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## CCWRO New Welfare News #2024-09

### In Brief

**Counties have to resubmit trouble tickets to CalSAWS-** The PCG group reported in their monthly status report for February of 2024 to the Newsom administration that counties are complaining that they give “trouble tickets” to CalSAWS for resolution and are getting a “closure notice” when the issue has not been fully resolved. *Counties are being forced to resubmit the same trouble ticket again.*

**Release of Information discussions in the dark-** The PCG group reported in their monthly status report for February of 2024 that there is a ROI Workgroup #11. ROI is the “Release of Information” process for assisters for Medi-Cal and CalFresh information. Counties refuse to talk to assisters unless the assister has a ROI. At the “non-public” Workgroup Meeting #11, a closed secret meeting, assisters are excluded there was a discussion that the RIO requirements for Medi-Cal and CalFresh are different.

**CalSAWS wants about \$2 million to program an application that already exists -** SB 1254 would require a workgroup to help incarcerated individuals to have Medi-Cal and CalFresh before they are released. CDSS asked CalSAWS how much it would cost to implement SB 1254. CalSAWS responded on 6-24-24 that CalSAWS would need 12 months to develop automation and would need \$1,869,669 to come up with a combined Medi-Cal and CalFresh application that is translated in the required languages. Why does CalSAWS want to get about \$2 million to create a new application, when there is one right now, SAWS 2?

**BenefitsCal Lockout Wastes Time -** BenefitsCal users, who have 15 minutes of inactivity, are shut out of the system and it takes them back to the log in page, but will not let the users log in. They click on the “log in” button but it just keeps the user at the same “log in” screen. So, what users have to do is close all the browsers and open them back up, and then it will let the user log in. Users have to do this EVERY TIME there is 15 minutes of no activity.

### CalSAWS BenefitsCal Stands in Violation of Civil Rights

BenefitsCal is supposed to be a one-stop for support with food, cash aid, and health coverage benefits. Principally, BenefitsCal manages the CalFresh and Medi-Cal programs; however, BenefitsCal also manages other benefit programs such as transportation and general assistance. BenefitsCal permits individuals to apply for benefits online. Part of the online application requires an applicant to provide a narrative of their circumstances that justify receiving a benefit. The narrative and the ability to provide one are important because it allows for the applicant to explain in their own words how their lives are impacted and how the benefit will improve their lives. Currently, this narrative portion of the application is only available to those individuals who submit their application in English. Non-English speakers who visit the BenefitsCal website are not given the opportunity to complete the narrative portion of the application thereby diminishing their abilities to explain their position or justify why they may need the benefit. BenefitsCal’s website is translated into 19

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**CDSS Defective Data Reports** - At the August CalSAWS meeting, CalSAWS staff revealed that the following reports are defective • CF 256 • CA 237 CW • CW 237 CW Line 8 Backup • CA 255 CW • CA 253CW • CMSP 237 • CMSP 237 Detailed Backup Report • WTW 25 • WTW 25A • CA 237 FC • FNS 209 • CA 812. The report also revealed that only the CA 237 CW • CA 255CW and • CA 253CW are being addressed. That is a lot of defects.

**Inter-County-Transfer (ICT) coordinators need to know what their job is from CDSS and DHCS?** The California CalWORKs, CalFresh and Medi-Cal Inter County Transfer (ICT) process has been a mess for decades. Each county has had a ICT coordinator for several decades. At the 8-15-24 CalSAWS JPA meeting it was revealed that they need a clarification of ICT coordinators responsibilities, reminders about the escalation process, standardized process and clear technical guidelines and revision of outdated protocols.

**County unlawful denials of child care upheld by CDSS** - CDSS Child Care Division supports the unlawful action of Riverside County denying full-time child care to a home schooling parent. On 2-27-24 Riverside County asked CDSS if a CalWORKs parent can get full-time child care for a child that is being home schooled. ACL 19-99 clearly states "Child care shall be authorized full-time unless the recipient specifically requests part-time care." CDSS responded that child can only be authorized for hours that the child is in school, which is in direct violation of ACL 19-99.

