from the CalWORKs, CalFresh, and Foster Care programs, offering paid summer internships and year-round services.

Youth can access job readiness and personal development workshops, as well as receive individual assistance from Employment Counselors with finding unsubsidized employment. These services are meant to help young people gain work experience, which is instrumental to positive youth development.

In previous years, over 500 youth participated in paid internships in public and private organizations across the County.

This year's program was preparing to serve more youth than ever before, with the hours increased to 30 per week and pay raised to \$16.50 per hour—the most robust summer program yet!

Typically, the recruitment process for Intern & Earn begins well ahead of the summer months, and this year was no exception. Over the week of winter break in February, over 200 youth walked into the Employment Connection Center to apply for jobs.

Then, in response to the global pandemic that was evolving, our County was ordered to shelter in place beginning on March 16—leaving the future of the program uncertain.

Once staff settled into their new normal of working from home, the Intern & Earn program was

rethought, reimaged, and reworked. The goal was to offer internships to as many youth as worksites could accommodate.

Additionally, consideration had to be given to the need for a flexible program that could respond to Public Health Department guidance as it was issued.

The Intern & Earn team quickly developed a program that allowed interns to have the opportunity to work on either a “virtual” project, or onsite at an “essential” organization that was allowed to remain open during the pandemic.

All interns began with a week of online job readiness and onboarding training facilitated by the Intern & Earn team, followed by the internship experience of their choice.

Due to worksite capacity limitations, the program was pared down to 125 interns for this year. However, as part of the rethinking of the program, additional cohorts are being planned to offer more youth meaningful internship opportunities in a supported and safe manner.

Intern & Earn's partnership with Second Harvest of Silicon Valley continued this year, with the Employment Connection Center in San Jose designated as a “Summer Feeding” site.

This service was redesigned to ensure that guidance from the Public Health Department was followed. Accordingly, meals were pre-bagged, offered to go, and could be picked up outside, drive-thru style.

Interns placed on the Senter Road campus had a nutritionally balanced breakfast and lunch available to them daily, free of charge; interns from nearby offices also picked up meals from the Senter Road campus.

Interns in other locations received information about community Summer Feeding sites near them, so that they too could access free meals.

The Intern & Earn program impacts employers as well youth. Our collective efforts continue to make a positive impact on the community.

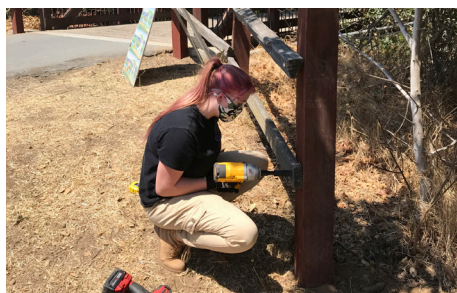
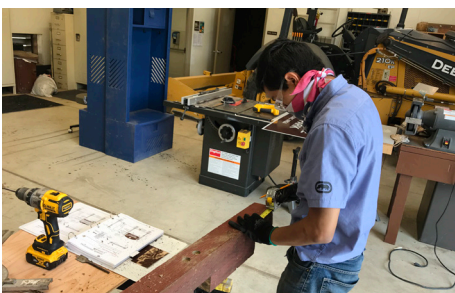
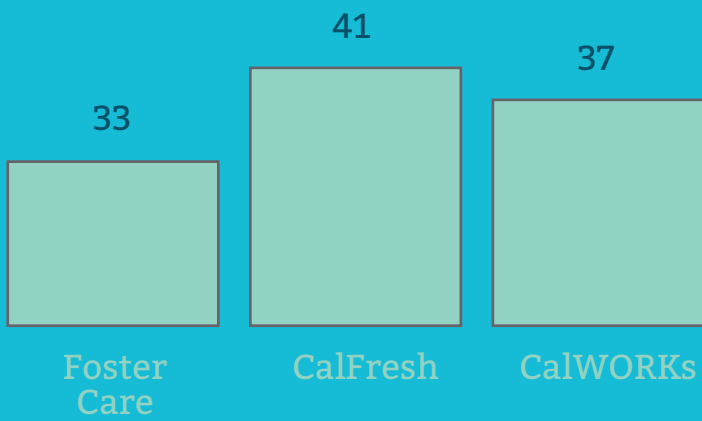
Janet Bryan, Human Resources Service Partner at Germaines Seed Technology in Gilroy, said:

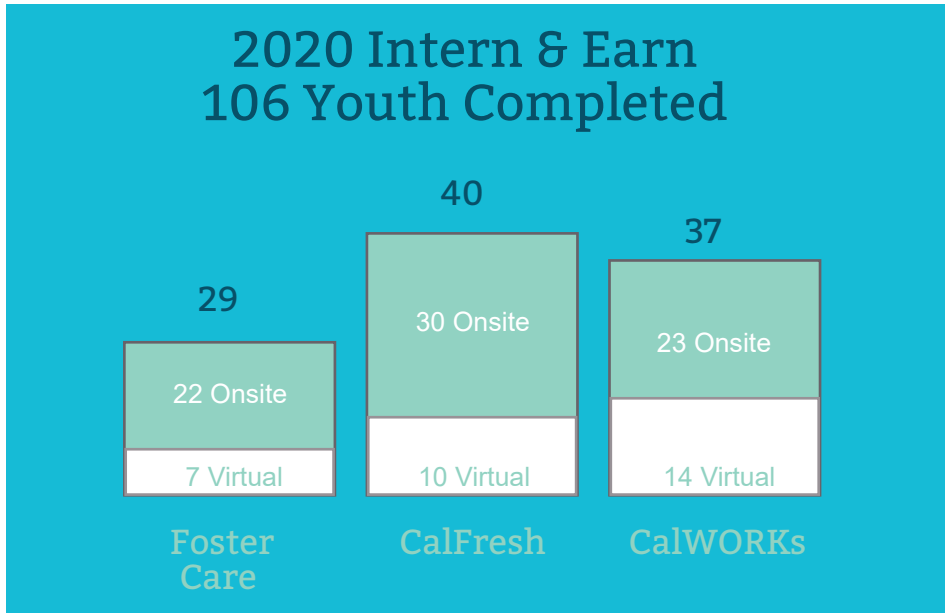
“Thank you so much for contacting us regarding this program! We had three interns start today and they all arrived early, dressed appropriately, were engaging and did really well.

