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## CCWRO New Welfare News #2024-08

### THE 2024-2025 BUDGET DENIES COLA FOR THOSE MOST IN NEED

The 2024-2025 budget authorized a cost-of-living increase (COLA) for public benefit beneficiaries who receive cash aid benefits above 100% of the federal poverty level while not giving a COLA to those who are receiving cash aid for CalWORKs and SSI that is below 100% of the federal poverty rate. California's CalWORKs children receive a average monthly cash aid that is less than 30% of the federal poverty level. **TABLE #1** reveals the COLA rates and average grant amount for 2024-2025.

**TABLE # 1 - Public Benefits Programs Getting a COLA**

Program	Average Monthly Grant	COLA for 2024-2025	Percentage of the Federal Poverty Level
CalWORKs- Maximum Grant Per Person	\$381.34	.3%	30%
SSI/SSP disabled	\$957.21	0%	76%
SSI/SSP aged	\$ 748.05	0%	60%
CAP	\$1,074.67	0%	86%
Adoption Assistance Program per adopted child	\$1,576.69	3.72%	126%
Foster Care per child	\$3,235.01	3.72%	248%
Kin-GAP per child	\$1,412.44	3.72%	113%

Source: State Department of Social Services – Local Assistance  
 2024-2025- May revise

### County/CalSAWS Victim Report

**CDSS Tells County to Impose WtW Sanction in Violation of State Law** - CDSS was asked by Sacramento County whether a mom should be required to participate in a WtW activity or be sanctioned for not participating in a WtW activity because she was not comfortable with the child-care that the county was offering.

Welfare and Institutions Code § 11320.30 is clear- Participation in a WtW activity is required only if the parent can secure childcare that the parent deems is appropriate. Thus, common sense dictates that a parent cannot be sanctioned if the parent is not able to secure childcare that the parent, and NOT the government, deems appropriate.

The CDSS response was, if Sacramento cannot find good cause, it must impose the racist,

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punitive sanction of reducing her benefits for exercising her rights under W&IC 11320.30. DSS greenlighted Sacramento County to sanction the mom illegally.

**County Stops Benefits with Due Process Deficient Notice** - On 6-12-24, Ms. 1BCFY73 of Sacramento County was issued a CalSAWS due process deficient Notice of Action NA 960Y stating that her benefits would stop effective 6-30-24, because “The semi-annual report (SAR-7) that we got from you this reporting period is not complete.” As to what was not complete is the big mystery. Could it be that this County/CalSAWS victim did not sign the SAR-7? Maybe they did not mark an undetermined box? Maybe they did not attach income verification? Maybe they did not show why the income they reported 6 months ago is no longer being received? There are laws known as “due process of law” and adequate Notices of Action that the county/CalSAWS is required to issue before they sentence families to cash and food insecurity. State welfare regulation MPP §22-001. (a)(1) states:

*“Adequate Notice - A written notice informing the claimant of the action the county intends to take, the reasons for the intended action, the specific regulations supporting such action, an explanation of the claimant’s right to request a state hearing, and if appropriate, the circumstances under which aid will be continued if a hearing is requested, and for the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) Program, if the county action is upheld, that the aid pending must be repaid. In the CalFresh Program, see Section 63-504.2. The written notice must meet applicable requirements of Section 22-071.”*

The county/CalSAWS notice of action does not meet any of the mandatory requirements of an adequate notice.

**Ventura County CalSAWS Notices Infested With Illegalities & Imposes Unlawful WtW Sanction-** Ms. 1B3QM12 of Ventura County received a Notice of Action on 5-7-24 stating that on 5-7-24 she “did not sign the welfare-to-work plan”. A reasonable person would assume that Ms. 1B3QM12 was provided with a WtW plan and she did not sign the plan. The fact is, Ventura County never gave her a plan to sign.

On 6-12-24, she received a Notice of Action (NOA) stating that her “... cash aid will go down on 7-01-24 as we told you it would in the Notice of Action (NA 840) sent to you on 5-07-24.” The 6-12-24 NOA just says her grant for July 2024 will be \$1,171. The 6-12-24 NOA does not say what her grant used to be – it was \$1,412, a \$241 reduction.

