

San Francisco County's CalFresh Employment and Training (CFET) Program: Identifying Opportunities for Santa Clara County's ABAWD Population

EILONA BETKOLIA-GEVARGIZ

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The time limit for Able-Bodied Adults without Dependents (ABAWDs) goes into effect in Santa Clara, San Francisco and San Mateo Counties on September 1, 2018. ABAWDs may only receive CalFresh benefits for up to 3 months within 36 months, if they are unable to meet the work requirements or are exempt from participating.

This case study examines the San Francisco Human Services Agency's (SFHSA) CalFresh Employment and Training (CFET) Program and its different components serving the ABAWDs.

SFHA has developed a robust program that has a proven track record of success in employment placement, retention and helping clients become self-sufficient. As Santa Clara County is preparing to serve its ABAWD population, there are lessons to learn from San Francisco County; specifically, Santa Clara County can focus on condensing its placement and recruitment timeline to a few days, and working rigorously when it comes to client and employer engagement by having dedicated staff focused on each area.

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Introduction

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the country's largest anti-hunger program. SNAP benefits are 100% federally funded and help families and individuals put food on the table by paying for a minimally adequate diet. SNAP, known as CalFresh in California, serves a particularly vulnerable population. On average, almost 4.3 million Californians received CalFresh assistance each month during the 2016 federal fiscal year.¹ About 8.8 percent of all SNAP participants (3.8 million) were non-disabled adults aged 18 through 49 who lived in childless households.

Federal regulations state that CalFresh clients who are of working age (18 to 49) and Able-Bodied Adults without Dependents (ABAWDs) are subject to CalFresh time limits. Since 1996, this rule has been part of the law that governs CalFresh.² Due to high unemployment rates, California has been operating under a series of statewide waivers for the ABAWD CalFresh time limit since October 1, 2008. Santa Clara, San Francisco and San Mateo Counties' federal eligibility to waive CalFresh time limits for the ABAWD population is set to expire on August 31, 2018.

The elimination of the waiver for the ABAWDs means they can only receive CalFresh benefits for three months in a 36-month period, unless they

satisfy the ABAWD work requirements or meet exemption criteria. The expiration of the ABAWD waiver brings exciting yet challenging opportunities for counties to develop and implement programs that will assist CalFresh recipients to become self-sufficient. Santa Clara County has begun preparing for this change by creating an ABAWD Work Group and assessing best practices from other counties.

San Francisco's CFET Program Targeting ABAWDs

As mentioned, the City and County of San Francisco's CalFresh time limit waiver is also set to expire on August 31, 2018. The San Francisco Human Services Agency (SFHSA) has estimated that over 11,000 of its CalFresh recipients are ABAWDs. An estimated 4,200 ABAWD clients may be at risk of losing their benefits since they do not meet the work requirements or exemptions. The Workforce Development Division (WDD) of the SFHSA has started a pilot program to identify and provide employment services to ABAWDs through the agency's Mission Workforce Development Center.

The referral to this pilot program is done through mass-mailers to ABAWD clients, through outreach from continuing eligibility staff and at the point of the intake application process. The continuing eligibility and intake staff screen clients utilizing a screening tool to find out whether a client meets the ABAWD work requirements and/or meets the exemption criteria. After the screening, if a client is deemed to be employable, then he/she is referred to WDD's recruitment orientation.

1. California Budget and Policy Center, Fact Sheet February 2018, (Hutchful, 2018)

2. United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, FNS 618, January 2016. "Waiver of the Time Limit for Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs) in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)."

The ABAWD Pilot Data Analysis for the month of February 2018 shows that out of the 149 ABAWDs that were screened, 15 WDD Referrals were made. The same analysis for the month of March 2018 shows that out of 184 ABAWDs that were screened at the point of intake and continuing eligibility determination, fifteen additional WDD Referrals were made.

WDD has consolidated its activities for General Assistance (GA) clients to meet the work requirements of ABAWDs. Due to its robust multiple activity options and tiered approach, the program is able to serve all eligible and unemployed clients regardless of their work experience, job skills, or education. Based on job readiness and skills, clients are able to choose and participate in one of the following tiers:

Tier One – Community Jobs Program (CJP). This opportunity is contracted out to community-based, non-profit organizations and is designated for clients with high barriers to employment whom require more support. The duration of this program is 6 months, and 100% of wages are subsidized by the SFHSA. During this paid internship, clients earn \$14 per hour working 32 hours weekly.

Tier Two – Public Service Trainee Program (PSTP) and Individualized Training Internship Program (ITIP). This program is designed to help clients with medium to moderate job skills successfully transition to full-time permanent employment through skills training and experience working at a variety of city/county departments. This opportunity is a temporary 6-month training position. Clients with outstanding work performance and attendance may be entitled to two 3-month extensions. SFHSA staff provide all personnel and payroll function for all city agencies. Clients have the ability to earn \$15.125 per hour and work 32 hours weekly.