Looking forward to a long partnership in this program together. It feels really great to be able to help these kids gain not only experience, but exposure to real life and skills that can carry forward. Thank you for this program.”



2020 Intern & Earn 111 Youth Started





Partnership with Second Harvest of Silicon Valley Meeting increased need during the pandemic



When residents were asked to shelter in place in March 2020, Second Harvest had to completely re-organize their operations.

With over 40 years of experience fighting hunger and food insecurity, adapting to changing needs is nothing new for Second Harvest of Silicon Valley.

The first priority was to ensure that Second Harvest and their distribution partners were considered 'essential'—after all,

food distributions are like grocery stores for low-income people.

Almost immediately, need skyrocketed. Second Harvest served an average of over 250,000 people across both counties in February and by June was serving over 500,000.

In order to meet this need, Second Harvest rented a third warehouse in Santa Clara County and leased an additional 10 tractor-trailers, for a total of 30.

Distribution practices also had to change. Prior to the COVID pandemic, Second Harvest and their partners utilized farmer's market style distributions that provided client choice in a friendly in-person climate.

In order to protect their clients, volunteers, and staff, Second Harvest started pre-boxing the food and creating drive-thru distributions that allowed for touchless distribution by popping food directly into client's trunks. Second Harvest

set up large drive-thru centers to distribute boxed food to the public. After determining that the drive-thrus were safe and effective, Second Harvest provided training and support to their partner network on this method. In February, there were 3 drive-thru distributions in Santa Clara & San Mateo Counties. By June, there were over 120!

Key to the ability to box the food was assistance from the National Guard. At their peak, over 140 Guardspeople were boxing food in Second Harvest's three different Santa Clara warehouses. Their work ethic was incredible and they helped create very effective boxing processes.

With shelter-in-place, there were more people who were in need of home delivery. While this had been on Second Harvest's 3-year strategy plan, the need became urgent.

Working with partners like Catholic Charities, Team Rubicon, Cathedral of Faith and many others, Second Harvest created a home delivery program to serve the many vulnerable residents in Santa Clara County who were unable to leave their homes to pick up groceries. Through these partnerships, Second Harvest delivered pre-boxed food to 4,000 households of seniors and other high-risk individuals, every other week.

At the beginning of shelter-in-place, Second Harvest's hotline spiked to over 1,200 calls per day. Understanding that establishing services isn't meaningful if no one knows about them,

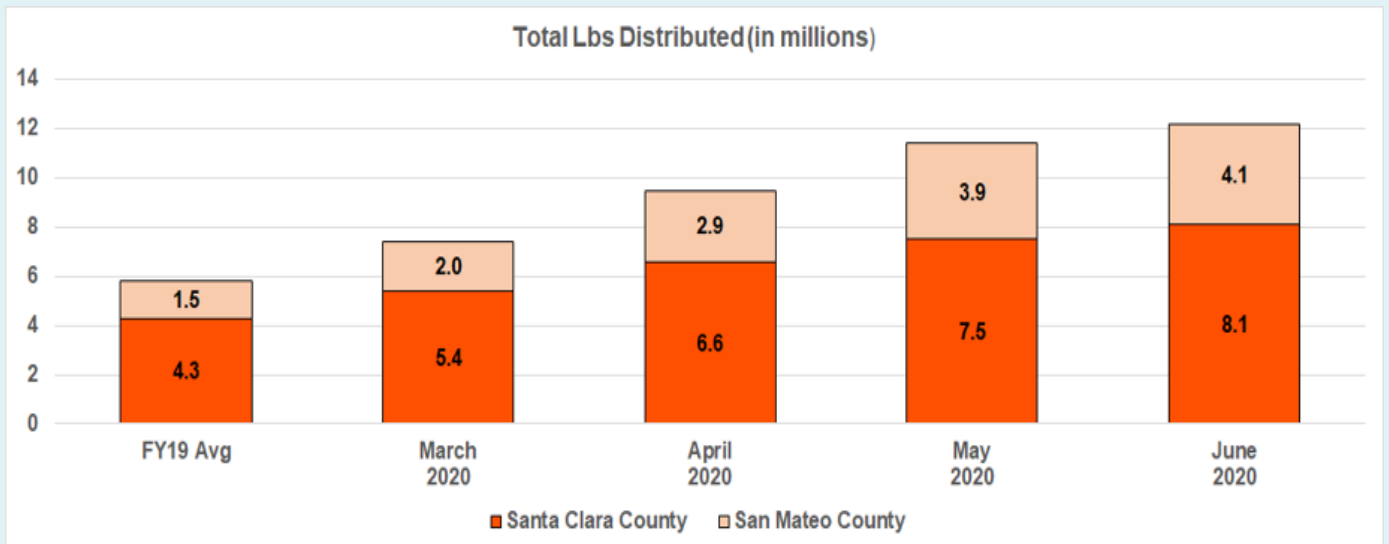
Second Harvest expanded their outreach and information efforts, increasing their call center lines from 4 to 15 at the peak. Second Harvest continues to work to quickly and efficiently connect families to food distributions around the County as well as signing up eligible households for CalFresh.

