

2023 DEBS ANNUAL REPORT



**County of Santa Clara
Social Services Agency**

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



www.socialservices.sccgov.org

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Message from DEBS Director

With the economic effects of the pandemic recovery, inflation, and high gas and housing prices continuing to affect Santa Clara County residents, the work of the Department of Employment and Benefit Services (DEBS) is more important than ever.

Today, we serve 485,000 individuals – that’s over 1 in 5 of all County residents. Approximately 26% of these people are children and 20% are elderly. Many adult-age individuals are working poor who rely on public benefits to supplement their low wages.

DEBS is committed to its mission of administering programs and services that increase access to nutritious food, health care, employment, and affordable housing. We strive to be a valued resource for those in need of safety net and employment resources due to permanent, temporary, and situational obstacles such as disability, illness, job loss, and generational poverty. We recognize the importance of equitable access and lived voice.

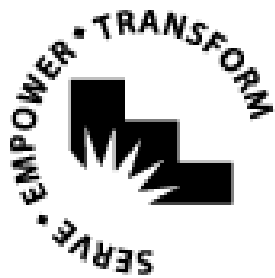
We work together with community members and community-based operations to improve access to and utilization of the safety net services that we administer. Every year, we are so excited to offer the programs and assistance detailed in the pages that follow, and we strive to maintain the public’s confidence as we continually improve our service and operations.



Angela Shing

Director

Department of Employment
and Benefit Services (DEBS)



SOCIAL SERVICES AGENCY SANTA CLARA COUNTY

Mission

Transition public assistance recipients to employment and eventual self-sufficiency and to ensure that low-income individuals and families receive necessary health, nutrition, financial and employment services.

Vision

Making a difference through people, service and performance.

Goals

- Ensure that basic needs are met through accurate and timely services.
- Assist job seekers in obtaining and retaining employment and empowering them with the tools, and skills to set and achieve their goals.
- Reduce the number of hungry children and adults by outreaching and conducting community-wide campaigns to make nutrition services more accessible and available.
- Increase well-being by promoting strategies to grow the number of eligible children and adults who receive health coverage.
- Promote various housing assistance programs to help eligible, low-income individuals move into permanent housing.

2023 By The Numbers

Total Number of Individuals
Participating in Public Benefits

485,164

Total Number of Phone Calls
Answered

268,737

Total Number of Applications
Processed

151,565

Average Call Wait Time

6:50

Total Number of Lobby Visitors

155,098

Total Number of Families and
Individuals Assisted with Housing

650



SOCIAL SERVICES AGENCY
SANTA CLARA COUNTY

Health Care



Health Care Strengthens Communities

Overall quality of life increases dramatically when people have access to preventative health care. Physical health improves, mental health is uplifted, and people have a greater ability to contribute to the local economy through work and educational achievement.

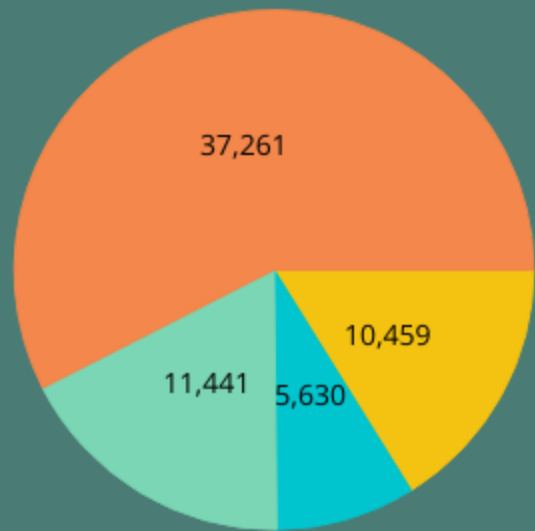
Through the administration of Medi-Cal, the largest health coverage provider in California and the largest public assistance benefits program in the County, the Department ensures that qualified community members receive comprehensive medical services.

Healthy California For All

California is on its way to implementing Healthy California for All initiative. The goal of this initiative is to expand Medi-Cal to all low-income residents, regardless of immigration status.

In 2016, Healthy California was expanded to Ages 0-18. In 2020, it was expanded to Ages 19-25. In 2022, it was expanded to Ages 50 and over. Effective Jan 2024, it will be expanded to Ages 26-49, completing California's goal. Over 37,000 residents are projected to transition to full-scope Medi-Cal in January 2024. This expansion will make California the first state in the nation to offer health coverage for all.

Medi-Cal Expansion: Healthy California for All Regardless of Immigration Status



2016: 0-18 years old 2020: 19-25 years old
2022: 50+ years old 2024: 26-49 years old

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Health Care

These individuals will gain access to a broader scope of health coverage including but not limited to, inpatient and outpatient services, maternity and newborn care, mental health and substance abuse services, dental services, affordable prescription drugs, physical therapy, and vision services.

Eligible residents will be notified of their transition to full-scope Medi-Cal and will be given the option to choose a managed care plan. Statewide, the initiative will impact approximately 700,000 current enrollees.

Maintaining Enrollment in Medi-Cal After the Public Health Emergency

In response to the declared COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (PHE), the federal government ordered a continuous coverage requirement for Medical recipients. As a result, Medi-Cal recipients have not had to renew their coverage for over three years, acclimating individuals to a system where they were not required to submit annual eligibility redetermination paperwork.

When the PHE ended in April 2023, the State terminated the continuous coverage requirement. This means that, for the first time since March 2020, many residents must complete the eligibility redetermination process in order to keep their health coverage. Full redetermination processing resumed in June 2023, and loss of coverage for some residents may have occurred as early as July 1, 2023.

With this in mind, the Department has been working to ensure not only that Medi-Cal recipients complete the redetermination process, but also that individuals who no longer qualify for Medi-Cal are enrolled into alternative health care plans. While the immediate goal is to ensure that every eligible individual access and retains Medi-Cal, the overall goal for Santa Clara County is health care coverage for all.

Outreach to Medi-Cal Recipients

In collaboration with the State, managed care plan partners, and community partners, the Department is engaging in a multi-pronged outreach campaign. The main objective of this campaign is to two-fold: raise awareness of the need to update contact information; and ensure that beneficiaries submit their renewal packets by the deadline.

In Santa Clara County, the following organizations, as well as various other community-based organizations, non-profits, and county agencies and departments, have been working with the Department to outreach to all of the County's Medi-Cal recipients about the need to redetermine their eligibility: Santa Clara Family Health Plan; Anthem Blue Cross; County of Santa Clara Health System; California Coverage Health Initiative; Community Health Partnership; and various other community-based organizations and county agencies and departments.

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Health Care

These groups and the Department are involved in various cross collaborating workgroups with other CBOs, non-profits, and county agencies and departments for the purpose of ongoing communication, lessons learned, and continual improvements in outreach. The goal is to ensure that every eligible individual retains Medi-Cal or is enrolled into an alternative health care plan.