Tier Three (1st component) – Wage Subsidy Program. This program is designed to assist clients with the most experience and skills in re-entering the labor market. The subsidized employment opportunities are in both private and non-profit businesses.

Clients have the opportunity to earn anywhere from \$15 to \$40 per hour while working a minimum of 32 to 40 hours per week.

Tier Three (2nd component) – Unsubsidized Employment. This tier is very similar to the wage subsidy program when it comes to the targeted client population. The only difference is that this is employment without subsidy. The employer is responsible for all costs associated with hiring a client.

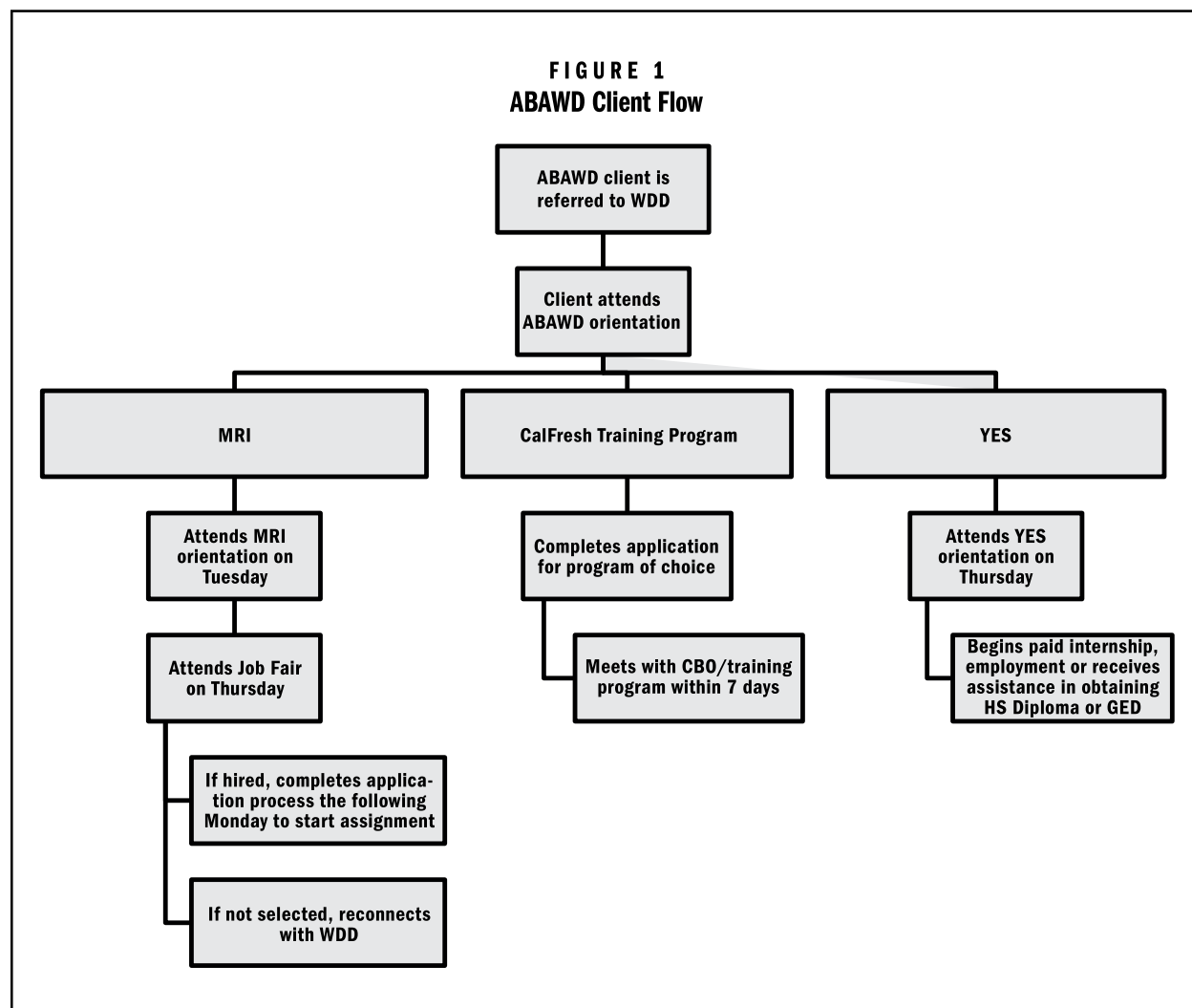
ABAWD Client Flow

San Francisco County has redesigned its County Adult Assistance Program (CAAP)–Employable Client Flow to meet the demands of the ABAWD population. For the current ABAWD Pilot Program, there are two concurrent pilot programs. The first pilot involves the mass mailer; ABAWD clients are being invited to attend a Mass Recruitment Initiative (MRI) every Tuesday. The second pilot involves the personal contact through the eligibility staff. If not exempt, eligibility staff refers clients to the WDD Orientation. At Orientation, WDD explains the options currently available.

