

JULY 1, 2020

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ALL COUNTY INFORMATION NOTICE NO. I-55-20

The purpose of this All-County Information Notice (ACIN) is to provide counties information about a new resource available to help engage CalWORKs Welfare-to-Work, CalFresh E&T, and Refugee Cash Assistance clients in remote and distance learning activities called Cell-Ed.



KIM JOHNSON
DIRECTOR

STATE OF CALIFORNIA—HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
744 P Street • Sacramento, CA 95814 • www.cdss.ca.gov



GAVIN NEWSOM
GOVERNOR

JULY 1, 2020

ALL COUNTY INFORMATION NOTICE NO. I-55-20

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS
ALL COUNTY WELFARE TO WORK COORDINATORS
ALL COUNTY CALWORKS PROGRAM SPECIALISTS
ALL COUNTY CONSORTIA REPRESENTATIVES
ALL COUNTY REFUGEE COORDINATORS
ALL COUNTY CALFRESH SPECIALISTS
ALL TRIBAL TANF ADMINISTRATORS

SUBJECT: DISTANCE LEARNING VIA CELL-ED FOR CALIFORNIA WORK OPPORTUNITY AND RESPONSIBILITY TO KIDS (CalWORKs), REFUGEE CASH ASSISTANCE (RCA), CALFRESH EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING (E&T), AND TRAFFICKING AND CRIME VICTIMS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (TCVAP) PARTICIPANTS

REFERENCE: MANUAL OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES (MPP) SECTION [42-711.8](#), [42-716.62](#), [42-716.621](#), [42-750](#) AND [69-207.121](#); [ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS LETTER \(MARCH 30, 2020\) FOR WTW](#); [CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES \(TANF\) PROGRAM WORK VERIFICATION PLAN](#); [DISTANCE LEARNING STUDENT RESOURCE GUIDE](#); [EXECUTIVE ORDER N-33-20](#); [ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS LETTER CALFRESH EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING: FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2020 PLANNING KICK-OFF](#); [FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING TOOLKIT](#)

The purpose of this All-County Information Notice (ACIN) is to provide counties information about a new resource available to help engage CalWORKs, CalFresh E&T, RCA, and TCVAP clients in remote and distance learning activities called Cell-Ed. This letter highlights the features and programs available through Cell-Ed, how counties can access the application, how to engage clients with the application, and how progress will be tracked and verified through the application.

BACKGROUND

On March 19, 2020, Governor Gavin Newsom issued [Executive Order N-33-20](#), which advised all non-essential California residents to remain in their residences in an effort to reduce the spread of COVID-19. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the executive order, California County Welfare Departments (CWDs) have continued to assist clients by providing work readiness, skill building, and education programs through online and mobile technology platforms. The CDSS issued an [ACWDL on March 30, 2020 for WTW](#), which provides CWDs additional flexibility to serve their clients during the COVID-19 pandemic, including the ability to serve clients remotely through telephone interviews, electronic signatures, and distance learning activities. As CWDs continue to seek service solutions that allow for social distancing and provide the ability to meet the increasing demand for services while facing significant workforce capacity challenges, CDSS has invested in a mobile application and text messaging platform called Cell-Ed.

CELL-ED

CDSS has partnered with Cell-Ed to provide program participants the opportunity to receive education and training through their electronic device to build skills and engage in countable WTW participation hours while sheltering or caring for others at home during the COVID-19 pandemic. Cell-Ed is a voluntary learning program that enables adults to acquire essential skills in various courses via distance learning on a mobile device. The list of programs and courses available on Cell-Ed include:

- English on the Go (offered from Levels 1 through 6)
 - Spanish-to-English bridging
- Basic Literacy:
 - Math for Daily Life
 - Reading & Writing
 - Social Studies
- Work Ready Skills
- U.S. Citizenship & Civics Courses
- COVID-19 Best Practices and Preventative Measures
 - Offered in English, Spanish, and French (more languages to come)

All courses are pre-recorded and developed by content experts with experience in Adult Basic Education, Language Learning, and Mobile Learning. The COVID-19 courses were developed using information available through the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) and [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#), which have been reviewed by certified health experts and epidemiologists. Also available to clients are coaches, who are available at any time via live chat through the application or through

text messaging. Coaches are bilingual and will assist participants step-by-step through course content and are available for any questions. The CDSS partnership with Cell-Ed is currently providing full access for free to all counties through June 2021, with a possible extension if the program is proven effective with positive feedback.