In addition, the Department's Medi-Cal Coordinators participate in a state workgroup to develop strategies and policies that help individuals retain Medi-Cal coverage and ease the completion of the redeterminations. The Medi-Cal population has grown to approximately 450,000 individuals and through program flexibilities, planning, community partnerships, and outreach efforts, we will play a major role in maintaining healthcare coverage for our residents.



Medi-Cal

23%

In Santa Clara County, 451,527 children, adults, and seniors receive their health care coverage through the Medi-Cal program. That's almost a quarter of the County's entire population of 1.9M people.

Keep your family covered.



Update your contact information so Medi-Cal can reach you when it's time to renew.



Please click on the image above to apply for Medi-Cal or manage your Medi-Cal account.

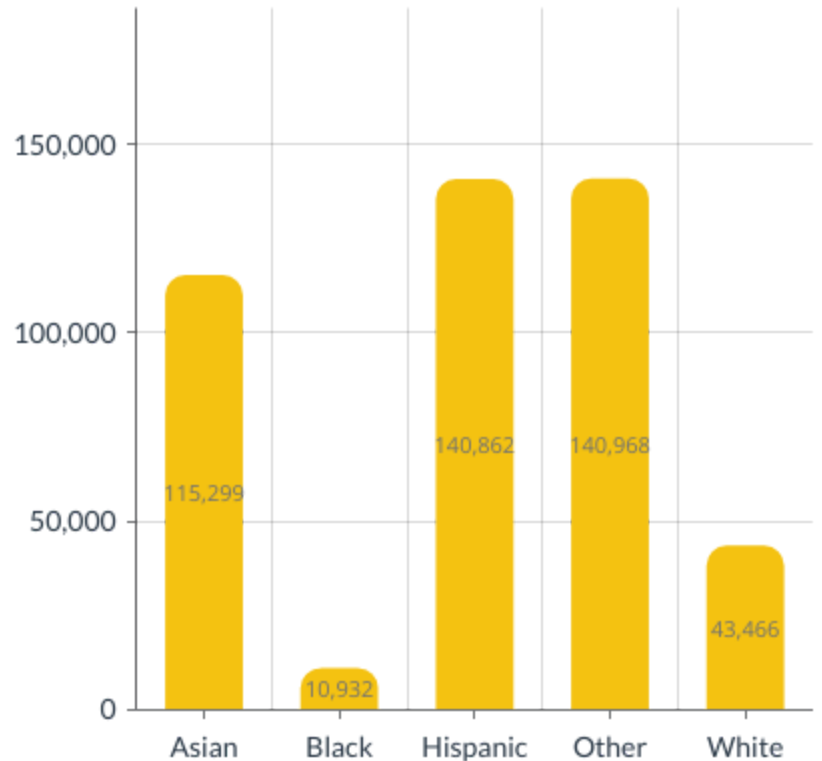
Medi-Cal - Demographics of Individuals Served

451,
527

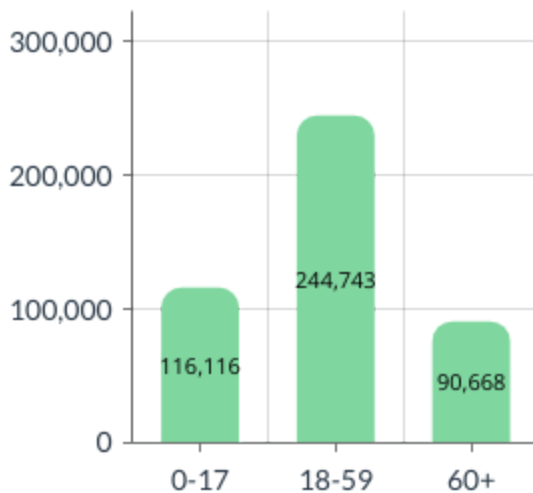
community
members

are covered by Medi-Cal.

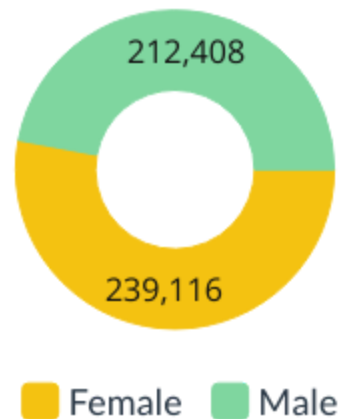
Ethnicity



Age



Gender





CalFresh provides individuals and families with greatly increased food purchasing power every month, making healthy diets affordable for low-income residents. Recipients use their Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card at participating grocery stores and farmer’s markets just like cash. EBT is accepted by some online retailers offering in-store pick up and/or delivery, which is an added convenience with today’s busy lifestyle, and particularly assists those with limited mobility or who are unable to travel. In addition, the Restaurant Meals Program allows elderly (aged 60 and over), disabled, and/or homeless participants to purchase hot, prepared food from participating local restaurants.

Increase in CalFresh Benefits

Every year, the maximum allotment for CalFresh Food benefits is updated based on the cost of the Thrifty Food Plan. The Thrifty Food Plan is one of four food plans the USDA develops that estimates the cost of a healthy diet across various price points – the Thrifty, Low-Cost, Moderate-Cost and Liberal Food Plans. The Thrifty Food Plan is the lowest cost of the four. It represents a nutritious, practical, cost-effective diet prepared at home for a “reference” family, which is defined as an adult male and female, ages 20-50, and two children, ages 6-8 and 9-11.

Due to inflation significantly increasing the cost of the Thrifty Food Plan, CalFresh benefits increased by 12.5% starting in October 2022—that’s the most significant increase since April 1979.

The new maximum benefit amount varies by family size, ranging from \$281 per month for one person to \$939 per month for a family of four, compared to \$250 per month for one person and \$835 per month for a family of four in the prior year. The amount of benefits that residents receive from CalFresh changes depends on gross income, net income and household size.

A Note from Our Partners at Second Harvest of Silicon Valley

At a time when CalFresh recipients are facing increased food and gas prices, COVID-19-era safety nets such as CalFresh Emergency Allotments have ended. This is putting a significant strain on household grocery budgets. In Santa Clara County, CalFresh households saw an average reduction of \$168* in monthly benefits once the Emergency Allotments ended in February 2023 – and that’s including the new increase in benefits.

SB 600 (Menjivar) would increase the minimum CalFresh benefit allotment from \$23 for an individual to \$50. Not only would this bill provide critical support for low-income individuals, it would also provide an economic boost to our economies. Every \$1 in CalFresh benefits generates as much as \$1.80 in GDP during an economic downturn, creating jobs for farmers, transportation, grocery, and other sectors.

Nutrition



CA Fruit and Vegetable EBT Pilot Program

For each \$1 of CalFresh EBT that they spend on CA-grown fruits and vegetables at participating grocery stores and farmers' markets, the Double-Up Food Bucks Program provides participants with \$1 in coupons to spend on any (not limited to CA-grown) fresh fruits and vegetables.