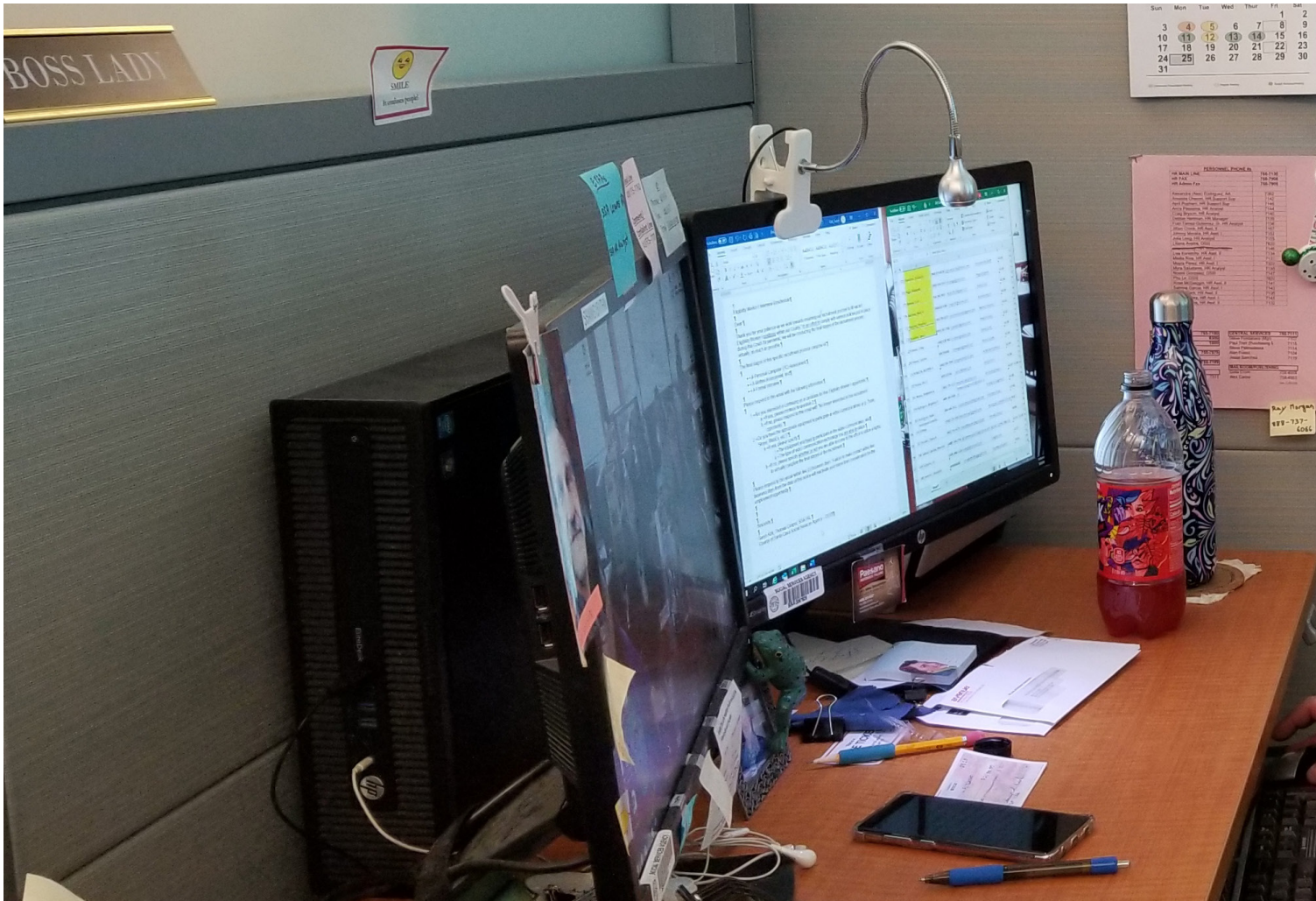
The results of this effort have been dramatic. In February 2020, Second Harvest was able to distribute over 6 million pounds of food. Thanks to Second Harvest's rapid deployment and adaptation to demand, over 12 million pounds of food were distributed in June 2020.



Growth in Pounds & People Served

SH now provides food to over 500,000 people, a 100% increase over pre-pandemic need





Saryn Kirk is pictured working at her desk at 333 West Julian Street. Some DSWs worked for the EOC part-time, and continued performing their normal job duties.

DEBS Employees Answer the Call for Disaster Service Workers

In response to the Covid pandemic, the County activated the Emergency Operations Center (EOC), a 5,000 square foot facility that serves as the hub for emergency management activities

Immediately after designating the COVID-19 crisis and the SCU Lightning Complex Fire as emergency events, the EOC began recruiting Disaster Service Workers (DSWs) to help serve our community.

DEBS employees answered the call to service without hesitation. Staff members from every bureau took to the front lines, working jobs that the EOC matched to their skillsets.

Assignments ran the gamut and included operating heavy machinery

in a warehouse, providing food support for the EOC, doing contact tracing of diagnosed COVID cases, and doing project management for the shelter needs of those being housed due to possible exposure to COVID-19.

