

San Francisco Diaper Bank: An Opportunity for Napa County to Meet This Basic Need

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Diapers are not a luxury but a necessity that every single child in the United States should not be deprived. Diaper insecurity can bring major physical, mental, and emotional problems to children and families. The San Francisco Diaper Bank has taken the initiative to develop a program to meet a basic need for children ages zero to three since 2015. San Francisco Human Services Agency (SFHSA) was the first organization in the United States to pilot such a project. The San Francisco Diaper Bank piloted the

program with CalWORKs families in 2015, then expanded to CalFresh families in 2019, and finally expanded to Medi-Cal families in 2022. The last expansion brought over 52% of eligible children to the program. Napa County Self-Sufficiency Division has constantly observed families coming to our doors asking for diapers. Unfortunately, only one organization in the county can help provide a handful of diapers as an emergency service only.

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Introduction

In 2014, the San Francisco Human Services Agency (SFHSA) became the first local government organization to develop and propose a pilot diaper bank to help low-income families with children under three years old. After conducting research and data analysis, SFHSA implemented the pilot program for CalWORKs families in 2015. The program expanded to CalFresh families in 2019 and Medi-Cal families in 2022. The last expansion was their largest, almost doubling the number of eligible children.

The program's main purpose is to ensure all children have access to enough diapers without struggling to change diapers for the children as needed. Eliminating the need to decide between rent, food, or diapers for their children helps families meet their basic needs. Families are automatically enrolled in the San Francisco Diaper Bank when approved for one of the public assistance services. Families are informed of this service by mail, including a brochure on how to access this benefit.

According to SFHSA's most recent study in October 2022, San Francisco had over six thousand families eligible to receive diapers. However, the majority of families pick up diapers infrequently, with only about 22% of eligible families getting their diapers in a given month. Over the course of a given year, about half of eligible families use the diaper bank at least once (Cano, 2022). SFHSA staff continues to work hard to increase the program usage since they understand that diaper need is like any other basic necessity. Staff have been looking at ways to make it easier for families to pick up diapers at more convenient locations.

The San Francisco Diaper Bank is funded by local, state, and federal funding. SFHSA contracts with Help a Mother Out (HAMO),

a non-profit organization that manages the distribution of diapers to their distribution centers. There are 13 distribution centers, including two government sites and 11 non-profit organizations and Family Resource Centers. Families are provided with up to two boxes of diapers per month per eligible child.

Collaboration

SFHSA works closely with HAMO, which manages several programs across the Bay Area. The collaboration was an easy transition since SFHSA had already developed the program and identified the eligible families for this benefit and HAMO had the infrastructure to distribute diapers to these families quickly. HAMO has established relationships with several non-profit organizations and could easily incorporate this program. HAMO even has its own diaper brand called ELO. Their contract shows that during a 5-year budget, about 86% of the expenses are to purchase diapers.

SFHSA sends a secure file containing information on eligible children and families to HAMO regularly and they incorporate this information into HAMO's Point of Sale system utilized by distribution centers. HAMO oversees inventory at each distribution site to ensure they have enough variety to offer families. They also do outreach and keep their informational materials up to date to include new distribution sites. The distribution sites do not receive monetary compensation but are happy to help distribute diapers to needy families.

Benefits

HAMO conducted an evaluation report for San Francisco's Diaper Bank (Help a Mother Out, 2021). Some of the findings

with the non-profit organizations and Family Resource Centers indicate that:

- 52% see new clients in their organization
- 46% see an increase in attendance/participation in their program
- 42% see an increase in trust with clients
- 27% observed longer-lasting relationships with current clients

Families also had an opportunity to participate in a survey. Survey results indicate that the diaper program encourages them to apply to and maintain their public assistance and access other services at the family resource center. Families that received free diapers from the diaper bank reported significant benefits to their family's situation.

- 94% indicated that their family feels less stressed
- 94% indicated that their child is healthier
- 90% indicated that they have more money for food
- 87% indicated that they could pay bills more easily

Lessons Learned

SFHSA reviewed its program in 2022 to learn how to improve access to its community's diaper bank. Staff conducted several interviews with families accessing and not accessing the diaper bank to gather feedback regarding constraints. Some of the findings include:

- Transportation issues
- Free diapers were perceived as low quality
- Conflicts with site schedule and location

- Unclear information to select an authorized individual to pick up diapers on family's behalf
- Diaper Bank inventory (some sizes not available)
- Equity of access by program (ie. undocumented immigrants ineligible for CalWORKs or CalFresh)

Some recommendations primarily suggested by the families interviewed during the study include:

- Increase inventory of all sizes across all locations, which may require creating more storage capacity
- Increase locations to include libraries, schools, churches, or food pop-ups
- Increase connections with WIC, health clinics, hospitals, and social workers