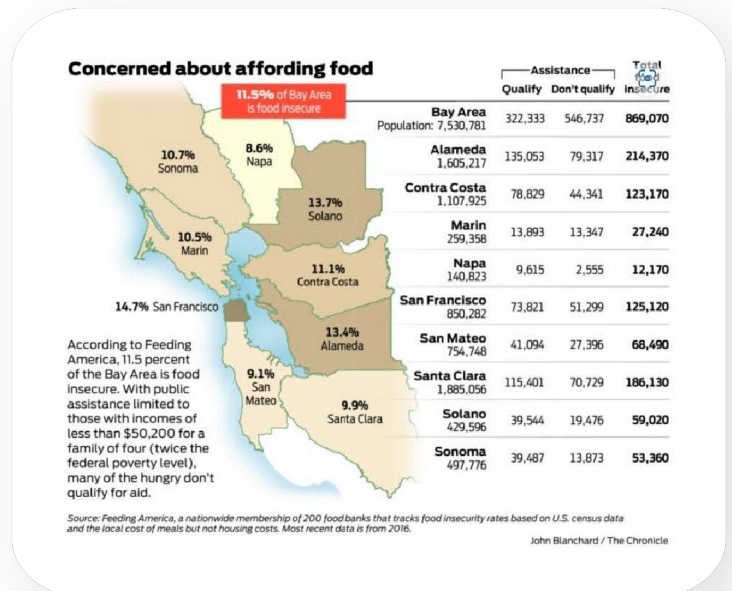
This incentive program doubles the value of CalFresh benefits so that participants can bring home even more fresh fruits and vegetables. The program has broad benefits: it makes healthy food more affordable for low-income families and individuals, supports economic development through grocery stores, and increases demand for California produce.

A roadblock to usage was that participants were required to use paper coupons. Thanks to a new innovation called the CA Fruit and Vegetable EBT Pilot Program, Santa Clara County is transitioning from a paper coupon-based program to an electronic program that is fully integrated within the EBT system. Customers earn bonus dollars when purchasing California grown produce and get an instant reimbursement to their EBT cards, up to \$60 per month.

This innovative new pilot program makes accessing benefits much easier for CalFresh Food participants, as participants will no longer have to remember to bring their paper coupons when they shop. Importantly as well, CalFresh Food recipients will not have to shop at a participating retailer to redeem bonus dollars; they can use these supplemental benefits at any EBT retailer. Finally, it is more administratively efficient, with Santa Clara County grocery partners reimbursed directly from the California Department of Social Services.

Food Insecurity

This year, over 120,000 individuals 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: 29% of CalFresh recipients are children aged 17 and under, and 33% are seniors aged 60 and over. CalFresh is a lifeline for low-income residents in our County who struggle with food insecurity and hunger.



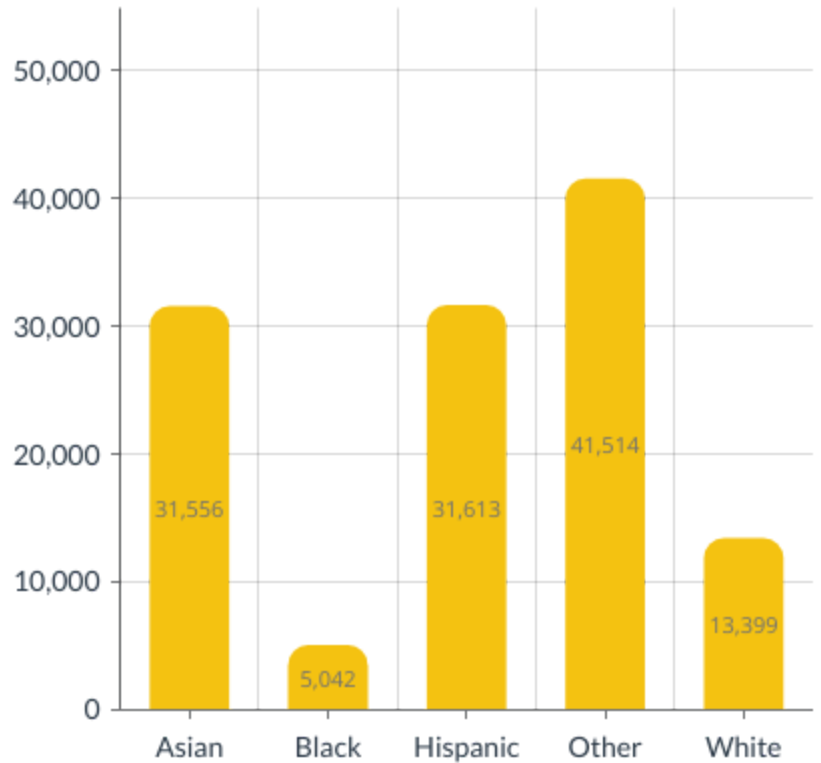
If you are hungry or food insecure, but don't qualify for CalFresh, please click below to contact Second Harvest of Silicon Valley to get the food you need.

[Second Harvest of Silicon Valley \(shfb.org\)](http://shfb.org)

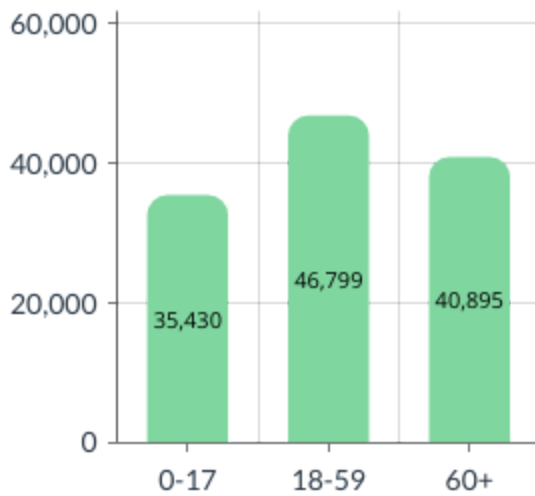
CalFresh - Demographics of Individuals Served

123,
124
community
members
participate in CalFRESH.

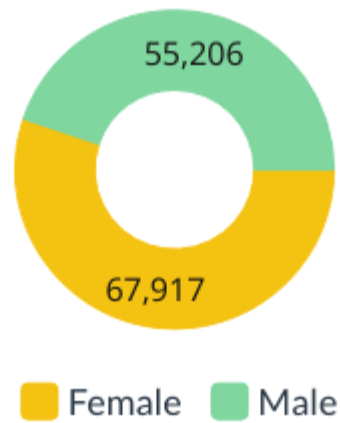
Ethnicity



Age



Gender





County of Santa Clara Social Services Agency

<https://socialservices.sccgov.org/home>

WE OFFER THESE SERVICES:



Healthcare



Food Assistance



Cash Assistance

An Eligibility Worker can assist you in finishing the application. The minimum requirements to submit an application are: name, address, and signature.