**Sacramento County stops CAPI benefits for victim of the Putin Ukrainian genocide-** Ms. 1BCBG26, fleeing the Ukrainian genocide, received a notice on 09-17-2024 stating that her CAPI benefits were being stopped because "You failed to cooperate with the process of your yearly redetermination." The notice did not say what this CAPI victim failed to do. Did she miss a scheduled appointment? Maybe she did not sign a form? Maybe she did not turn in verification requested with a CW 2200? Maybe she did not answer a certain question on the redetermination? Who knows? Certainly, not the County CAPI Victim.

**California doles out a billion dollars and more to Deloitte** - The California Health & Human Services Office of Technology and Solutions Integration (OTSI) has agreed to a \$982,384,313 infrastructure contract with Deloitte for 7 years with four one-year optional extensions. OTSI has also agreed to a \$674,558,518 contract for 6 and a half years with four one-year optional extensions.

(CalSaws BenefitCal, cont'd from pg 1)

languages other than English, however, non-English speaking BenefitsCal applicants are not given a complete application for certain benefits because BenefitsCal does not permit these applicants to provide the crucial narrative.

Since 1973, the Dymally-Alatorre Bilingual Services Act has required California agencies such as BenefitsCal to "provide for effective communication between all levels of government in this state and the people of this state who are precluded from utilizing public services because of language barriers." Cal. Gov. Code § 7291. If BenefitsCal is failing to provide non-English speakers the opportunity to provide a narrative in their native language, then BenefitsCal stands open to litigation for violating the Dymally-Alatorre Bilingual Services Act and California Government Code Section 7290 *et seq.* See Cal. Gov't Code § 7295.4(b) (State agencies shall distribute "information solicited, required, or furnished [that] affects or may affect the individual's rights, duties, or privileges with regard to that agency's services or benefits"). BenefitsCal failing to provide non-English speakers the opportunity to provide a narrative in their native language to justify their receipt of a state benefit and subjecting non-English speakers to differential treatment raises constitutional concerns as well.

It would be in the best interest of BenefitsCal and non-English speaking applicants to have identical applications for services as English speaking applicants. BenefitsCal can avoid potential litigation and ensure compliance with the Dymally-Alatorre Bilingual Services Act by providing identical English and non-English applications. Please contact CCWRO if you are aware of this issue and wish to provide information about BenefitsCal issues.

## Maximus Fleeces CalWORKs Beneficiary

Ms. L3F0603 is attending Pasadena Community College. College started 8-26-24. Her class schedule was mailed to the Maximum Region VII by the Pasadena Community College CalWORKs office way before August 18, 2024, but Ms. L3F0603 has yet (early September) to get her advance payment to buy her books.

Her advocate called the Region VII Maximus GAIN office. The advocate called Vice President of Maximus Lazur at 818-524-4214 - no answer – does not even take a message. It said, after 10 rings “the person is not accepting calls”. The advocate called Ms. Diana Amir Khanian from Maximus at 818-524-5203 and no answer and no message after 10 rings – the call was picked up by the computer saying this person does not accept call at this time and terminated the call. This happened when the advocate called the worker, Mr. Sekoyan at 818-524-4313 and his supervisor, Mr. Alonso at 818-524-4304.

The advocate then called 877-325-2211 and was informed that Maximus Region VII does not answer their phones. There are over 70 different telephone numbers, paid for by taxpayers that just ring and ring. Many call this fraud, waste and abuse. We wonder what DPSS and the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors call it?

The advocate was forced to file for a state hearing that will cost over \$2,000 just because Maximus GAIN office does not have any customer service.

Meanwhile Ms. L3F0603 and many other CalWORKs GAIN participants are not getting their ancillary services as required by state law.

## What Is A CalFresh Eligible Household and How Much May A Household Receive In Benefits?

### An Advocates Primer

by Daphne Macklin

These seemingly easy questions are often quite the opposite. CDSS provides the basic answers at its website <https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/calfresh-resource-center>

From the advocate community’s perspective, CalFresh program known for its complicated rules and complex interpretations of what should be a simple question: is your family hungry including your kids?

First, review this CDSS Document. [Unique Household Composition](#)

Then consider what a CalFresh SNAP household is and that your client may have more than one household per residence.

Example: *The Michaelis Family*

Emily 47 is a widow who lives with her youngest child and his father, Thomas, age 32 and their son, Tommy, Jr. age 5. Emily and Thomas are not married. The family also includes Emily’s oldest child, Amelia age 16. Amelia is pregnant and has dropped out of high school. The presumed father of Amelia’s child, Waldo, age 19, is currently in state prison. He has never lived in Emily’s home or with the family.