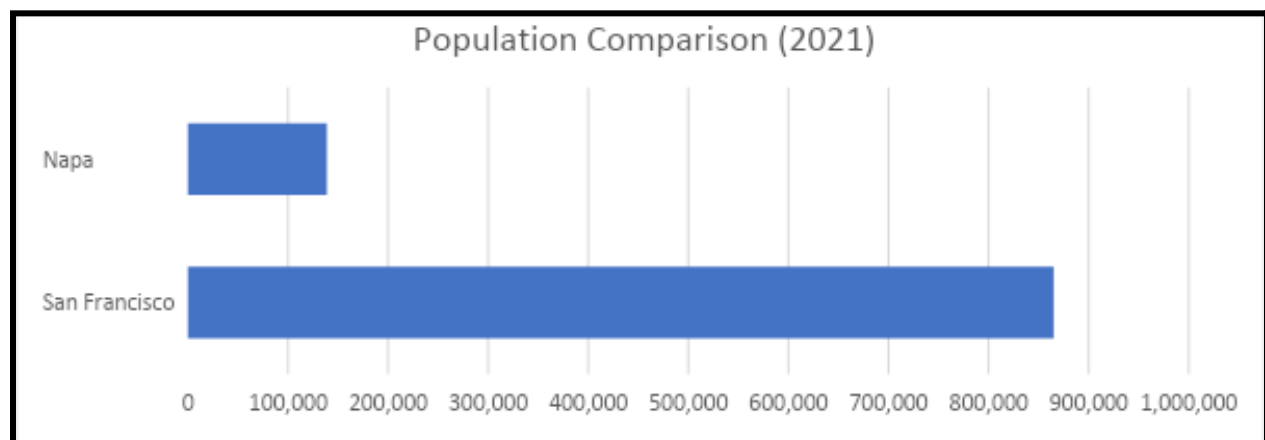
Data

San Francisco and Napa County have very different demographics. San Francisco has a much larger population than Napa County. Below is a chart comparing the numbers of San Francisco and Napa children who are potentially eligible for the diaper program. The data used for San Francisco is the data that was provided on their last program evaluation as reported by Cano in 2022. Napa's data was data pulled on May 5, 2023 from Napa's internal eligibility determination system, CalSAWS. As observed in Table 1, Napa has about 8.5% of the children enrolled in the CalWORKs program compared to San Francisco County. This is not surprising since Napa County has about 16% of the population compared to San Francisco County, according to California Demographics by Cubit.

Table 1. Potentially Eligible San Francisco and Napa children

Program	San Francisco Children 0-3 yrs old	Napa Children 0-3 yrs old
CalWORKs with CalFresh and Medi-Cal	1700	146
CalFresh with Medi-Cal	1500	764
Medi-Cal only	3500	2129
Total	6700	3039

Table 2. San Francisco and Napa Population



Recommendation for Napa County

Napa County Health and Human Services should consider developing a pilot diaper bank program for children receiving CalWORKs. It is recommended that Napa County considers the diaper needs in its community as a basic necessity to improve the health of our children. In Napa County, there is no available program to help

low-income mothers with small children with their diaper needs except for the limited emergency diaper services from COPE, a non-profit organization located in downtown Napa.

First, an assessment should be conducted to pull historical data on the Napa CalWORKs program and see how the number of children three and under has fluctuated over the last few years. Second, a workgroup involving

all staff levels should come together to provide input on what they have observed regarding diaper needs in our CalWORKs caseloads and include our fiscal department to review the possibility of utilizing part of our single allocation budget.

Third, once the need assessment and data have been addressed, a Geographic Information System (GIS) Map should be developed to see where our clients are. A race and equity tool should be utilized to ensure that proposals meet the needs of our community. Also, Napa County should consider how they will bridge transportation issues since Napa County is very large geographically.

Program Recommendations

Napa County may consider implementing the program in-house to keep costs down since it currently has offices throughout the county. This may require the county to develop an inventory tracking mechanism and audit system, and introduces the burden of purchasing diapers and finding the best deals. Keeping the program limited to CalWORKs families and operating in-house will keep the program very small. CalWORKs eligibility workers and employment services workers could contact their clients if they have not picked up their diapers. They could also take the diapers to families during home visits or meet the client outside the office. Other strategies may include offering extended hours (although this could raise costs and labor issues, and would need to be carefully considered) and different locations to pick up diapers while being available for outreach and signing up additional clients for benefits.

Alternatively, contracting with a non-profit organization that already has tracking mechanisms in place could possibly make the program run smoother and build off

existing relationships with CalWORKs clients, making it easier for participants to access benefits. Some Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) may be part of the California Department of Social Services Diaper Bank Program and may get a matched funding opportunity to obtain diapers at a better price if buying in bulk to meet contracts with multiple organizations. A non-profit organization could also extend hours and locations sites where clients can pick up their diapers at their convenience.

Financial Impact on Napa County

If Napa County has similar success to the San Francisco Diaper Bank, about 32% of their CalWORKs participants will participate in a Diaper Bank. This would mean that 47 children will receive diapers every month. This translates to a \$4,700 per month or \$56,200 per year expense to purchase diapers, if these children receive two boxes per month at \$50 per box.

Conclusion

Napa County has an opportunity to develop a program to meet a basic need for families in our community who need this extra help with their children. A pilot diaper program would allow Napa County to improve the pilot before creating a permanent program or expanding it to other public assistance beneficiaries. Napa County could develop a pilot proposal to maintain the program in-house or contract with a non-profit organization based on the needs assessment, available budget, and GIS map to better meet the needs of our CalWORKs community.

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