Staffers also performed social work supporting individuals housed due to COVID, utilized their foreign language skills by providing translations, answered isolation and quarantine support hotlines, and worked at fire evacuation centers.



DEBS is proud of and grateful to all staff members who served as Disaster Service Workers during the 2020 emergencies.



Christopher Williams

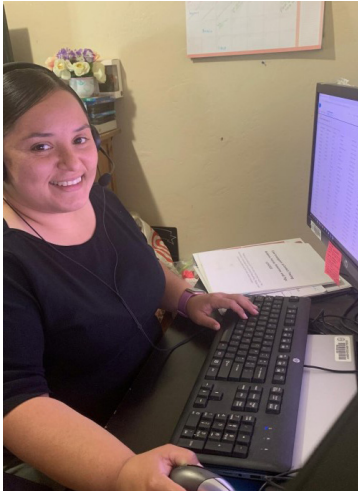


Jessica Vazquez



Anh Nguyen Phan

DEBS Staff Members Helped Slow the Spread of COVID-19 by Working as Contact Tracers



Rosa Oseguera

My experience as a contract tracer has been great, although at first I was very nervous about the assignment. I have been learning a lot about the virus and it feels good to know that you are making an impact in the community. I'm hopeful that with all the work we are doing as DSWs, we will slow down the spread of COVID-19.



Sofia Vega

It has been a great experience to work with both the Public Health Department (PHD) and our community!

Everyone at the PHD has been extremely supportive and appreciative of the help we are providing. They answer all of our questions and check-in with us throughout the day.

It has been very rewarding reaching out to our community and being able to provide them with vital information that can help ease the spread of this horrible virus. I am really grateful to be a part of this assignment and hope that we can continue to make a difference in our community!



Rocio Teliha

As a contact tracer, my responsibilities include contacting a list of clients who have tested positive for COVID-19, as well as anyone they came in contact with.

When interviewing the client, I verify identity and collect information, such as medical history, places they visited or traveled to, and people they have spent time with. All this information is used to help control the spread of COVID-19.

I also offer available resources, such as housing, financial assistance, and medical. Some of the topics we discuss are how to properly isolate, quarantine, as well as the symptoms and when to contact medical facilities or 911. Ultimately, my job is to make sure clients feel safe and comfortable knowing that we are here to help. My goal as a contact tracer is to make a difference in our community in the fight against COVID-19.



Esther Castellon-Quezadas

The experience is great. I really enjoy working with our Public Health Department. They are an amazing team of nurses and doctors. I feel like I'm learning a great deal while helping my community, it feels great.



Fernando Becerril

It's been a great learning experience for me. The nurses are very thorough and always willing to help. I am learning a lot about the virus and it's very rewarding knowing that we are making an impact in reducing the amount of cases in the County.



Artie Garcia



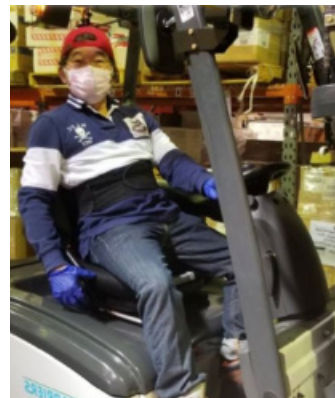
Iveth Andrade



Maria Salazar



Richard Ching

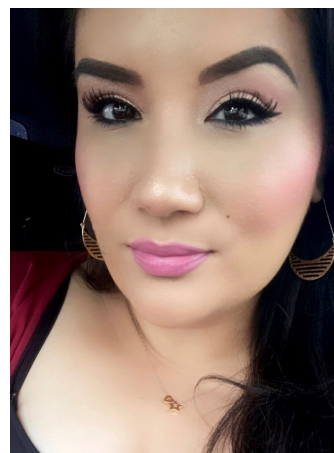


Jack Lee

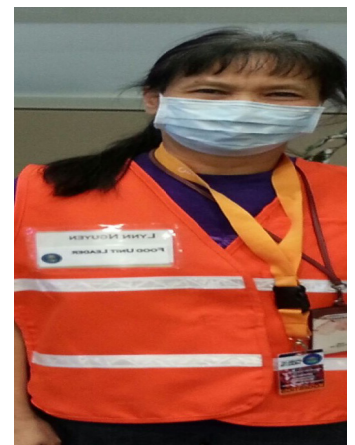


Jimmy Liang

Some DSWs were able to telework, while others were required to work onsite at different locations in the County.



Pauline Ferguson



Lynn Nguyen

Eleven staff members who served as DSWs are not pictured. They are: Jimbill Batuampo, Thomas Cooper, Angela Diaz, Maria Duarte, J'Aleta Frazier-Nisby, Deborah McAfee, Gabriel Munoz, Ozzie Orozco, Rowena Pascual, Robert Sacasa, and Patricia Sun.

Client Acknowledgements

It is gratifying to hear that our best efforts are making a difference in the lives of community members. Here are some thank-you notes that our Medi-Cal eligibility team received this year.



Carla Olmos

Email to Eligibility Worker Carla Olmos

Other people in your position, may not realize the tremendous power they have over others' lives and the opportunity they have because of that, to make a positive difference as well. But being that you are an exceptional person, you have shown that quality repeatedly.

There are no words to express the depth of my/our appreciation and gratitude for your helping Indi out yesterday, by helping her get her Medi-Cal insurance restored. Losing that would have been a huge loss and tremendous burden...especially at this time!

So, thank-you for your compassion, empathy, professionalism and humanity. You personally made a profound difference in our lives, through the effort you put forth to help rectify that situation.