If you are without money for food, you may qualify for Expedited Service CalFresh Food benefits within 3 days of application.



Office Hours:
Monday to Friday | 8am-5pm



Online:
7 Days a Week | 24 Hours a Day

*Consulte el reverso para ver las traducciones al español y al vietnamita
Xem mặt sau cho tiếng Việt và Tây Ban Nha.*

To Apply or Keep Your Benefits CONTACT US:

Online

For all benefits: MyBenefitsCalWIN.org
For food assistance only: GetCalFresh.org



Phone

408-758-3800
For hearing impaired: 7-1-1



Submit Documents Online*

<https://ssadocupload.sccgov.org/DEBS>



Fax*

408-295-9248



Mail*

PO Box 11018, San Jose CA 95103



Office & Drop Box Locations*

Benefit Assistance Center

1867 Senter Rd, San Jose CA 95112

Continuing Benefit Services

1870 & 1877 Senter Rd, San Jose CA 95112

General Assistance Services

1919 Senter Rd, San Jose CA 95112

North County

1330 W Middlefield Rd, Mtn View CA 94043

South County

379 Tomkins Ct, Gilroy CA 95020

CalWORKs Employment Services

1879 Senter Rd, San Jose CA 95112

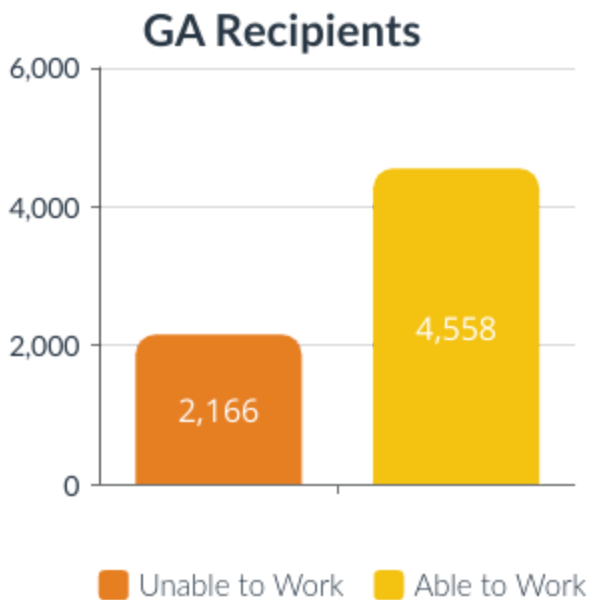


*Call 408-758-3800 to get an application mailed or pick it up in one of our lobbies

General Assistance

The General Assistance (GA) program provides services and financial assistance for adults with no dependents who are ineligible for state or federal cash assistance programs. The GA program is an important source of support for approximately 6,000 clients, many of whom are unhoused and seeking assistance with the basics of daily living.

Through the GA program, clients who are unhoused receive a cash grant of \$150 for personal needs, while clients with housing expenses receive up to \$343 per month. In addition to providing a cash grant, the GA program helps recipients get back on their feet by offering Vocational Services for those who can work, and SSI Advocacy for individuals who are not able to work.



SSI Advocacy

Approximately half of all GA clients are not able to work on a permanent basis. For these clients, qualifying for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) can be a life-changing event because it results in a continuing cash benefit that is much larger than the GA grant. Often, however, clients are not aware that they may be eligible for SSI or do not know how to apply.

The SSI Advocacy Program helps such clients navigate through the complex SSI process. After being screened for eligibility, clients are helped by specially trained Social Workers from initial application to resolution of appeal for SSI benefits.

Because the federal SSI program does not have deadlines for decisions on applications or appeals, it can take as long as two years for benefits to be awarded. While applications or appeals are pending, the Department's Social Workers connect GA recipients with community resources such as food banks, homeless shelters, and behavioral health programs.

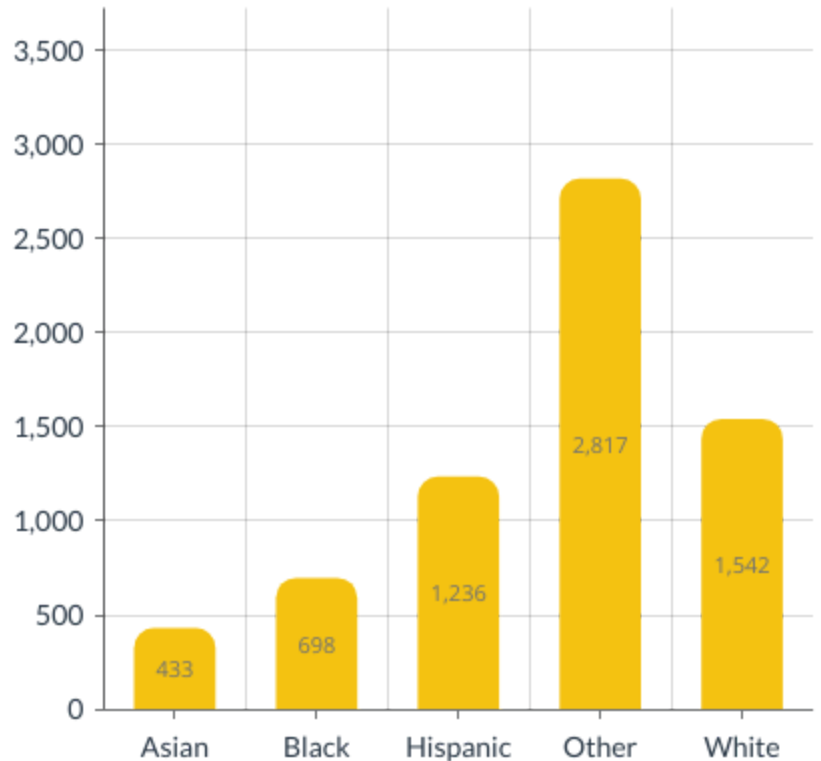
General Assistance - Demographics of Individuals Served

6,726

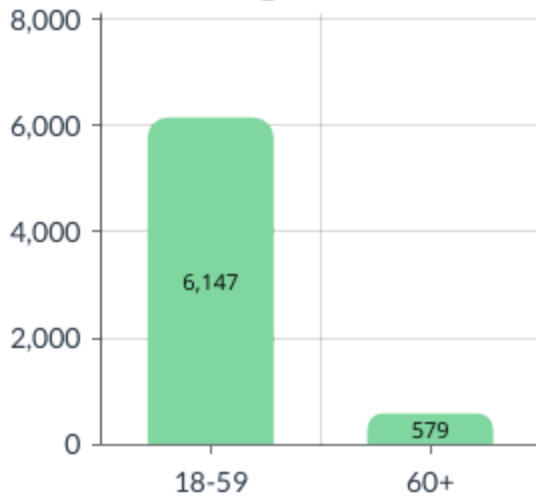
community members

participate in General Assistance every month. Approximately 50% of those community members are unhoused.