COUNTY ACCESS TO CELL-ED

Counties can register with Cell-Ed by signing up through the [Cell-Ed](#) website or sending an email to california@cell-ed.com. Once registered, counties will have access to the online toolkit, which will provide more information on Cell-Ed content, recordings of training webinars, FAQs, how to onboard county staff and Community Based Organizations, and resources to onboard learners. Counties will have full access to the Cell-Ed program beginning July 1, 2020. Currently, there is no limit to the amount of county staff that can register. County registrations and access permissions to Cell-Ed will be at the discretion of the county and their needs. For data sharing purposes, Cell-Ed will need to enter into county level data sharing agreements with CWDs in order to access and share personal data.

CLIENTS ENGAGED IN CELL-ED

To sign up and engage in Cell-Ed, participants will need a mobile phone with texting capability. If participants own a smartphone, they will be able to download the Cell-Ed mobile application in their device's Application Store for free or can access Cell-Ed through the WhatsApp application. If participants do not own a smartphone, they can use any mobile phone to use Cell-Ed's call-in and text version that uses a combination of regular phone calls and text messaging. Participants can also access Cell-Ed through an internet connected computer or tablet. Should clients require additional resources to utilize Cell-Ed, CDSS has uploaded a [Distance Learning Student Resource Guide](#), which contains information on companies providing free or low-cost internet access as well as other resources for students affected by COVID-19. There is currently no limit to how many participants can sign up for Cell-Ed.

Once registered, clients will answer a few assessment questions that will determine the appropriate courses based on their answers, interests, and abilities. Each course is made up of multiple units, and units are made up of multiple lessons. Lessons typically are only a few minutes long while entire courses can range from 10 to 25 hours long. As clients go through their courses, they will be awarded with badges and certificates of completion. Any progress a client makes on a course will be saved and can be accessed across different platforms, which allows clients to be able to continue where they left off when switching devices.

USING CELL-ED TO MEET CALWORKS WTW ACTIVITIES AND REFUGEE SUPPORT SERVICES REQUIREMENTS

Cell-Ed and other distance learning activities may count toward an individual's work participation requirements when the distance learning programs meet the definitions of the respective activities provided in MPP Section [42-716.62](#). Cell-Ed courses may count as the following WTW activities:

- Adult Basic Education
- Job Search and Job Readiness
- Job Skills Training
- Education Directly Related to Employment
- Vocational Education
- Secondary Education or the Equivalent
- English as a Second Language (ESL)

FEDERAL REPORTING AND VERIFICATION OF HOURS USING CELL-ED

Cell-Ed may count as, but is not limited to, the following federal core activities: Vocational Education (12-month lifetime total), Job Search and Job Readiness. For federal non-core activities, Cell-Ed may count as, but is not limited to, the following: Job Skills Training, Education Directly Related to Employment, and Satisfactory Progress in Secondary School or the Equivalent, when appropriate. These activities provided through Cell-Ed may count towards the Work Participation Rate (WPR) or RSS employment requirements provided that the participation can be verified and documented in accordance with the [CDSS TANF Program WVP](#). The WVP provides specific requirements and documentation needed for activities completed as distance learning. For federally countable Vocational Education specifically, Cell-Ed meets the definition of a vocational-technical school, as required under the WVP. For federal data reporting purposes, participation in a WTW activity through distance learning must be monitored by the service provider and reported to the CWD and documented in the case file.