*Income Sources and Amounts:*

Emily and Amelia receive \$1250 in SSDI dependents benefits based on the account of Emily’s late husband who was Amelia’s father. This is a combination of Emily’s widow’s benefits and Amelia’s child dependent benefits are \$625 each. Thomas chose to work as a homemaker caring for his baby son and Amelia who was a 5th grader at that time. Emily became the IHSS caretaker for her father-in-law Joe, who married Tricia after his wife’s death. Tricia is an SSI recipient. She requires IHSS assistance that Joe is unable to perform as an “able and available spout”. Tricia and Joe were shocked to learn that Tricia’s SSI benefits were reduced when she married Joe, a disabled, now retired veteran. On the upside, Emily and Tommy qualified for a feder-

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(CalFresh eligible, cont'd from pg3)

ally subsidized mortgage that allowed them to purchase a 4BR/2BA house. Tricia and Joe are considering moving in with Emily's family. One question the elderly company have is whether the senior couple should continue to live on their own which is increasingly difficult with Tricia's medical issues or move into an ADU that was added to Emily's home.

## Things To Consider

### CalLearn and TANF Pregnancy Supplement

Amelia (and possibly Waldo) may qualify for the CalLearn program for pregnant and parenting TANF eligible persons. See <https://www.cdss.ca.gov/cdssweb/entres/forms/English/pub367.pdf>

Waldo, age 19, is reapplying despite his drug-related conviction provided he is in compliance with his court ordered conditions of probation or parole. <https://www.cdss.ca.gov/cdssweb/entres/forms/English/Temp3005.pdf>

Waldo is seeking to have his SSI benefits reinstated when he is released on probation. He plans on living with the Michaelis family, but he hopes to have an apartment to share with Amelia and their baby. That baby is due in December.

Amelia plans to return to high school through the Cal Learn program for teen parents. Her goal is to complete high school and to have her own home.

Amelia could establish her own CalFresh household in own home. Waldo may have a child support obligation even if he is sharing a home with Amelia and their child.

### Establish A Separate CalFresh Household

Grandpa Joe and his wife could establish their own separate CalFresh household even if they lived in the same home as Emily, Tommy and Tommy, Jr. Emily likes this option as it would allow her to focus on providing IHSS for Tricia and assist Joe, should he require help.

This is not an exhaustive discussion of the multiple household rules in CalFresh. It does however raise possibilities about how to establish separate households. This is useful as there are somewhat different rules for seniors than for younger CalFresh recipients.

### Combining Other Resources

1 - the WIC program provides nutrition for pregnant and nursing mothers as well as young children up to age 6 (in certain circumstances).

2 - There are nutrition programs aimed at early childhood education programs, for children as well as increasingly universal school meals (usually breakfast and lunch).

3 - Seniors and some disabled persons may be able to access restaurant prepared meals using their basic SNAP EBT resources.

Exceptions: If Waldo returns to the household, because of his drug related conviction, he may be eligible for CalFresh and CalWorks provided he is in compliance with his conditions of probation or parole. <https://www.cdss.ca.gov/cdssweb/entres/forms/English/Temp3005.pdf>

This part of the article is based on the CDSS informational flyer "Unique Household Composition" [https://www.cdss.ca.gov/calfreshoutreach/res/Toolkit/Handbook-GeneralMarket/GeneralMarketHandbook\\_CH4\\_EligibilityBasics.pdf](https://www.cdss.ca.gov/calfreshoutreach/res/Toolkit/Handbook-GeneralMarket/GeneralMarketHandbook_CH4_EligibilityBasics.pdf)

A CalFresh household does not have to include only biological or marital related family members. There are rules that allow unrelated people who usually eat together to be part of a single household. But there are things to consider. Immigration status is a consequential issue. See the CDSS informational flyer [https://www.cdss.ca.gov/calfreshoutreach/res/Toolkit/QuickReference/RegulationQuickReference\\_D\\_PeoplewithImmigrantRefugeeorAsyleeStatus.pdf](https://www.cdss.ca.gov/calfreshoutreach/res/Toolkit/QuickReference/RegulationQuickReference_D_PeoplewithImmigrantRefugeeorAsyleeStatus.pdf). Also see information about the CAFAP program which is scheduled to begin in 2025. <https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/calfresh/california-food-assistance-program#:~:text=What%20is%20CFAP%3F,not%20qualify%20for%20federal%20benefits>.