Thank-you for your kindness and thoughtful assistance. In a world, where sometimes we seem so divided, as a country...in moments like this, my faith in humanity is restored...one person at a time. You are that person for me, today, and I am grateful for your presence in our lives. May you, your family and friends all stay healthy and safe at this time.

Blessings to you,
Karen

Email regarding Eligibility Worker Caesar Meza

I just wanted to send an email about my interaction with Caesar Meza. I am working with my mother-in-law on her Medi-Cal renewal and needed to call the phone line at 408-758-4040.

Caesar answered and carefully listened to the issues I was working on. He let me know that a worker was assigned but that person was out-of-the-office today. He said he would assign the case to himself and help me right then. He was very patient and we walked through the documents we had uploaded on mybenefitscalwin.org and he was able to resolve the issue I was having.

He was very friendly and helpful throughout the entire call and really helped our family relax about the Medi-Cal renewal process. I am really grateful for his caring and patient approach with my family today. I just wanted to pass along the wonderful experience with had with Caesar today.

Thank you again Caesar!!!

Bruce



Caesar Meza

Email to Eligibility Worker Julissa Martinez

Guess what? I just received the Medical packets today! Thank you again for everything! This is going to be so wonderful to have Mom home again. I wanted to let you know that your help has helped make this possible. I have enclosed a picture of Mom Dolores and myself.

Thank you so much again and have a wonderful evening.

Diane



Julissa Martinez

Voicemail regarding Eligibility Worker Sandy Ramirez

I wanted to put in a good word for one of your employees, Sandy Ramirez. Sandy really took care of me. She's just so wonderful ... I've been tossed around a couple times in the system as I've been trying to figure out this whole medical plan situation. Sandy was able to take care of it so quickly and so swiftly and I'm just so impressed.

Thank you so much.

Mia



Sandy Ramirez

Community Service Highlights

February 3, 2020



SSA Today Highlight

SERVE, EMPOWER, TRANSFORM

County of Santa Clara
Social Services Agency

The GA Bureau serves over 4,000 clients per month, approximately 51% of whom are homeless.

Cold weather poses a threat to those experiencing homelessness even when temperatures seem mild.

Hypothermia can set in when temperatures drop below 50 degrees Fahrenheit, but many warming shelters don't open until it's much colder.

There are approximately 7,400 homeless people in the County, of whom 74% are unsheltered. *

*Santa Clara County 2017 Homeless Census and Survey

SSA Today written by Paul Lopez and Tonika Lewis

**Submit your
SSA Today
Highlight!**

Comments on SSA Today?
Click above and submit.

Guiding Principles– Innovative, Compassionate, Responsive

The General Assistance (GA) Bureau Supports the Homeless Community with a Winter Coat Drive

The winter season brings many wonderful changes to the end of the year. The days get shorter, the temperature begins to drop, and the sound of holidays begins to fill the air. The excitement of the season offsets the unpredictable weather of a cold, frosty morning or the bite of a bitterly cold night. But, not for everyone.

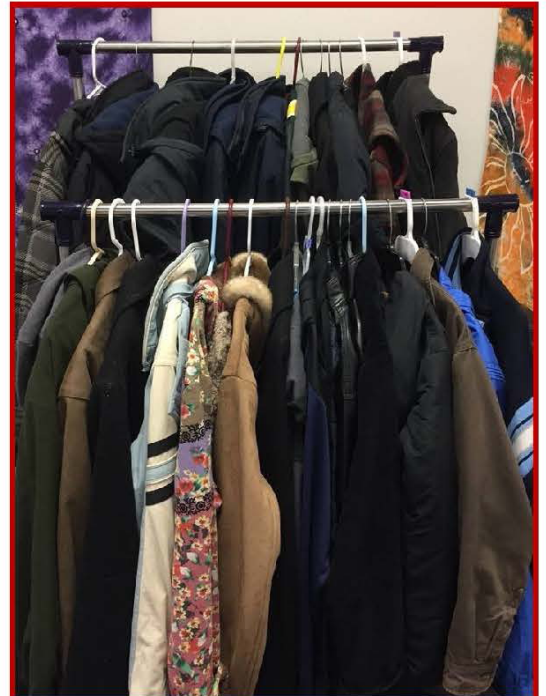
Accessibility to a warm home or clothing is a challenge for those in need, and coping with cold winter temperatures proves very difficult. The homeless and those with limited means face a dangerous reality during the winter months; glaring needs surface every year as a result of this growing dilemma.

Instantly, upon hearing personally about the effect of cold upon many of the 4,000 plus clients we serve monthly, a call to action took place within the GA office. A coat drive was developed, a flyer ensued within a few hours, and within almost a day, a full-fledged coat drive was in full force.

Our goal was to provide a warm coat to anyone in need, thus bringing some relief from the cold weather conditions. Any coat, gently used or new, was welcomed, and the response was immediate.

Agency-wide, not just within GA, staff donated coats and jackets in varying sizes. One GA staffer even purchased four new jackets and gladly donated them. This typifies the generosity and desire of SSA staffers to help those in need when it is most crucial.

The GA Bureau distributed over 75 coats to clients who were feeling the sting of winter cold; their gratitude was heartfelt and real. While providing coats is a temporary solution to the systemic issues that lead people into homelessness and poverty, we believe that helping in small ways makes a difference in our community. Even small acts of kindness help to save lives, provide hope, and reconnect us with our humanity: our fundamental commonality and the desire to make a difference.



"I really appreciate the jacket, it helps us survive the cold weather."