WDD offers three different CalFresh Employment and Training Options listed below to its ABAWD Population (*Figure 1*).

Mass Recruitment Initiative (MRI). During MRI, clients receive an overview of the tiers/programs available to them. Clients are then presented with current opportunities for employment and/or training in one of the three previously mentioned tiers. The client has a choice of selecting at least four opportunities from different organizations for an interview. Once the clients have chosen their four jobs, they are then paired with a WDD Trainer to ensure they have a resume, clothing and transportation ready to attend the Jobs Now Recruitment Fair. The Resume Drop-In Workshop is open the same afternoon for clients who need to edit or update their resumes.

Two days after MRI, clients attend the Thursday Jobs Now Recruitment Fair. The public and private



sector employers are able to interview and hire candidates the same day. Each employer receives a list of 12 to 15 candidates to interview. The list of the candidates is based on the selection clients made during MRI. Employers are required to provide feedback after each interview. This feedback is utilized by training staff in coaching and working with clients to enhance their interview skills.

If a client is selected by employer, he/she goes back to WDD the following Monday to complete all the necessary paperwork to start employment. Clients who are not hired have the opportunity to work with the WDD Trainer and try again the following week.

CalFresh Training Programs. The City and County of San Francisco collaborates with Community-Based

Organizations (CBOs) to provide various training programs targeting the ABAWD population so clients are able to enhance their skills and reach self-sufficiency. The following CBOs are providing training programs to the San Francisco ABAWD population:

- **Community Housing Partnership** – provides a six-week training for Front Desk Clerk positions, available to all ABAWD clients.

The following training programs are available to currently at risk and/or formerly homeless ABAWD clients:

- **Arriba Juntos** – offers a ten-week Office Skills Training program, an eight-week Nursing Assistant Training program, and a four-week Home-care Training program.

- **Episcopal Community Services** – offers a five-month CHEFS (Culinary Training) program and up to eight months of a Hospitality Training program.
- **Goodwill** – offers a four-week Ramp-2-Retail Training program.

Interested clients complete an application for the program of their choice and are able to connect with the CBO/training program of their choice within 7 days.

Youth Employment Services (YES). This opportunity is only available for clients between the ages of 18 and 24. Eligible clients are given appointments to attend a Thursday YES Orientation. The YES program is designed to offer individual support and resources to clients in obtaining permanent employment, paid internships, or a High School Diploma or GED. Clients may receive a 6-month paid internship position with the City and County of San Francisco or a CBO. The program also assists clients in referring them for interviews with private sector employers who offer permanent part-time or full-time positions.

Employer and CBO Engagement

The WDD has dedicated staff, Business Account Representatives, who are engaging employers by reaching out to them and educating them about the benefits of the Jobs Now program and providing recruitment support to employers. Through partnerships with the San Francisco Office of Economic and Workforce Development and other city partners, businesses are able to thrive by getting connected with qualified job applicants and receiving wage subsidies. Employers are able to attend job fairs weekly and hire candidates immediately.

There are three different types of wage subsidies available to employers:

- For employers that offer compensation of \$16.50 per hour or greater, for a minimum of 32 hours per week, SFHSA will reimburse the employer:
 - 100% of wages paid for the first month
 - 75% of wages paid for the second month
 - \$1,000 a month for the remaining three months
- For employers that offer compensation of \$15.00 to \$16.49 per hour, for a minimum of 32 hours per week, SFHSA will reimburse employers \$5,000 for each eligible employee hired.
 - The reimbursement will be paid in monthly installments of \$1,000 for the first five months of a new hire.
 - Wages paid in excess of \$1,000 in each calendar month are the sole responsibility of the Employer.
- For employers that provide On the Job Training (OJT) and offer compensation of at least \$18 per hour, for a minimum of 32 hours per week and have the capacity to retain employee after training subsidy ends, SFHSA will provide:
 - Recruitment Assistance
 - 100% of wages covered for the 1st half of the training months
 - 50% of wages covered for the 2nd half of the training months

The duration of training is based on the O*NET Specific Vocational Preparation.

The SFHSA has partnered with over 500 Bay Area businesses to connect nearly 20,000 San Francisco residents to jobs since the program began in 2009.³

Outcome

San Francisco County's Jobs Now program model has a proven track record of success since its inception in 2009. Nearly 20,000 clients have found employment through the program. The average earnings for participants who completed the program increased by 55%. The post-program analysis showed that 78% of the participants are self-sufficient and no longer needed cash assistance two and half years after exiting the Jobs Now program.

