



CCWRO Welfare News-2021-05

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Counties Erect Barriers To Prevent Needy Californians From Receiving Basic Survival Assistance

Unlike the overwhelming applications for Unemployment Insurance Benefits that EDD received during the pandemic, CalWORKs and CalFresh applications did not grow although the need for CalWORKs and CalFresh skyrocketed. People in the Capitol and Administration have wondered why applications for public assistance did not increase.

From the perspective of a poor person needing assistance, the problem is obvious. Counties closed their doors to the needy. Welfare offices in just about every county made their customers complete the application process on-line. Although counties may have provided paper applications outside the shuttered welfare offices for applicants to complete and then place in the mail drop, the counties required telephonic or on-line interviews. Those who made this decision thought that relying exclusively on online applications was a good enough solution because they all have smart phones, iPads, and one or more computers at home with access to the internet. To those armed with so many gadgets and resources, it is easy to assume that everybody else is in the same place. However, even the homeless people that had phones did not have the ability to recharge them since the usual locations with access to a charger were unable. Facilities such as libraries, shopping malls and Starbucks were closed to in-person traffic.

Although the welfare departments were closed to their in-person customers, the welfare departments continued to operate, albeit with a small staff. The law in California is clear.

Under state law counties must give applicants and recipients access to the welfare office during regular working hours. Per *Blanco v. Anderson* (Court Order, United States District Court, Eastern District

of California, No. CIV-S-93-859 WBS, JFM, dated January 3, 1995) E.A.S. 11-601 (d), CDSS and the Department of Health Services are enjoined by a court order including provisions for providing services to clients under Medi-Cal as well as Food Stamp and AFDC programs. The order requires that notices posted by the CWD offices inform the public of the provisions specified in Sections 11-601.314(a), (b), and (c) include information regarding Medi-Cal and emergency medical services.

Additionally EAS §11-601.312 requires that counties:

“Provide individuals the opportunity to file an application for and receive expedited Food Stamp, immediate need AFDC, and/or homeless assistance benefits within the time limits prescribed by federal and state law.

(a) Maintain sufficient staff to accept and act upon all such applications, and/or

(b) Maintain a local telephone service with sufficient staff to accept and act upon all such applications as if such requests had been made in person at the CWD’s office.”

This regulation also cites to Welfare and Institutions Code Sections 10553, 10554, 18902 and 18904.

While many state office opened their doors to Californians in need, like DMV, the most county welfare offices to date, in blatant violation of state laws and regulations, are still shut down.

Why? Good question.

CalWORKs & CalFresh Procedural Denials = California child poverty

Former CDSS Director Marion Woods institutionalized statistical reporting during the first Jerry Brown administration during 1972 through 1980. Data from CDSS published on CDSS's web page provides helpful insights to how the county welfare administrators abuse California's impoverished. According to CDSS statistical reports, statewide, 50% of the CalWORKs application denials in December 2020 were the result of applicants failing to meet county procedural requirements and not because they were ineligible.

For example, Butte County denied 135 cases. Of those, 111 denials resulted from the applicant allegedly failing to meet the county's procedural requirements, all while the county blatantly violated State Regulation EAS §11-601.11 et. seq requiring office access during the pandemic when most counties shut their doors to the needy of California. 77% of applications in Kern County were rejected for failing to meet county procedural requirement. Stanislaus County's procedural denial rate was 61%. On the other hand, San Diego County's procedural denial rate was 28%, Alameda's 27% and Contra Costa's 23%. For more county information, see TABLE #1 containing data for December 2020 from CDSS CA255CW.

TABLE #1- CalWORKs Procedural Denials	Denials	Procedural Denials	% of Procedural Denials
Statewide	19269	9684	50%
Butte	135	111	82%
Kern	1095	844	77%
Stanislaus	392	238	61%
Riverside	1824	1078	59%
San Bernardino	2210	1192	54%
Fresno	883	453	51%
Los Angeles	5656	2857	51%
San Joaquin	465	197	42%
Orange	264	110	42%
Sacramento	970	310	32%
San Diego	1309	363	28%
Alameda	442	118	27%
Contra Costa	228	53	23%

California Inequitable CalFresh/SNAP Denials Statewide Administration Questioned

The excessive denial rates for failure to comply with procedural requirements extended to CalFresh. Nationally, California has always been one of the lowest rated states for SNAP/CalFresh participation. During December 2020, 68% of the CalFresh applications were denied for allegedly failure to meet "procedural requirements." Tulare's procedural denial rate was 96%, Butte's 91%, and Riverside's 86%, while San Diego's was 11% and Santa Cruz's was 24%. The difference in these rates occurs because of differences in county management.

The CalFresh program is called a statewide system, but TABLE #2 reveals that it may be a statewide system for the federal, state and county administrators, but not for the applicants. For applicants the chances of getting food on the table if they happen to live in Riverside, Butte, Merced, or Stanislaus Counties are much less than if they were living in San Diego or Santa Cruz.

The CalFresh denial rates during the pandemic clearly demonstrate that California has a real problem – it is a county run program and not a state run program. Most TANF and SNAP programs in the USA are operated by the State and not the 19th century county run program.

For 5 months during the pandemic, Sacramento, San Diego, Santa Cruz, Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo, Solano and Yolo Counties had fewer than 10% of CalFresh applications denied. Meanwhile El Dorado, Riverside, Sonoma, Shasta and Stanislaus counties had a denial rate of 40%-50% percent per month. That is statistically significant. A person living in Riverside County has a 400-500% higher chance of having their application being denied that if they lived in neighboring San Diego County.