On 6-12-24, she also received a second notice regarding her CalFresh benefits. The NOA states “As of 7-01-24, the county is changing your CalFresh benefits from \$886 to \$796. Here’s Why: When your income changes, your CalFresh benefits amount also changes. Your CalFresh household size is 4. Your IRT is \$3,250.”

Assuming that Ventura County had provided a WtW Plan for Ms. 1B3QM12, there was good cause to excuse her activity. Ms. 1B3QM12 is the primary caregiver of her disabled SSI child. She so advised her worker but that did not matter. She also informed the county that she did not have childcare. The county refused to verify that she had childcare before requiring her to participate and achieve the primary purpose of the current WtW program which is to sanction, reduce cash aid by \$241 and CalFresh by \$90, which is \$331 a month.

**ADVOCATE PRACTICE NOTE:** W&IC § 11323.3(a) provides that a CalWORKs beneficiary cannot be required to participate in any WtW activity until the county verifies that it has secured childcare of their choosing. In the case of Ms. 1B3QM12, Ventura County never verified that Ms. 1B3QM12 had secured childcare of her choosing, but still went ahead with CalSAWS and imposed a \$331 sanction unlawfully. She has a disabled child, she cannot participate without childcare. That would be “child neglect”.

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*§11323.3(a) An applicant for, or a recipient of, CalWORKs benefits shall be informed of the availability of childcare services upon enrollment in the CalWORKs program, and at later times when a participant expresses to the county a need for childcare. The county shall verify if childcare is needed to participate in a program activity, as defined in subdivision (c) of Section 11323.2, and, if needed, that childcare services are authorized, and that the participant has secured appropriate childcare prior to requiring a participant to participate in any mandatory activity. Verification that childcare has been secured the childcare contractor, or the childcare provider.*

**CalSAWS Print Center Issues Unconstitutional Notices Of Action** - Ms. 1BD3F71, from San Diego County received a Notice of Action, dated 3/12/24, stating “As of 12-01-23 the County has reevaluated your CalFresh. Here is why: As of 12/01/2023, the County is changing your CalFresh benefits from \$291.00 to \$23.” When your income changes, your CalFresh benefits amount also changes. You started receiving SSI/SSP in unearned income. Your CalFresh household size is 1. Your IRT is \$1,580.00.”

How much was the SSI/SSP income that the CalSAWS Eligibility Determination Budget Calculation (EDBC) use to calculate in the Notice of Action issued by CalSAWS print center? Who knows?

What deductions were allowed and if not allowed, why not? CalSAWS central printing-issued Notice of Action does not give this CalSAWS victim a clue.

This is just another one of the thousands of unconstitutional Notices of Action that CalSAWS is sending out every day that result in cash and food insecurity to thousands of Californians and children.

## **CalSAWS Requests More Than \$3 Million AB 2452 - For What?**

Every legislative year, CDSS looks at a bill and robotically seeks a SAWS Cost Estimate Request for Research & Analysis (SCERFRA) that CDSS and DHCS pays for at the rate \$127 hr. So, what is CDSS getting for the \$127 hour?

AB 2452 is a bill that would require the county to issue a \$100 transportation payment to a WtW participant who is actually participating in a WtW activity. This would simplify the issuance of benefits process. Today about 60% of the participants do not receive transportation assistance.

If the beneficiary's actual transportation costs exceed that amount, the beneficiary would be able to submit a supplemental payment request form, and the county worker must issue that payment like they currently do.

Well, CalSAWS told CDSS that AB 2452 would require \$2,359,800 for CalSAWS implementation and \$717,860 for BenefitsCal to automate. Why? Currently, there is no automation needed. The only change is that each county worker has to issue a county amount and not it would be \$100.

But the county welfare department-controlled (in that all members of the CalSAWS Board are county officials) CalSAWS dollar hungry system will automate even when automation is not needed to get more money from the federal and state government which put up an estimated 96% of the total CalSAWS funding. Who is watching out for the apparent unnecessary fleeing of federal and state dollars for automation? When will this CalSAWS abuse stop?