3. (City and County of San Francisco Human Services Agency), JobsNOW! Employer Information, <https://www.sfhhsa.org/services/jobs-money/jobsnow/jobsnow-employers>

With the success of Jobs Now program in mind, for the CAAP and CalWORKs clients, the SFHA has expanded its program to include the ABAWD population. For its pilot project, specifically, the MRI, the employment readiness workshop is condensed to a couple of days, which shortens the time from when a client is first engaged by WDD to when they are interviewed and hired. Through the Subsidized Employment portion of the program, employers have an opportunity to hire candidates with barriers to employment, with minimal financial risk. SFHSA's partnership with The Office of Economic and Workforce Development emphasizes the importance of the Jobs Now program, which strengthens the local economy by providing opportunities to both job seekers and employers.

Funding

The funding for this population is fairly complex and requires tapping into several sources. The services provided through San Francisco County's Jobs Now Program for ABAWDs are funded through a combination of General Funds and CalFresh Employment and Training (CFET) dollars. The CFET money is federally funded and the counties receive 50% reimbursement for allowable costs. Since the wage subsidy is not an allowable cost for the CFET program, the County of San Francisco is utilizing its general funds to fund this program. For the upcoming fiscal year, SFHSA is seeking \$1.0 million in new funding from the general funds to provide public service training and wage reimbursement to at least 468 ABAWDs. SFHSA is reallocating its existing staff to create new ABAWD units in its Benefits Net (eligibility staff) and in WDD.⁴

It is important to note that both Santa Clara and San Francisco Counties are keeping an eye on Senate Bill 282. SB 282 will create employment opportunities by requiring county social services departments to seek a federal waiver that allows counties to use

CFET to support a subsidized employment program. CFET is a federal matching fund that allows counties to support specified employment and training activities, but the state must obtain a waiver from the Secretary of the United States Department of Agriculture to participate. The waiver will allow 50% federal reimbursement for eligible CFET activities to be used to provide a wage subsidy for ABAWD participants in counties that do not participate in the waiver of the ABAWD time limit.⁵

Recommendations for Santa Clara County

In Santa Clara County there are approximately 28,435 potential ABAWD individuals. Of those, about 4,500 may be subject to the three-month time limit and lose CalFresh benefits if they do not meet the work requirements or exemptions. In preparation of the expiration of the waiver, Santa Clara County has begun work in preparing to serve this population. In the upcoming months, a pilot program will start with designated staff to outreach to potential ABAWD clients to refer them to Vocational Services. In preparation for the return of ABAWDs, Santa Clara County could look into implementing and fine-tuning some aspects of the CFET program that San Francisco County has in place to meet the needs of its clients and the community it serves. Based on the proven success record of the San Francisco's CFET Program, the following recommendations are being made to Santa Clara County:

#1: County Employment Opportunities. San Francisco County has a strong subsidized employment through its general fund dollars. While both counties wait for the implementation of SB 282, the recommendation for Santa Clara County is to tweak its current unclassified program to offer employment opportunities to its ABAWD clients, as it does to its current CalWORKs clients who are participating in the Welfare to Work Program. The unclassified position has been proven to be successful in both

4. Department of Human Services and Human Services Agency Administration Proposed Budgets for FY 2018-2019 and FY 2019-2020, Kaplan, Dan through Rhorer, Trent, February 14, 2018.

5. State of California, Legislative Counsel Bureau, Senate Bill No. 282, Chapter 355, Legislative Counsel's Digest.

assisting CalWORKs clients in finding a county job, and for county departments to fill their vacant entry-level positions. The only requirement for the Vocational Services staff would be to develop and maintain the list of qualified candidates and work closely with Employee Services Agency. No additional costs are expected.

#2: Fast Tracking Employable Clients. San Francisco has condensed its Employment Readiness Workshop to couple of days for all employable clients. The same approach can be used in Santa Clara County. The county will be able to save a lot of time and have a greater chance of engaging clients by allowing them a shorter time from possibly finding a position to interviewing for it. The county would be able to save money and resources by condensing this approach for the employable clients.

#3: Employer Outreach and Engagement. San Francisco County has dedicated staff working directly with employers to increase employment opportunities for their clients. Santa Clara County can utilize its existing model for the CalWORKs client to outreach to a broader group of employers by targeting small and large local businesses. This will help in being able to fast-track clients to employment. The county is already in the process of hiring ten additional Vocational Services staff to serve the ABAWD population. These staff can utilize some of their time to outreach to employers to bring in new “business” to the county in terms of employers who would be interested in hiring ABAWD clients.

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