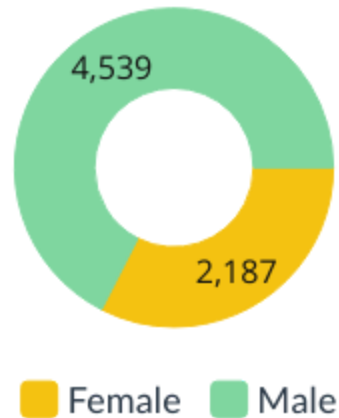
Ethnicity



Age



Gender





Employment Services

The County offers Employment Services to participants in the following programs: CalFresh, General Assistance, and CalWORKs.

CalFresh Employment and Training

The CalFresh Employment & Training (CFET) program provides CalFresh recipients who do not receive GA benefits with access to the skills training and supportive services they need to increase employability and decrease reliance on CalFresh benefits. The CFET program is funded by the United States Department of Agriculture through the Food and Nutrition Services.

The CFET program provides employment & training through activities such as Supervised Job Search, Apprenticeship/Pre-apprenticeships, Workfare, Subsidized Employment, Education, and Job Retention. Supportive services, including transportation and ancillary financial assistance for work-related items, are provided to active CFET participants to help reduce barriers to employment while preparing them to obtain the skills they need to attain financial self-sufficiency.

The County administers the CFET program with the assistance of seven external employment & training providers. The CFET Third-Party Partnership model supports collaboration between the County and local community-based organizations as we all co-invest in a broad array of employment services for CalFresh recipients.

These are the County's Third-Party Partners for CFET:

- Center for Employment Training
- Goodwill of Silicon Valley
- San Jose Conservation Corps + Charter School
- Sacred Heart Community Service
- JobTrain, Inc.
- Working Partnerships, USA and
- Rightvarsity Technologies, LLC.

General Assistance Vocational Services

Vocational Services serves dual benefits recipients of the General Assistance (GA) and CalFresh programs and is the County's internal version of the CFET program. However, unlike CFET, which is a voluntary program for CalFresh recipients, GA participants who are able to work must participate in Vocational Services as a condition of their GA benefit eligibility.

Job seekers in the GA program are assisted by Employment Counselors on every step of their employment journey. Members attend job workshops, apply for jobs online using computers at the Employment Readiness Center, and participate in mandatory work experience assignments. These activities help to re-engage GA clients back into the work world, build their confidence, and provide opportunities to receive positive references for future employment.

Employment Services



CalWORKs Employment Services

The CalWORKs (California Work Opportunities and Responsibility to Kids) program is a vital part of the County's safety net, especially for low-income children. CalWORKs' adult participants are responsible for dependent children under the age of 18 years old. Some of these participants are long-term recipients of cash aid, but the majority utilize CalWORKs to recover from economic crises caused by unexpected events such as layoffs, serious illness or accidents, and loss of a family wage-earner. .

CalWORKs Employment Services connects clients to education, support services, and employment. It doesn't solely help parents find and maintain employment; it also helps families overcome problems with housing that have arisen due to homelessness, rising rents, and the shortage of low-income housing.

In addition to employment and housing assistance, the CalWORKs program offers help with mental health and substance abuse, domestic abuse, and other situations which prevent a stable family life for children. The end goal of the CalWORKs program is financial self-sufficiency for the family, and an improved quality of life for the children.

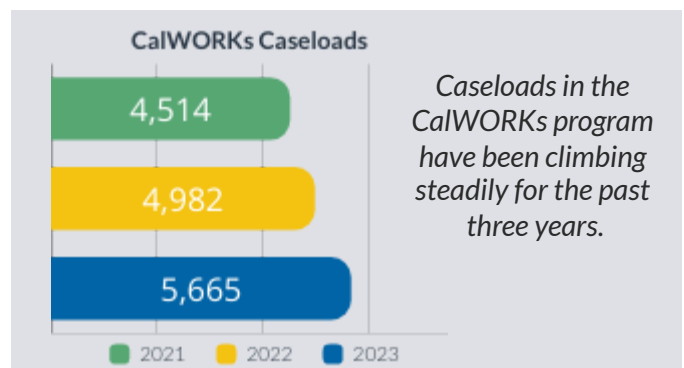
Cash Aid

CalWORKs job training and educational opportunities provide long-term value to families. However, those who participate in the program need the monthly cash grant to help them afford basic necessities now. Effective October 1, 2023, the Maximum Aid Payment for a family of 3 increased to \$1,171 per month.

Beginning May 1, 2022, adults became eligible to receive the CalWORKs cash grant for a maximum of 60 months under a new state law. This 60-month CalWORKs time limit replaces the 48-month time limit that was implemented on July 1, 2011. This is welcome news to CalWORKs families since, in some cases, 48 months is not enough time for a family to transition from poverty to self-sufficiency.

Unlike adults, children are eligible to receive the CalWORKs cash grant with no limitation if they are under 18 years old, or 18 years old but still in high school, or until age 19 if they did not graduate high school because of a disability.

In Santa Clara County, over 10,000 children under the age of 18 are enrolled in the CalWORKs program, along with about 4,000 adults who receive cash assistance. Almost all of these adults are required to participate in Employment Services as a condition of their cash aid. About 10% of aided adults are exempted from participation in work activities; for example, relatives who care for a child who is a ward of the state or is in danger of being placed in foster care (and whose care prevents work), disabled parents, and parents who are over the age of 60.





Employment Services

Tailored Services Lead to Successful Transitions and Improved Engagement

In order to best assist parents who are on the journey to financial independence, the CalWORKs program offers work plans that are tailored to the specific attributes of each family.

Participants work collaboratively with an Employment Counselor to assess their needs and develop individualized work plans that will help them meet their hourly work requirements and keep them moving toward their planned goals.

Work activities that support current or future employment goals are the core of each work plan. These activities may include direct links to subsidized or unsubsidized employment, educational opportunities that lead to high school or post-secondary degrees, or vocational training programs that will prepare participants for specific career fields. Work plans identify supportive services including childcare, transportation, and ancillary payments to help pay for work and education related expenses.

While some families are able to participate in work activities immediately, others require more substantial support to address acute crises. These families are eligible to receive Family Stabilization Services to help overcome significant barriers. Wrap-around services for these families include housing support, behavioral health services, substance abuse services and domestic violence advocacy.

Improved engagement in the CalWORKs program is supported by a client-centric approach focusing on in-person contact between participants and Employment Counselors, developing rapport, establishing good working relationships, and fostering participation and accountability.

