

San Francisco County's CalFresh Employment and Training (CFET) Service Model: Possibilities for Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) in Contra Costa County

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Able Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) waiver will be expiring in Contra Costa County effective August 31, 2019, and thereafter, CalFresh customers classified as ABAWDs will only be eligible to receive three months of benefits in a three-year period unless they qualify for an exemption or meet the work requirements.

ABAWD implementation in San Francisco County began September 1, 2018 and since then, San Francisco County's Human Service Agency's CalFresh Employment and Training (CFET) plan has incorporated the CFET service model to include and assist their ABAWD customers to meet the program requirements and maintain their benefits as they move into self-sufficiency.

Although San Francisco County has a greater availability of financial resources to assist their CalFresh customers to obtain and maintain employment, Contra Costa County can benefit by incorporating some of the facets of San Francisco County's service delivery model into a program design. These improvements will assist the ABAWD CalFresh customers to meet the program requirements by providing them with a timely orientation to the ABAWD requirements conducted by in-house staff members already trained to help in job search, preparation, and retention for other programs to support CalFresh customers subject to ABAWD requirements.

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Introduction

San Francisco County was one of the original California counties to implement the Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) regulations for CalFresh customers on September 1, 2018. These regulations require that adults without dependents between the ages of 18 and 49 who do not qualify for an exemption meet the work participation requirement, which is to work a minimum of 80 hours per month or participate in an allowable Work Program for 80 hours per month. They may also participate in Workfare to meet the requirement and keep their eligibility to receive CalFresh benefits by performing three hours of Workfare each week.

The first step in preparation for the implementation was to review exemptions for all existing CalFresh customers who appeared to be subject to the ABAWD rules. After exemptions were applied to 80% of the potential ABAWDs, 3,200 customers were non-exempt from the work requirements. This number was far less than expected.

In order to provide these ABAWD customers an array of opportunities to meet the work requirements and maintain their benefits, San Francisco County expanded their CalFresh Employment and Training Program (CFET).

Program and Service Delivery of San Francisco County's CFET Program

San Francisco County uses a service delivery model developed for the Personal Assisted Employment

Services (PAES) program for single adults without children. This model follows the model for the CalWORKS employment services program. Initially, when a customer applies for CalFresh, the Eligibility Worker determines whether the individual is eligible for the CFET program and schedules the applicant for an orientation within approximately two days. Currently, approximately 50% of the applicants referred to orientation show for their appointment.

During the orientation, ABAWD requirements and exemptions are presented to the customers in detail. After the orientation, customers select the activity they will perform in order to meet their ABAWD requirement. During the overview of available options, facilitators present the customers with four avenues of opportunity: employment through the JobsNOW! program, Vocational Training, the Vocational Immersion Program (VIP), or Workfare.

JobsNOW!

Those choosing employment through JobsNOW!, the city-subsidized employment contract which has been in effect for eleven years, currently have four tiers of employment services options:

- Community Jobs Program (CJP)
- Part-Time or Full-Time Employment (Wage Subsidy or Unsubsidized)
- Public Service Trainee (PST)
- On-the-Job Training (limited availability)

Customers who need additional support to return to work enroll in the Community Jobs Program (CJP), which provides supported employment consisting of a six-month placement for 32 hours per week, 25 of which are paid at \$15.00 per hour, with an additional seven hours per week of professional development instruction.

For those ready to step into a job, JobsNOW! has connections to approximately 100 employers who can interview and hire customers at \$15.00 per hour or higher, subsidized or unsubsidized. Every Thursday, employers conduct interviews with potential employees. The premium tier offered is private sector employment, which is 100% reimbursed by the subsidy for five months. This tier has an 82% employee retention rate, and 87% of CalWORKs and County Adult Assistance Programs (CAAP) customers no longer needed cash assistance two and a half years after exiting the JobsNOW! program.

Public Service Trainee (PST) positions are located at several City and County of San Francisco facilities and the employees work 32 hours per week under this plan at a wage of \$15.58 per hour.

Vocational Training

Customers subject to the ABAWD rules receive information about available Vocational Training offered through the Office of Economic and Workforce Development (OEWD) and Community Partnerships. Through these various programs, customers can receive training for jobs in Hospitality, Technology, Truck Driving, Retail, Janitorial, and Healthcare fields.