**Sources of Income:** Emily and Amelia - SSDI (Social Security widow's benefits and surviving dependent's benefits each receive these from SSA. Certain groups of people have to be considered a CalFresh household. Included in the CF grant with Tommy and Tommy, Jr. Married family members and their children: Parents living with their natural, adopted or step children, or children living with their natural, adopted, or stepparents — unless the child is 22 years or older or is participating in the other parent's CalFresh benefits household. [MPP § 63-402.142.] Spouses living in the same household [MPP § 63-402.143.]

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(CalFresh eligible, cont'd from pg 4)

## Are there multiple CalFresh Households in one house?

CalFresh Household Requirements:

Parents living with their natural, adopted or step children, or children living with their natural, adopted, or stepparents — unless the child is 22 years or older or is participating in the other parent's CalFresh benefits household. [MPP § 63-402.142.] Spouses living in the same household. [MPP § 63-402.143.] who:

1. Shop together;
2. Store food together;
3. Cook together; and
4. Eat together.

Advocates should try to get the maximum benefit for all members of eligible families, understanding the potential CalFresh household make up is crucial for this task. For advocates this may require charting out the people, their ages, their immigration status. It will require a good and may be even long conversation with a CalFresh client.

Consider a chart that identifies these items:

*Full name*

*Age*

*Immigration Status*

*Source(s) of income*

*Relationship to the principal applicant*

*Is any member of the household on SSI*

*Is anyone in the household elderly and/or disabled*

*Is anyone of the household a foster child*

This may seem intrusive but getting a clear early understanding of household composition and resources, is essential to get the household (as opposed to the basic family unit) the most benefits that may be available to them.

### Practical Actions:

Advocates should consider what information CDSS needs to track certain information about members of an applying/recipient household including:

*How are benefits calculated for a Cal Fresh household?*

Review the CCWRO Public Assistance Tables (PAT) at [www.ccwro.org](http://www.ccwro.org). Please note that benefit amounts change effective 10/1/2024, the date that the new Federal budget starts.

*Can you have more than one Cal Fresh household at the same address?* Yes. Some people must always be considered members of the same household, primarily parents and their minor children. Also, a couple who are married to one another, i.e. a couple who are both seniors. A young adult sibling may be in a separate household from minor siblings.

*Can CalFresh benefits be combined with other types of Food and Nutrition Assistance?* Yes. School aged children and pre-school children may qualify for school-based food supplement programs. Pregnant women and nursing mothers qualify for WIC benefits as do children aged 4 or younger

### California SSI eligibility for Cal Fresh

In 2019, California Social Security Supplemental Income/ State Supplement Program (SSI or Title XVI) recipients became eligible for CalFresh. California was the last state to change the rule that basically held that the “state supplement” benefit available to SSI recipients was also a supplement for the state’s participation in general federal food and nutrition program known as SNAP. This is the CDSS informational website. <https://calfresh.dss.ca.gov/food/home/ssi-and-calfresh>. Humboldt County published a thoughtful explanation of this change. See <https://humboldt.gov/DocumentCenter/View/72739/1-17-15-Info-Sheet---CalFresh-and-SSI--SSP-Recipients#:~:text=SSI%20FSSP%20recipients%20are%20elderly,before%20looking%20at%20program%20eligibility>.

This change does cause some challenges for households with minor dependent children who are TANF eligible but who are not on SSI. Solutions may include increasing the SSP (State Supplement Payment for SSI) for recipient minor children) The goal here would be to increase the resources available to a household mainly to address California’s high housing costs. Consider Component with the goal of reducing homelessness among families with children.

The SSI change may be the most beneficial to the elderly and disabled who may qualify to have separate household status for their CalFresh benefits. This may be a useful option for household members who have special dietary needs which are usually related to health issues such as diabetes or cardiac issues.

For 2024 the SSI maximum payment for a disabled adult is \$1182.32; a disabled child receives \$1040.27. Equalizing the SSP would increase family household resources by more than \$140.00. Contact Daphne Macklin at [daphne.macklin@ccwro.org](mailto:daphne.macklin@ccwro.org)