Cal-OAR: Continuous Improvement for Evolving Needs

One of the hallmarks of a good program is continuous improvement. The CalWORKs Outcomes and Accountability Review (Cal-OAR) is a state-led project to ensure continuous quality improvement and better client outcomes.

Cal-OAR consists of three core components: performance indicators, a county CalWORKs self-assessment, and a CalWORKs system improvement plan. Employment Services is participating fully in every step of the Cal-OAR process. We are excited by the opportunity for improvement that Cal-OAR represents and look forward to the improvements that Cal-OAR will bring to CalWORKs families throughout the County.



The image at left depicts the steps of the Cal-OAR process for best practices. Please click the image for up-to-date information about this important initiative.

Employment Services

Employment Connection Center

The Employment Connection Center (ECC) provides job readiness, job development, job placement, and job retention services to support CalWORKs families on their path to self-sufficiency.

Over the past year, as the community has continued to work towards pandemic recovery, the ECC has prioritized in-person workshops and promoted job readiness events, offering both in-person and virtual employment recruitment events. The ECC has leveraged remote and virtual resources to provide job announcement sessions and weekly employer meet-and-greets, where job seekers and hiring managers come together in a convenient format.

Employment Connection promotes both unsubsidized and subsidized employment. In addition, paid work experience (PWEX) continues to be a great avenue for job seekers who are looking to develop new skills and earn a reference. Thanks to the high demand for PWEX participants in County and non-profit sites alike, any eligible participant can be matched to a PWEX placement.

For PWEX workers on County sites, this experience is invaluable preparation for the Employment Support Unclassified Program (ESUP). ESUP provides a modified hiring process for qualified candidates to land unclassified County employment. The ECC's ESUP coordinators work closely with the Employee Services Agency to match eligible job seekers to open County positions. These unclassified opportunities lead to permanent County jobs for participants upon successful completion of their probationary period.

ECC's relationships with organizations outside the County also allow for a wide array of unsubsidized job opportunities. The Employer Relations team maintains open job orders with employers who are actively hiring, and is always on the lookout for new partnerships. Employer Relations Specialists seek out openings based on client interest and demographics, including accessibility to their homes and via public transportation. This past year, ECC has partnered with over 120 unique employers and worksites to bring meaningful employment opportunities to adult and youth job seekers.

Many employers continue to utilize remote resources as they screen applicants for openings. Competitive candidates need to know how to properly interview remotely and have access to the tools and resources to do so successfully. The ECC has integrated remote interviewing into job readiness workshops called Job Club. Job seekers learn tips from Employment Counselors on how to connect and set a good impression "through the screen," from posture to lighting to backgrounds. Onsite at the ECC, virtual interviewing spaces are available to job seekers, complete with computers, cameras, and headsets. Employment Counselors offer practice interviews both in-person and virtually, so job seekers are prepared for whatever modality an employer may prefer.

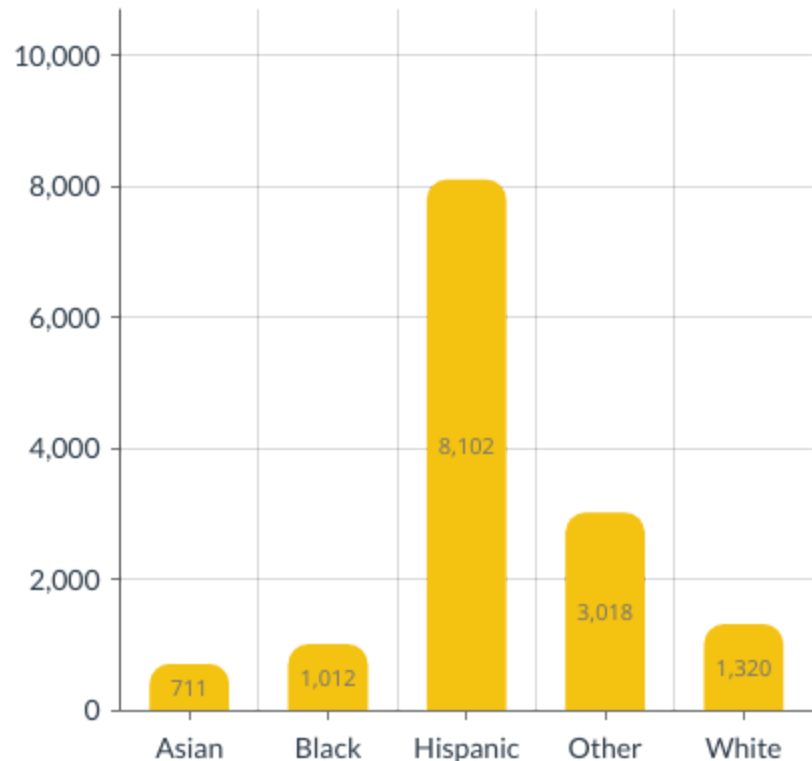
Looking ahead, the ECC will continue to prioritize in-person workshops and promote job readiness events to assist clients as they prepare to enter their desired vocation. This will be done to ensure they are being properly matched to a position of interest, and so they will be equipped with the industry specific skills that will make them serious and competitive candidates who can meet the employer's needs. In addition, the ECC will continue to strengthen and grow employer partnerships to provide clients with meaningful connections to employers in high demand and industry leading job markets.

CalWORKs - Demographics of Individuals Served

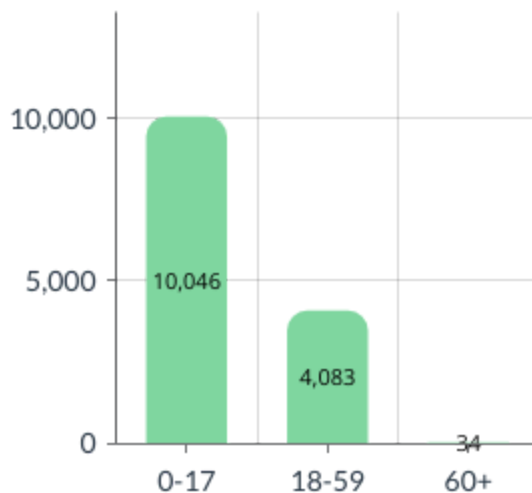
**14,
163**
community
members

*participate in CalWORKs
(about 75% of whom are
children). About 4,000 adults
receive cash aid and participate
in Employment Services.*

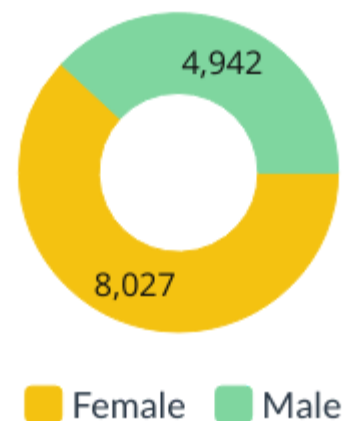
Ethnicity



Age



Gender





Child Care

Child care is an important work support for parents who are on the path to financial self-sufficiency. However, the cost of market-rate child care is a significant barrier for many families, especially here in the Bay Area where the cost of living is so high. In partnership with the Santa Clara County Office of Education and First 5 of Santa Clara County, the CalWORKs program removes this barrier by providing families with access to immediate and continuous child care as the parent works or participates in employment-related activities,

Utilizing its comprehensive database of child care providers, the Santa Clara County Office of Education provides information about potential providers to parents looking for child care.