June 22, 2020

SSA Today Highlight

SERVE, EMPOWER, TRANSFORM

County of Santa Clara
Social Services Agency

“Together, we make a difference”

DEBS’ motto “Together, we make a difference” provided the perfect inspiration for Maggie’s tree mural.

The handprints that represent leaves were made by BAC/AAC staffers whose roles required them to work from the office during the pandemic.

BAC/AAC continue to work towards a united goal of providing the best service possible for our clients.

[Submit your SSA Today Highlight!](#)

Comments on SSA Today?
Simply click above

Vision—Commitment to Serve, Empower, Transform

Staff-Created Murals Brighten the Lobby at the Benefits Assistance Center

Workplace art has a powerful effect. It can brighten moods, spark creativity, and create a feeling of acceptance, welcoming, and community strength. For years, staffers at the DEBS Benefits Assistance Center (BAC) and Application Assistance Center (AAC) harbored a plan to make the lobby a more welcoming place for children and families through the use of murals.

With the office being closed due to the pandemic, Eva Chaboya, Program Manager of the BAC, and Armand Barreras, AAC Eligibility Worker III, figured that now was their time. Having previously received permission for the beautification project, Eva and Armand sought out help from Maggie Reyes, Client Services Technician and in-house artist. Eva and Armand donated the paint and Maggie did the rest all on her own, with the only guidance being to use bright, cheery designs that will put smiles on faces. BAC/AAC staffers are very proud, knowing that clients young and old will be welcomed and cheered by the color and detail of these beautiful murals.



The beautiful murals painted by Maggie Reyes, with paint donated by Eva Chaboya and Armand Barreras, are ready to welcome clients to the BAC when our lobbies re-open.

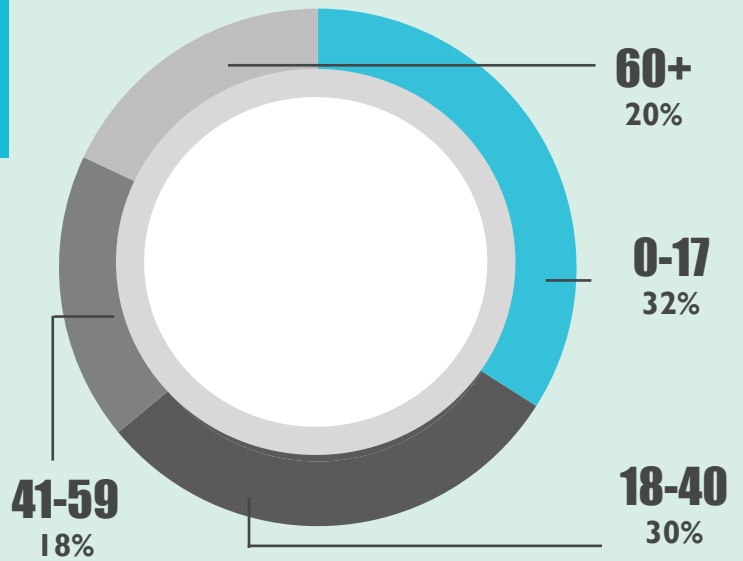
MEDI-CAL

DEMOGRAPHICS

388,756 CLIENTS

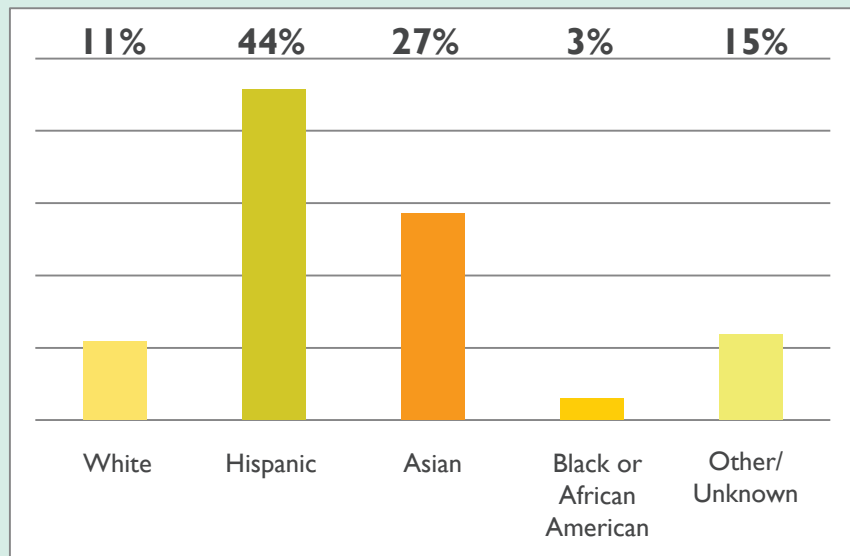
AGE GROUP

Low-income individuals of all ages benefit from Medi-Cal insurance.



ETHNICITY

Hispanic and Asian clients are the largest recipient groups of Medi-Cal.



GENDER

An almost equal number of men and women utilize Medi-Cal benefits.