## **CalSAWS Makes Policy**

CalSAWS has publicly announced that they do not make policy – they simply automate what is required by law. In fact, CalSAWS insists that automating a self-executing statute requires an All-County Letter (ACL).

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At a meeting of 7-17-24, CalSAWS stated that “CalSAWS limits customers to a maximum of 126 reported transactions in each EBT 2259 request (CA-275549).

What is CA-275549? We went to google.com and CA-275549 did not come up. We went to the CalSAWS webpage, went to the “search” and typed “CA-275549” and again no CA-275549. Is CA-275549 a new secret law enacted by the CalSAWS staff? We have heard from our friends at the county welfare departments that “CalSAWS makes policy”, something that CalSAWS denied that conflicts with the facts. How does California CDSS and DHCS, the single state agencies, hold CalSAWS accountable?

## **CalSAWS Stopping Benefits in Violation of U.S. Constitution**

At a 7-15-24, meeting with CalSAWS it was revealed that CalSAWS Eligibility Benefit Determination Calculation has been programmed to spot cases that may be issuing erroneous payments. Once CalSAWS identifies such a case, benefits are stopped by CalSAWS, and not the county. There is no due process Notice of Action issued. The county is then mailed a list of these cases known as “skip issuance report”. It is up to the county to activate the unlawfully terminated case by CalSAWS.

Thousands of victims of the CalSAWS illegal termination of benefits have experienced severe cash and food insecurity which is unconscionable.

CalSAWS has no authority to make policy and terminate cases. And then, CalSAWS Executive Director Julie Edkamp alleges that CalSAWS just does automation and does not make policy. Tell that the thousands of CalWORKs beneficiaries and their children enduring cash and food insecurity due to the unlawful actions of CalSAWS.

What really happened in our opinion, is that the CalSAWS, which is controlled by counties and not the single state agency, has no say in what CalSAWS

does, decided that if their system spots an issue with the case, CalSAWS can shut down the cases, send the list to the county to reactivate. That is a blatant violation of due process of law.

CCWRO emailed California Public Records Act requests seeking “skip issuance” information on 5/6/24, 6/5/24, and 7/6/24 and no response. Silence. Below is what CCWRO has asked for since May of 2024.

1. All documents pertaining to skip issuance reports (this does not include identifying information about any case that appears on a skip issuance report).
2. All documents pertaining to any policy, procedure, or practice, however denominated, about when a case appears on a skip issuance report.
3. All documents pertaining to any policy, procedure, or practice, however denominated, about when skip issuance occurs on a case.
4. All documents pertaining to any policy, procedure, or practice, however denominated, about how counties are informed that skip issuance has occurred on a case.
5. All documents pertaining to any policy, procedure or practice, however denominated, about how benefits are issued on a case after skip issuance has occurred.
6. Any written communication between the California Department of Social Services and the BenefitsCal consortium pertaining to skip issuance reports. (this does not include identifying information about any case that appears on a skip issuance report).
7. Any written communication between the California Department of Social Services and

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the BenefitsCal consortium pertaining to when a case appears on a skip issuance report. (this does not include identifying information about any case that appears on a skip issuance report).

We are still waiting for a response from CalSAWS. These laws that are designed to protect cash and food insecure families of California.

### **CalSAWS Live Chat – Available? Not Available?**

CalSAWS used federal and state funding to develop a “live chat” for BenefitsCal, but it is not available in most counties. 53 of 58 counties have chosen not to help their customers’ better access and use public benefit services. Per [AskCalSAWS](#), only Marin, Monterey, Placer, San Bernardino and San Diego have chosen to better the services they offer and the lives of their customers by using live chat.

Deciding not to use a CalSAWS feature that was designed to facilitate better communication between counties and customers says much about the priorities of welfare departments across the state; namely the people and families in their community applying for and receiving benefits are not the priority of these welfare departments. If your county has chosen not to provide the best service to their customers by refusing to use the live chat CalSAWS feature, we recommend raising the issue with local welfare departments; this is a service that can only benefit their customers.