First 5 of Santa Clara County (F5SCC) manages a variety of programs and family resource centers to promote the health, education, and care of young children. Through the Quality Matters (QM) initiative, F5SCC trains and supports local early educators and caregivers so that they have the tools to provide high quality early learning and care. F5SCC shares an updated list of QM-certified child care providers with CalWORKs staff quarterly, offering child care to families seeking to attend school or participate in work related activities.

As a result of these collaborative partnerships, high-quality care is available and accessible for CalWORKs families. When children are well cared for and their families can pursue work or school, families thrive, and communities prosper. We will continue to invest in these critical resources to support families in the child care decision-making process and their journey toward self-sufficiency.



Please click on the image above for more information about the Childcare Resource and Referral program.



Please click on the image above for more information about the First 5 program.



Refugee Employment Services

The Refugee Employment Services Program (RESP) has been providing economic support and social integration services to refugees since the 1980s. The purpose of the RESP program is to assist incoming refugees in successfully integrating with Santa Clara County, and to help these new members of the community establish a connection with the community so they can thrive and become self-sufficient. This is done by providing a direct link to local benefits and resources designed to promote independent living, including financial assistance, housing, and employment. New arrivals receive Refugee Vocational English as a Second Language, job readiness training, career counseling, job placement and employment retention services.

Extension of Cash Benefits

Effective October 1, 2021, the benefit eligibility period for Refugee Cash Assistance clients increased from eight months to twelve months. This extended eligibility period provides refugees with additional time to connect with full-time employment.

Funding

This year, funding for RESP increased from \$380,209 to \$722,073. These funds are being used to assist the influx of newly arrived refugees. The County received \$2,000,000 in one-time funding to provide for the emergency needs of the many new families from Afghanistan and the Ukraine.



The County of Santa Clara partners with the International Rescue Committee-San Jose and Jewish Family Services of Silicon Valley to provide services to refugees.



Please click on the video above to watch "A Welcoming Home in Santa Clara County: Tahmina's Story."

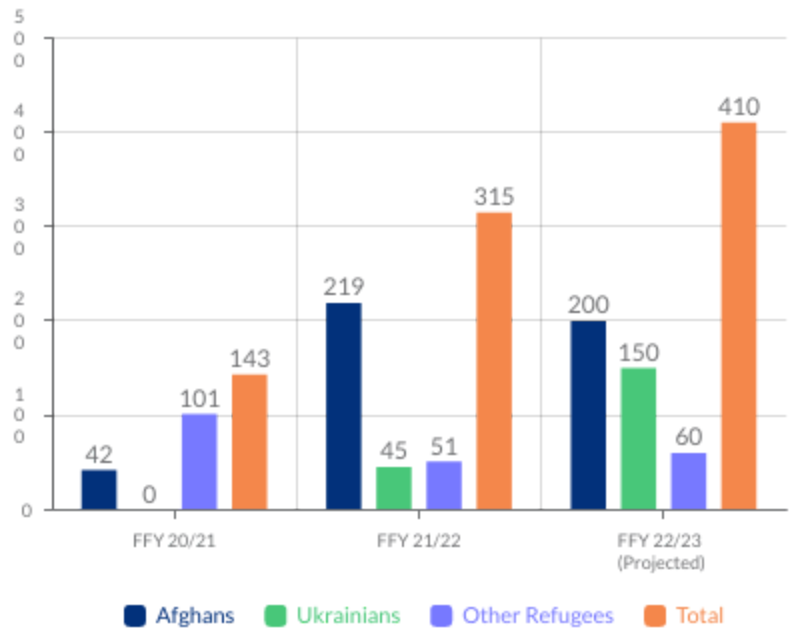
Refugee Employment Services

Increased Enrollment

During the past federal fiscal year (FFY), the Refugee Employment Services program experienced an expansion that exceeded early service projections. The 3-year enrollment trend is shown at right.

In addition to receiving assistance with employment and other resettlement services, approximately 25 refugee families have been placed in permanent housing this year.

Refugee Employment Services Program Enrollment
FFY 2020-2023



Welcome Corps

In January 2023, the U.S. Department of State launched the Welcome Corps. This is a new program that empowers everyday Americans to welcome refugees arriving through the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP). Refugees receive initial assistance and basic services through the USRAP through professional resettlement agencies or by private Welcome Corps sponsors.

In addition to providing core private sponsorship services, private sponsors connect refugee newcomers directly to their communities, helping them build a social network, become self-sufficient, and gain a stronger sense of belonging. These shared acts of welcome strengthen communities and build support for refugee protection by directly involving private citizens in refugee resettlement.



Housing



The cost of housing is very challenging for many County residents, but it is particularly felt by CalWORKs families. To help address the high cost of housing in Santa Clara County, the CalWORKs program provides temporary housing and homeless prevention assistance to housed families through the Family Stabilization Housing Assistance Program (FS), and support to homeless CalWORKs families through the CalWORKs Housing Support Program (CHSP).

The CalWORKs program's housing assistance enables families to move from shelters, motels, cars, and the streets, to a safe, secure home of their own. Families are provided with interim housing that enables them to stabilize their living conditions and begin the search for a new home with the support of the Abode Services team. Once permanently housed, families are given rent subsidies and housing case management services to support their efforts to become financially self-sufficient.

Monthly requests received from homeless CalWORKs families for housing assistance continue to rise. From February 2020 to February 2023, families referred to CHSP increased by 87%. During that same time period, the number of families receiving ongoing rental assistance rose 60% and families engaged in a search for housing rose 120% on a monthly basis. Almost 500 families have been assisted with housing this year.



Please click on the video above to see the inspirational story of a single father who established a home for himself and his daughter, began earning a living wage and benefits at a full-time job, and became financially self-sufficient with the help of the CalWORKs program.

Housing



New Services

During the past year, new services and benefits became available to help support families facing homelessness. Through a collaboration with the Office of Supportive Housing (OSH), CalWORKs families who are at-risk of homelessness have been referred to Sacred Heart Community Services. At Sacred Heart, families are triaged and assisted financially with past-due rent or are referred to other County homeless programs for assistance.

Emergency Housing Vouchers have provided a life-changing opportunity to over 140 CalWORKs families during the past two years. These federally funded vouchers provide a 10-year rental subsidy for qualified CalWORKs families. What is important about these housing vouchers is that they target families who have been assessed as being the most vulnerable and least likely to independently sustain their housing after the end of their CHSP rental assistance. With the help of these vouchers, families are provided with substantial additional time to find long-term solutions to their housing challenges.