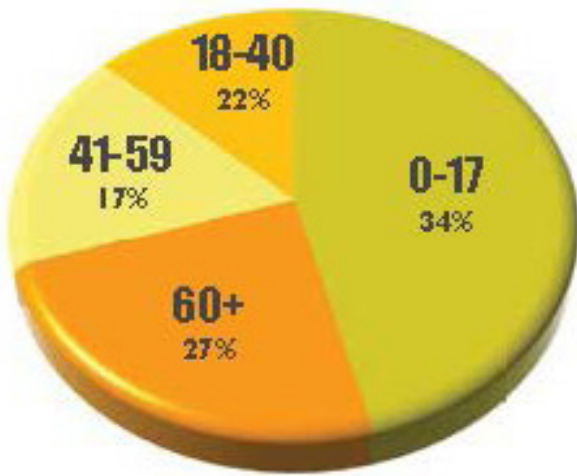
CALFRESH

DEMOGRAPHICS

102,467 CLIENTS

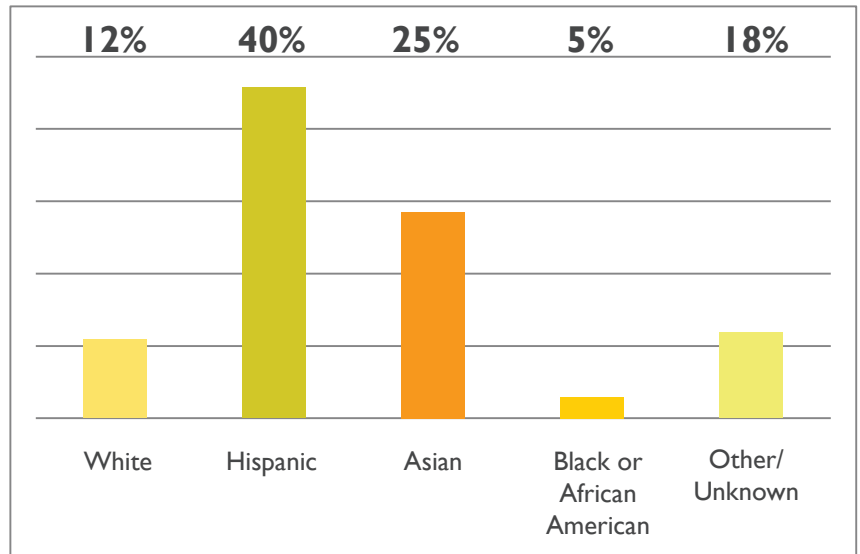
AGE GROUP

Children and seniors make up the majority of all CalFresh recipients in the County of Santa Clara.



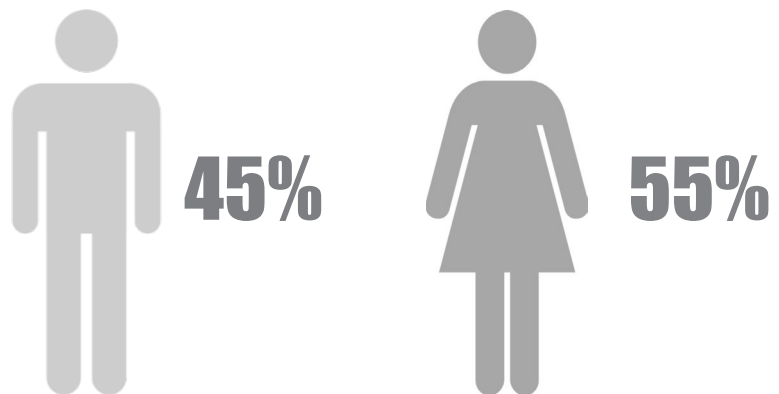
ETHNICITY

Recipients of Hispanic and Asian descent benefit the most from CalFresh.



GENDER

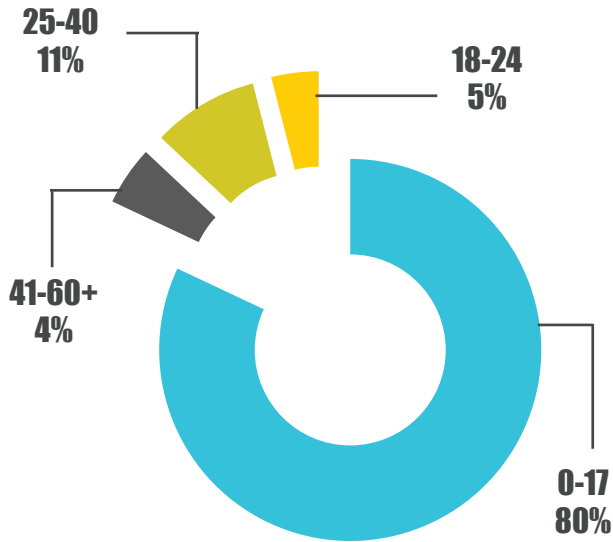
There is not a large gender disparity among CalFresh recipients.



CalWORKs

DEMOGRAPHICS

12,317 CLIENTS



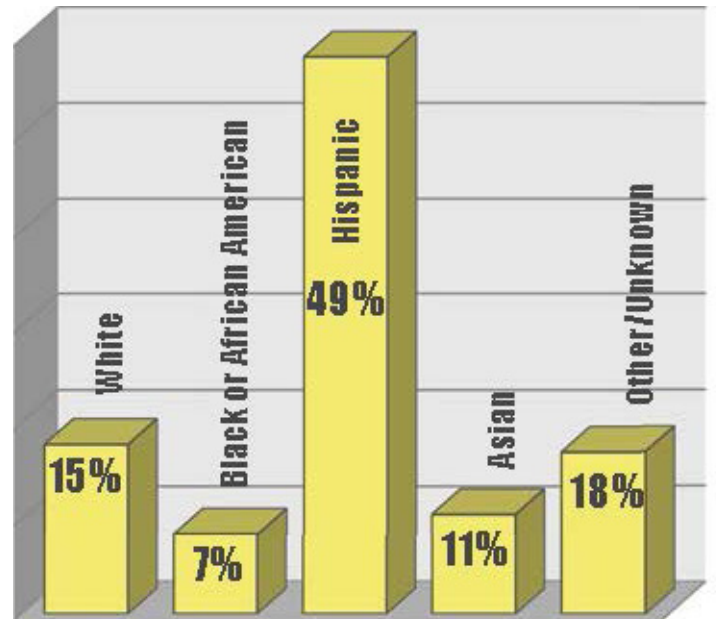
AGE GROUP

Approximately 5,500 families in Santa Clara County receive support from the CalWORKs program, including almost 10,000 children.

