



CCWRO Welfare News -

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Looking Back On the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996

Twenty-years ago, led by Congressional Republicans with the support of many Democrats, Bill Clinton signed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, also known as **“welfare deform”** in the recipient community. “Personal responsibility” did not mean allowing former AFDC recipients to make personal life decisions but created an autocracy wherein the welfare system told AFDC recipients what to do in order to meet the federal work participation requirements. When poor TANF families failed to meet the federal work participation requirements they are punished through sanctions, primarily with full family sanctions.

Under TANF, the welfare system could force moms with newborns to perform unpaid labor for the state or lose all of their benefits. TANF did not require that states provide child care or transportation to parents who worked. That decision was left to the state welfare system.

Alternately, PRWORA rewarded the welfare bureaucracy by allowing them to decide how to spend the funding. During the AFDC program, 70% of the money was allocated for payments to families and 30% to the welfare system. TANF provided the state with flexibility to do whatever they wanted to do with the money. Now only 30% of the money is allocated to families while 70% goes to the welfare system.

In California, at the time of instituting TANF, many counties used their TANF allocation to buy office furniture, county cars and added new hires to their staff. The counties are rarely, if ever, sanctioned for failing to comply with the law and perform their jobs in order to meet their responsibility under TANF.

The passage of PRWORA helped Bill Clinton with his re-election and it was strongly supported by the welfare industry – the welfare office administrators of America. Many politicians believe that TANF is a success. In fact, during a review of the TANF program on C-SPAN, a republican proponent of TANF applauded TANF’s results - more money to the bureaucrats and less money for the people.

Over One Million SSI Recipients Wait For Food Stamps

In 1974, California cashed out food stamps. This meant that instead of receiving food stamp benefits, every SSI recipient received \$10 a month as part of the SSI benefits. This occurred because fewer than 35% of the SSI recipients actually received food stamps.

This year, AB 1811 ended the Food Stamp Cash-Out by enacting legislation that would allow SSI recipients to get 21st century food stamps, now called CalFresh.

AB 1811 authorized \$220 million for technology and for partially and temporarily providing a bailout for 84,000 SSI recipients for those families who already receive CalFresh and whose CalFresh benefits would otherwise be reduced.

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In 1974, SSI Food Stamp Cash-Out was done because less than 35% of SSI recipients were getting Food Stamps.

In 2019, CDSS estimates that 37% of the SSI household would get food stamps.

The California Budget Center, Western Center on Law & Poverty and Justice on Aging estimated this to be 137,000 CalFresh households, but only 84,000 would get partial relief under AB 1181.

Current SSI recipients now eligible for CalFresh food stamps today must wait until June 1 or August 1, 2019 before they can apply for CalFresh. Why? Because DSS needs about a year to set up the process to get benefits to the 84,000 cases that would get less than they are getting now. That is a 61% of the so-called losers who will be made partially whole.

CDSS has set up 3 workgroups to implement the ending of the SSI Cash-Out:

1. SSI Cash-out Implementation
2. SSI Cash-out Outreach
3. SSI Cash-out Automation and Policy

So far, only three (3) meetings have been held in which legislative staff, advocates and counties participated.

The third working group, “SSI Cash-Out Automation and Policy Workgroup” is meeting every two weeks. Legislative staff and advocates have not been invited to these meetings. This is where all of the major decisions are being made that impact ending the SSI cash-out.

This exclusion is done notwithstanding the legislation that provides:

18900.5 (d) “The provisions of this section and Sections 18900.6 and 18900.7 shall be implemented by the department in consultation with stakeholders and counties. Additionally, beginning July 1, 2018, and continuing quarterly through June 2019, or the alternate implementation date described in subdivision (b), the department shall convene discussions with the Legislature regarding implementation.”

CDSS estimates that a meager 369,000 households will receive CalFresh – a meager 37% of the potentially eligible households that could be eligible for CalFresh. **Table #1** below shows the SSI caseload’s living arrangements for March of 2018 that exceeds one million households.

TABLE #1- SSI Household Living Arrangements (3/18 data)

SSI Household	Cases
Own Household	1,068,035
Another’s Household	81,525
Parents’ Household	78,024
Title XIX Institution	13,693

Stay tuned for more information.