New Families

In early 2022, refugee families from Afghanistan began arriving and seeking assistance with housing and their transition to life in this country. During the past program year, these families have been joined by Ukrainian families fleeing war in their country.

These families face many new challenges including learning a new language and customs, finding employment commensurate with their training and work experience, and affording the cost of suitable housing for families of sometimes five or more members. This year, through the collaboration between CalWORKs, Abode Services, and local refugee resettlement agencies such as the International Rescue Committee and Jewish Family Services of Silicon Valley, approximately 25 refugee families have been placed in permanent housing.

496 families

were assisted with housing by CalWORKs housing programs this year.



of unhoused families enrolled in CalWORKs Housing Support

have children aged 5 years old and younger.

Housing



Housing and Disability Access Program

The Housing and Disability Advocacy Program (HDAP) supports the efforts of disabled individuals to obtain federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits. This is done in partnership with Abode Services and the Office of Supportive Housing who secure stable housing for these individuals while the Department's SSI Advocacy unit assists participants with the SSI application process.

This year, the HDAP program placed 73 individuals in permanent housing and 154 individuals in interim housing. Many of these vulnerable residents were placed in Permanent Supportive Housing units made available through the County's Office of Supportive Housing department.

227 *disabled individuals*

were placed into homes by the Housing and Disability Access Program this year.

Please click on the image above for more information about Abode Services.



County of Santa Clara
Office of Supportive Housing

Please click on the image above for more information about Supportive Housing.

The CalWORKs housing assistance programs represent the collaborative efforts of the Department's CalWORKs Family Services and Employment Connection Center Units together with our nonprofit housing services partner, Abode Services, and the County's Office of Supportive Housing's Rapid Rehousing team.



COUNTY OF SANTA CLARA INTERN & EARN

Employment at an early age can have a positive impact on an individual's career path and raise their future earning potential. Studies have also shown that youth unemployment can have long-lasting negative effects. With these statistics in mind, the Department developed the Intern & Earn program, designed to help disadvantaged youth explore and find success within a variety of career options. This program offers disadvantaged youth, aged 16-24 and enrolled in the CalFresh, CalWORKs, or Foster Care programs, with an opportunity to attain practical work experience, build their soft skills, and obtain valuable mentorship and guidance.

Over the past year, approximately 400 youth participated in the Intern and Earn program, gaining valuable experience at their worksites while earning \$18.50 per hour for up to 30 hours per week. Through strong community partnerships, interns were connected to a variety of positions. Interns seized the opportunity to explore, and learn how to succeed, in the government, food services, animal care, retail, education, transportation, nonprofit, technology, healthcare, and legal industries while alleviating the financial strain on their families. The money youth participants earned help them save for college, take care of personal needs, and contribute to the household income.

To meet the unique needs of these adolescents, staff applied a youth-centered lens to the County of Santa Clara Intern and Earn program decision-making process. Through direct engagement, these young people are encouraged to identify challenges, explore strategic approaches to any situation, and are supported in the development and design of their potential solutions. For example, interns were tasked with creating digital marketing material to promote the County of Santa Clara's Intern and Earn program on multiple media platforms. Through peer collaboration, interns have created several projects this year (featured on the next page).

SSA remains dedicated to empowering young people by encouraging the county's most vulnerable youth population to build a solid work foundation and to be prepared to meet the demands of the local labor market. Offering internships that help them to develop their skills, expand their network, and increase their work-related knowledge creates a productive space for youth to learn and grow.

In addition, by taking advantage of providing opportunities to influence program improvement strategies, the youth are better positioned to effect meaningful programmatic changes that can assist others with similar lived-experiences and from similar socio-economic backgrounds. This unique approach helps youth gain a sense of purpose and accomplishment, and allows them to have a positive impact on the program and its future participants.

County of Santa Clara Intern & Earn

Please click at right to watch videos made by some of the talented young people who participated in the 2023 Intern & Earn program.



County of Santa Clara Intern & Earn

Every year, the team behind Intern & Earn (I&E) logs many hours in an effort to recruit eligible youth into the program. This year, Employment Counselors worked a booth at the Viva Calle event in central San Jose to help increase enrollment as one of I&E's outreach events.

At Viva Calle, the team distributed about 400 flyers and postcards, along with pens, stickers, and water bottles. They engaged with adult community members including teachers, other County staff, school staff running after school programs, and other individuals with large social networks. They even bartered I&E branded water bottles with these adults in exchange for promoting Intern & Earn information to their networks!

Youth at the event expressed excitement about the prospect of participating in I&E. One student said, **"I've been looking for an internship, this is great."** A former participant from 2016, now 23 years old, told the team: **"I did the program a few years ago and that's what started my work career."**

I&E helps disrupt the cycle of generational poverty by providing 400 low-income youth every year with valuable work experience, the opportunity to earn their own money, and workshops and mentorship about how to be successful in the workplace. Outreach events such as this are a critical part of the process.



2023 Policy Changes

Assembly Bill (AB) 79 Medi-Cal/CalFresh Dual Enrollment

The AB 79 Medi-Cal/CalFresh dual enrollment became effective January 1, 2023. AB 79 aims to connect Medi-Cal applicants and recipients to CalFresh and assist them through the application process to increase participation in the CalFresh program.

AB 79 requires counties to provide Medi-Cal recipients who are potentially eligible for CalFresh with the opportunity to apply for CalFresh at the same time their Medi-Cal determination (RD) is processed.

CalWORKs Resource Limit

Effective January 1, 2023, the CalWORKs resource limit has increased from \$10,211 to \$10,888, and \$15,317 to \$16,333 for Assistance Units that include at least one member who is aged 60 or older or disabled, for CalWORKs applicants and recipients.

CalFresh Emergency Allotment

The consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023 ended the CalFresh Emergency Allotment after the issuance of February 2023 benefits. February 2023 Emergency Allotment was issued to clients on March 26, 2023. Beginning April 2023, CalFresh benefits returned to the regular amount.

Medi-Cal Non-MAGI Asset Test Waiver


The Department of Health Care Services received temporary federal approval to waive the asset test for Non-MAGI Medi-Cal recipients at their next redetermination. This flexibility is effective March 1, 2023, through December 31, 2023, until the elimination of the asset limit for all Non-MAGI programs on January 1, 2024.

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

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




Visit our website



**Home - Social Services Agency -
County of Santa Clara**

County of Santa Clara Social Services
Agency

 sccgov.org

A screenshot of a website header. On the left is a circular logo with a sun, a bridge, and a river. To the right of the logo is the text "Home - Social Services Agency - County of Santa Clara" in bold, followed by "County of Santa Clara Social Services Agency" in a smaller font. At the bottom right of the header is a small globe icon followed by the URL "sccgov.org".

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