Vocational Immersion Program (VIP)

Limited English Speaking customers can receive services through the VIP program, which connects them to English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction as well as Workplace Immersion in four levels:

Level 1 – 30 hours per week of ESL classroom instruction, with Workplace Immersion for five hours per week at \$15.00 per hour

Level 2 – 25 hours per week of ESL classroom instruction, with paid Workplace Immersion of 10 hours per week

Level 3 – 20 hours per week of ESL classroom instruction, with paid Workplace Immersion of 15 hours per week

Level 4 – 15 hours per week of ESL classroom instruction, with paid Workplace Immersion for 20 hours per week

Workfare

CalFresh customers may also elect to participate in workfare for three hours per week to maintain their CalFresh benefits. These assignments are primarily within the Department of Public Works or Muni Transportation and involve street and bus cleaning or laundry services. These Workfare assignments also enable participants to gain some work experience and skills. Some customers may also be able to perform Alternative Workfare at select Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) rather than the aforementioned departments.

After the ABAWD Orientation, the customer selects their activity. Those electing Employment, Training, or Education are given transportation assistance and an onboarding appointment, which is a one-on-one session with a staff member to discuss the Employment and Training options. Those electing to go the Workfare route stay to review site expectations regarding timeliness, dress, safety instructions, and any required training.

Contra Costa County's ABAWD Projection and Demographics

Contra Costa County estimates that there are approximately 4,500 ABAWDs who are not currently coded with an exemption and therefore may be at risk of losing benefits three months after implementation. Nearly half of ABAWDs are men under 30 years old, and 98% are English speaking.¹ Caseworkers began reaching out to customers in March

1. Contra Costa County ABAWD Fact Sheet, March 2018

to assist in obtaining exemption documentation. In addition, we have partnered with the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano to have an ABAWD Navigator in our district offices to assist this population. Once the exemption coding is complete, the number of ABAWDs are expected to be reduced by as much as 50%. These numbers are not static, as customers may shift in and out of ABAWD status on a monthly basis.

Contra Costa County's Current CFET Model

CalFresh intake packets in Contra Costa County currently provide all applicants with information about the two CBOs that provide direct service delivery of employment services and support to low-income customers who meet their eligibility criteria, Rubicon and Opportunity Junction. Rubicon serves low-income individuals recently released from incarceration in East and West County, and Opportunity Junction serves low-income young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 in East County. The oversight for these two programs lies with the California Foundation of Community Colleges. Fresh Success is the name of the umbrella program. Customer participation in both of these programs is voluntary. In 2018, two hundred Contra Costa County CalFresh customers were served in both programs. Three additional providers will be onboarded and will be in place by our implementation date.

Recommendations

Although Contra Costa County's CFET program currently serves a more limited population than San Francisco County's expanded CFET program, there are opportunities for increasing the services to ABAWD customers based on the service delivery observed in San Francisco County. The PAES program for single adults was modeled after the pre-existing CalWORKs employment services program, which has recently been downsized in Contra Costa County. The implementation of the ABAWD regulations provides an opportunity for Contra Costa County to revisit conducting group orientations to employment services available for

customers in all programs by staff already trained to provide employment services to Welfare to Work customers. This would give ABAWD customers an opportunity to receive information on an array of opportunities to meet their work requirement without having to navigate through the options on their own. Although Contra Costa County does not have access to funds to subsidize employment to the extent that San Francisco County does, it does have access to trained staff in employment services to support ABAWDs wishing to find and keep employment through Job Club and Job Search activities. An orientation to ABAWD requirements and resources could be offered weekly and include topics such as connecting to the existing CFET providers, Rubicon and Opportunity Junction, meeting the ABAWD requirements through volunteer activities at the Contra Costa Food Bank or local churches, and utilizing the resources provided by the Workforce Development Board such as East Bay Works Career Centers. A modified Job Club/Job Search could be conducted to include ABAWD customers as well as Welfare to Work participants.

Next Steps

The next steps toward implementing the above recommendations would be to explore the funding opportunities and challenges related to blending of program staff in Welfare to Work and CalFresh programs to evaluate the fiscal viability of having Employment Services workers conduct Orientations to CalFresh ABAWD customers. Additionally, information on the available resources for ABAWD customers would need to be consolidated into an Orientation curriculum. A pilot of the ABAWD Orientation would need to be conducted to assess the effectiveness of offering the sessions and the overall attendance and success rate.

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