### **CalSAWS Making Policy and Wasting Tax Dollars**

We have been receiving complaints from Los Angeles CalWORKs college students that they are being mailed GN 6070 forms to have their college counselors complete and return to the worker. This is causing stress for the students who are told by the college that the GN 6070 is no longer a required form and it also taking time away from community

college personell from doing their job rather than explaining why the CalSAWS notice is no longer required.

Before SB 1232 was implemented, which simplified CalWORKs college attendance, CalWORKs students were required in Los Angeles County to use the GN 6070 to verify their attendance in college every semester.

SB 1232 changed that, and CalWORKs students no longer must provide a copy of the GN 6070 per LADPSS Call-Out 21-103 issued on November of 2021. Yet, CalSAWS policy is that every student is mailed a copy of the GN 6070 for completion even though it directly conflicts with county policy.

The LADPSS GN6070 comes from the “CalSAWS centralized printing”, thus, students believe it is coming from LADPSS, when it is coming from CalSAWS.

This CalSAWS policy of mailing out a GN 6070 is a classic example of waste of taxpayer dollars by CalSAWS that adversely effects CalWORKs college students, and we urge the single state agency funding CalSAWS to stop this waste of taxpayer dollars and stop the CalSAWS policy of mailing students a GN6070, which is in direct violation of county policy embodied in LADPSS Call-Out 21-103.

### **CalSAWS Out of Compliance With Federal Law**

The California CalSAWS BenefitsCal system does not inform applicants that they have a right to submit a CalFresh application with their name, address and signature which is required by USDA, FNS. Below is the FNS policy issuance that CalSAWS is violating.

*“DATE: February 15, 2024*

*SUBJECT: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – Online Application Policy*

*TO: All SNAP State Agencies All Regions*

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*The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) has seen an increased number of questions regarding online application policy from state agencies, regional offices, and advocates during systems development, management evaluations, and other venues. The purpose of this memo is to reiterate and clarify existing policy. This clarification applies to both initial and recertification applications.*

### *Right to File with only Name, Address, and Signature*

*Federal law provides applicants with the right to file a SNAP application providing only name, address, and signature. Therefore, state agencies must accept and establish a filing date for any SNAP application that includes a name, address, and signature, even if other questions on the application form are incomplete. State agencies must consider such applications as "filed" and provide benefits from the filing date for eligible households.*

*For online applications, this means that state agencies can encourage but cannot require applicants to complete any additional fields to advance through and/or file/submit the application. The online application must include the name, address, and signature fields on one of its initial screens, and questions other than name, address, and signature must be optional. One option to meet this requirement is by including a "submit now" button immediately following the name, address, and signature fields. State agencies should also consider including a "submit" button on every screen or at frequent points as the applicant advances through the online application to prevent applicants from having to advance through every screen to submit."*

Notwithstanding the clear policy of FNS it is CalSAWS policy to violate FNS policy. It appears that in California county policy overrides federal policy.

## **New Federal SNAP/CalFresh Bill**

On June 13, 2024, [Senate Bill 4543](#), introduced by Senator Peter Welch of Vermont, would allow the Secretary of USDA to waive SNAP renewal interviews if the beneficiary waives the interview and the beneficiary has demonstrated eligibility for continued benefits. The bill is co-sponsored by both California's U.S. Senators.

## **CalKIDS Program Information**

by Daphne Macklin

In 2022, California established the CalKIDS Program to create savings accounts worth \$500 - \$1,500 each for over 3.9 million low-income public school students spanning first - 12<sup>th</sup> grade. This includes students who recently graduated from a California public high school in 2021, 2022, and 2023, who may be enrolled at a California Community College. CalKIDS is administered by the ScholarShare Investment Board (SIB), a state agency chaired by the State Treasurer.

CalKIDS gives money for college or career training to eligible students in California. There are two eligible groups:

- Low-income\* public school students enrolled in grades 1-12 during 2021-2022 academic year
- Low-income\* public school students enrolled in the 1st grade during 2022-2023 academic year and every year thereafter.

Award Amounts:

- \$500 for low-income public school student
- \$500 more for foster youth
- \$500 more for homeless youth

To be eligible, your child must have been enrolled on Fall Census Day\*\* and must also be identified as English Learner or low-income by the [Local Control Funding Formula](#). And, that information must be