TABLES #2

CalFresh Applications September 2020 Denials

	Applications received	Denied	% of Total Denied
Statewide	163528	56940	35%
San Luis Obispo	952	54	6%
Santa Barbara	1956	111	6%
Yolo	1530	87	6%
Santa Cruz	963	64	7%
Solano	1533	105	7%
San Diego	14578	1287	9%
Sacramento	7569	702	9%
Santa Clara	3378	316	9%
San Francisco	3084	292	9%
Humboldt	1000	504	50%
Monterey	1675	855	51%
Siskiyou	258	137	53%
Riverside	12043	6411	53%
El Dorado	512	280	55%
Stanislaus	2876	1585	55%
Shasta	1078	601	56%
Napa	392	225	57%
Sonoma	1228	803	65%

CalFresh Applications October 2020 Denials

	Applications received	Denied	% of Total Denied
Statewide	166951	53271	32%
Solano	1526	86	6%
Santa Cruz	931	60	6%
Santa Barbara	1817	121	7%
San Luis Obispo	849	57	7%
San Diego	14494	1390	10%
San Francisco	3018	296	10%
Santa Clara	3134	340	11%
Sacramento	7483	819	11%
Ventura	2153	250	12%
Contra Costa	2375	354	15%
Stanislaus	2917	1458	50%
Riverside	12134	6248	51%
Napa	498	259	52%
Butte	1422	764	54%
Shasta	1173	650	55%
Sonoma	1139	998	88%

CalFresh Applications - December 2020 Denials

	Applications received	Denied	% of Total Denied
Statewide	248199	61092	25%
San Luis Obispo	1274	53	4%
Santa Barbara	2794	129	5%
Santa Cruz	1234	62	5%
Solano	2518	129	5%
Yolo	1214	78	6%
Santa Clara	5651	373	7%
Sacramento	12011	904	8%
San Diego	20437	1739	9%
Contra Costa	4176	387	9%
Ventura	3346	316	9%
San Francisco	4823	520	11%

CalFresh Applications - January 2021 Denials

	Applications received	Denied	% of Total Denied
Statewide	207214	69253	33%
Santa Cruz	1089	39	4%
Santa Barbara	2398	96	4%
San Luis Obispo	1041	44	4%
Yolo	1083	52	5%
Sacramento	10811	573	5%
Santa Clara	4709	328	7%
Ventura	2851	199	7%
Solano	2096	160	8%
San Diego	17539	1507	9%
Contra Costa	3547	377	11%
San Francisco	4091	436	11%
Orange	12365	5605	45%
Monterey	2622	1205	46%
Humboldt	1291	594	46%
Kings	1040	482	46%
El Dorado	704	338	48%
Napa	504	248	49%
Stanislaus	3592	1784	50%
San Bernardino	15769	7900	50%
Riverside	15092	7906	52%
Shasta	1418	781	55%
Sonoma	1513	931	62%
Alameda	No Report		

CONCLUSION - California leads the country in child poverty and low SNAP participation. The pandemic has exposed the truth: that there is no statewide safety net system in California. It is full of holes that children fall into depending on what county they live in. ***“County flexibility” that violently discriminates against CalWORKs and CalFresh program beneficiaries is similar to “states rights” that is a recognized “racist” policy in America.*** How about “beneficiary flexibility”? That would be totally unacceptable to the paternalistic CalWORKs and CalFresh California state and county program administrators. The CalWORKs and CalFresh program needs to be ***“deracitized”*** if we are ever going to eliminate poverty in California!

California's P-EBT 2.0 Plan Approved

5/4/2021 Buckle Up and Hold On

P-EBT is the federal food and nutrition program for children who were no longer able to access free or reduced school-based lunch and supplemental nutrition programs as a result of COVID-19 pandemic school closures. This crisis was underscored by the fact that many of these children were members of CalFresh households with parents and family breadwinners who were themselves experiencing workplace shutdowns and layoffs in response to the public health emergency. In terms of dollars and cents, approximately \$1.3 billion was provided in food assistance benefits to 3.7 million school-aged children. See https://www.cafoodbanks.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/2021_CAFB_Pandemic-EBT_Report.pdf

P-EBT 2.0 benefits will be provided to any child eligible for free or reduced priced meals as of the 2019/2020 school year. The benefits for the 2020 – 2021 school year as proposed are:

- \$123 per month for any child living in a county where at least one school was operating on a fully virtual basis.
- \$68 per month per child for any child living in a county where schools were operating at least 55% of the time on a hybrid basis. Hybrid models may involve at-

tending school in person on a shortened day or shortened week along with virtual learning.

California's P-EBT 2.0 State Plan has been approved and child-care aged children may be eligible for benefits for the October 2020 through May 2021 time period. This is an enormous step forward and 1 million poor young children who are part of CalFresh/ SNAP households will benefit from a monthly payment of \$123 for the October 2020 – May 2021 school year. **CalFresh school aged children will not need to apply for P-EBT 2.0 benefits.**

At its April 2021 conference call with anti-hunger advocates, CDSS estimated this amendment would serve 500,000 previously unserved children and their households. To satisfy federal concerns, CDSS staff are proposing the establishment of a two-tiered P-EBT benefit for school-aged children based on whether the school districts in a county are operating on an in-person, virtual or hybrid model.

The goal is to end all P-EBT 2.0 benefits for all children, *even those attending school on a virtual basis*, once all schools have returned to a full-time in-person.

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