Children aged 0-17 are the primary beneficiaries of CalWORKs.

ETHNICITY

Hispanic families represent the majority of CalWORKs recipients.



GENDER

Most heads of household in the CalWORKs program are single mothers.



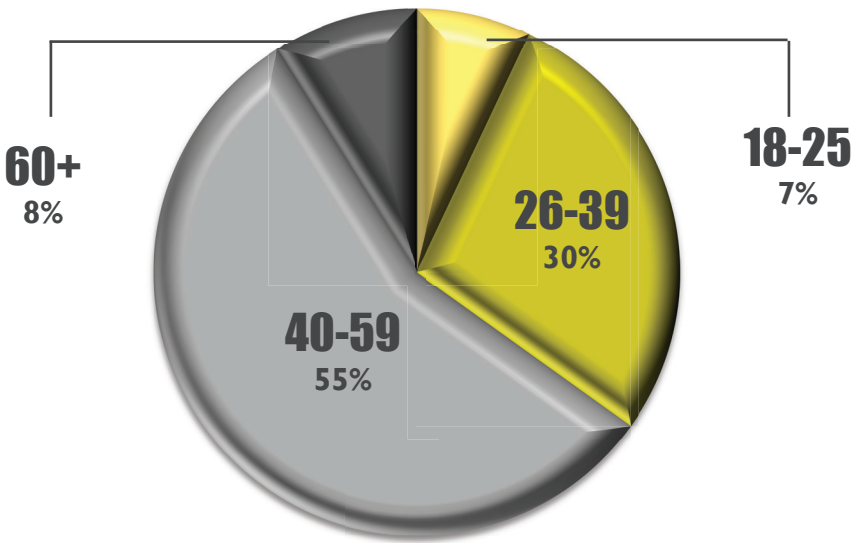
GENERAL ASSISTANCE

DEMOGRAPHICS

3,464 CLIENTS

AGE GROUP

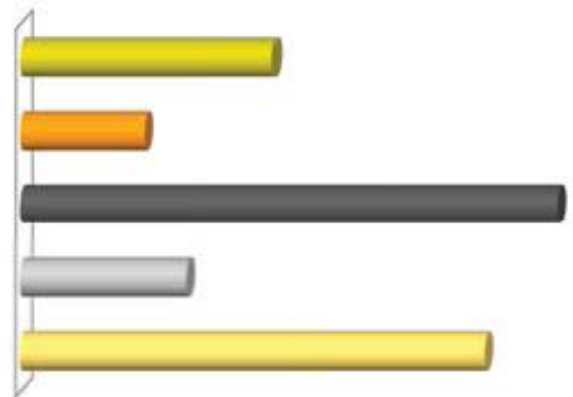
Over 60 percent clients in the General Assistance program are 40 years of age or older.



ETHNICITY

Individuals of Hispanic and White descent are the largest recipient groups of General Assistance benefits.

Other/Unknown	19%
Asian	9%
Hispanic	36%
Black or African American	10%
White	26%



GENDER

Male recipients of General Assistance outnumber female recipients by almost 2 to 1.





Safety Net Meeting 2021 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 Moncayo at: (408) 755-7187 or Mariela.Moncayo@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
January 28
February 25
March 25
April 22
May 27
June 24
July 22
August 26
September 23
October 28
November (No Meeting)
December (TBD)



CalWORKs Advisory 2021 Meeting Calendar

DATE	TIME	LOCATION
January 6	11:30 – 1:30	Social Services Agency 1879 Senter Road–Orientation Room
February 3	11:30 – 1:30	Social Services Agency 1879 Senter Road–Orientation Room
March 3	11:30 – 1:30	Social Services Agency 1879 Senter Road–Orientation Room
April 7	11:30 – 1:30	Social Services Agency 1879 Senter Road–Orientation Room
May 5	11:30 – 1:30	Social Services Agency 1879 Senter Road–Orientation Room
June 2	11:30 – 1:30	Social Services Agency 1879 Senter Road–Orientation Room
July	* NO MEETING THIS MONTH *	
August 4	11:30 – 1:30	Social Services Agency 1879 Senter Road–Orientation Room
September 1	11:30 – 1:30	Social Services Agency 1879 Senter Road–Orientation Room
October 6	11:30 – 1:30	Social Services Agency 1879 Senter Road–Orientation Room
November 3	11:30 – 1:30	Social Services Agency 1879 Senter Road–Orientation Room
December	*NO MEETING THIS MONTH - CALWORKS ACHIEVMENT AWARDS	

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

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Santa Clara County Social Services Agency - DEBS

@scssadebs

Visit our website:

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

Online Application:

[MyBenefitsCalwin.org](https://www.mycalwin.org)

Mobile App:

My Benefits CalWIN

Contact us:

Santa Clara County - Social Services Agency

333 W. Julian Street, San Jose, CA 95110

Phone: 408.755.7720 | Fax: 408.755.7965

Email: ClientComments@ssa.sccgov.org