Cell-Ed has the capacity to provide CWDs with acceptable documentation to verify client participation and meet federal reporting requirements noted in the WVP. By visiting the [Cell-Ed Portal](#), CWDs can generate data reports, track learner progress, and check learner registration. Through these data reports, CWDs will have access to information on which courses a learner completed, the total time spent on Cell-Ed during a specific time period, and information to identify each individual learner. CWDs should not reach out to the participant for any additional documentation to verify participation.

USING CELL-ED TO ENGAGE CLIENTS IN CALFRESH E&T ACTIVITIES

Cell-Ed is an allowable CalFresh E&T activity under the Education, Supervised Job Search, and Vocational Training components. The following list includes the components and corresponding activities that Cell-Ed will offer to counties and their CalFresh E&T participants:

- Education
 - Basic Skills and Literacy Attainment Activities
 - ESL Activity
- Supervised Job Search
 - Job Readiness and Job Skills Training Activities
 - Soft Skill Development
- Vocational Training
 - Training Activity in a Vocation or Trade
 - Certificate Attainment for Vocation or Trade

Cell-Ed, through distance learning, meets the requirements and has been approved by CDSS as a solution for counties to offer allowable CalFresh E&T activities to eligible participants. Cell-Ed can be administered locally as an optional service made available to participants through certain providers and partners or as part of a larger CalFresh E&T program. Cell-Ed can be used as a communication tool through the text messaging and push notification capabilities to help satisfy the Case Management requirements. Push notifications and text messages to and from clients can be accessed and saved, serving as case notation for monitoring participant progress. Utilization of these additional communication features can help CWDs in engaging participants with Cell-Ed and encourages participant use of the tool more broadly.

CALFRESH E&T IMPLEMENTATION AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS USING CELL-ED

CWDs as well as contracted and third-party partners may provide Cell-Ed alongside services currently offered as part of their CalFresh E&T program or CWDs, specifically new CalFresh E&T CWDs, can use Cell-Ed as their primary CalFresh E&T program. CWDs currently administering CalFresh E&T are not required to update their current Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 20 Annual Plan if they choose to offer Cell-Ed as part of their CalFresh E&T program however counties will need to include Cell-Ed in their [FFY 21 Annual Plan under Part I: E&T Program Overview Subparts A \(Program Summary\) and B \(Program Changes\)](#). Questions on how to complete the Annual Plan can be directed to the CalFresh E&T team at CalFreshEandT@dss.ca.gov.

CWDs may access aggregate level reports and data through the Cell-Ed application to assist in populating the Annual CalFresh E&T Outcome Metrics Report and the STAT 47 quarterly report. The Cell-Ed aggregate level reports may serve as data validation for both reports and should be referenced upon submission to CDSS. Data in the Cell-Ed aggregate level reports will include, but will not be limited to, information such as component enrollment and completion dates, component progress, and basic skills attainment. For more information on data and reporting requirements for CalFresh E&T please contact the CalFresh E&T team at CalFreshEandT@dss.ca.gov.

SUPPORTIVE SERVICES FOR CALFRESH E&T AND CALWORKS PARTICIPANTS

CalWORKs participants assigned to Cell-Ed courses as part of their program activity are eligible for supportive services as highlighted in MPP Section [42-750](#), including childcare and ancillary expenses. CalFresh E&T participants assigned to Cell-Ed as part of their E&T activity are also eligible for supportive services as detailed in the [Food and Nutrition Service \(FNS\) Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program \(SNAP\) E&T Toolkit](#). Ancillary expenses, for both CalWORKs and CalFresh E&T participants, may include providing a mobile phone or phone and internet service for participants to connect to Cell-Ed.

For more information on the Cell-Ed program, adding custom courses to Cell-Ed, or offering Cell-Ed to clients, please visit the [Cell-Ed](#) website or contact Cell-Ed at california@cell-ed.com or at (213) 325-3311.

If you have any questions or need additional guidance regarding the information in this letter, contact the Engagement Bureau at (916) 654-2137 or the Refugee Programs Bureau at (916) 654-4356 or RPB@dss.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Original Document Signed By

JENNIFER HERNANDEZ
Deputy Director
Family Engagement and Empowerment Division