

# **SAN FRANCISCO HUMAN SERVICE AGENCY'S CalFRESH EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAM**

**Kenya Campbell**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), or CalFresh (CF) as it is known in California, is a public benefit program providing food supplements for needy individuals and families. A large number of CF recipients are unemployed or underemployed. CalFresh Employment & Training (CFET) programs provide access to education, vocational training, intensive case management, and other tools for CalFresh recipients. California is working on developing CFET programs in all 58 counties. However, federal funding at 100% for CFET programs is very limited, but there are 50/50 matching funds available to augment non-federal revenue sources. Counties need to develop programs that support the needs of local residents while remaining fiscally responsible.

This case study examines the San Francisco County Human Services Agency's CFET program that has proven outcomes, partners effectively with community partners, and provides extensive services that match the needs of each participant.

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## **Introduction**

One goal of public benefit programs is to provide opportunities for customers to obtain relevant skills that will lead to self-sufficiency and a cessation of public benefit receipt. One such opportunity is the CalFresh Employment & Training (CFET) program which has several components that help participants gain or improve marketable job skills. Contra Costa County's Employment & Human Services Department (EHSD) has not operated a CFET program in several years. This absence was due, in part, to the Great Recession as well as a lack of resources. EHSD has received federal eligibility to waive CalFresh time limits for the Able Bodied Adults without Dependents (ABAWD) population.

However, Contra Costa County's ABAWD waiver is set to expire at the end of 2017. When implemented, thousands of CalFresh recipients will be eligible for benefits for only three months out of 36 unless they participate in workfare, a component of CFET. EHSD was afforded the opportunity to develop a CFET program to provide job related services to interested and motivated CalFresh recipients. The opportunity is through the Federal SNAP to Skills Project, which will provide technical assistance (TA) through the Seattle Jobs Initiative (SJI). EHSD's participation in SNAP to Skills combined with its resolve to develop an effective CFET program and commitment to extend eligibility to vital nutrition resources for thousands of food insecure residents made evaluating San Francisco County's Human Service Agency's (SF-HSA) CFET program worthwhile.

## **San Francisco Human Service Agency's CFET**

SF-HSA has operated an extensive CFET program targeted to its SF County Adult Assistance Program (CAAP) participants for several years. CAAP provides cash assistance and other services to adult residents with little or no income and no minor dependents.

CAAP has four components:

- General Assistance (GA), which provides cash assistance. An income eligible resident can receive GA for as long as financially needed with participation in workfare and or Job Search activities.
- Supplement Security Income Pending (SSIP) provides case management assistance for navigating the SSI application process to individuals who have a disability that has lasted or is likely to last 12 months or more.
- Cash Assistance Linked to Medi-Cal (CALM) serves individuals who are receiving Medi-Cal due to age or disability.
- Personal Assisted Employment Services (PAES) serves employable adults with job placement and training through the following components: Adult Basic Education, Vocational Training, Behavioral Health Support, Career Counseling, Youth Services (ages 18-24), and Jobs NOW access.

Any participant in any of the CAAP programs is invited to participate in the CFET program and receives employment and training opportunities; however, all employable GA and interested non-assistance CalFresh recipients are referred to PAES.

## **Personal Assisted Employment Services (PAES)**

San Francisco County conducts an initial CAAP orientation for all applicants to determine if they are employable or unemployable. All employable cash assistance recipients are referred to PAES for job-related services at the Tenderloin Workforce Center (TWC). PAES is a 27-month program with a 26-hour weekly participation requirement. The 27 months is a lifetime, non-consecutive eligibility period; the program is voluntary but a cash (GA) sanction may be imposed for non-compliance. PAES also offers Ancillary Services to assist participants with employment barriers including but not limited to funding for work clothes, transportation, and union dues. PAES's Employment Specialists work one-on-one with participants to develop an employment plan while providing information about program activities and responsibilities during participation.

### **Tenderloin Workforce Center**

TWC is one of San Francisco's workforce development centers designed to meet the unique needs of the PAES population as well as other San Francisco job seekers. TWC offers the following workshop sessions:

- CAAP Orientation
- CAAP Evaluation—providing information about workforce assignments and responsibilities
- CAAP Job Search—allowing clients to research information about local employment opportunities within the Bay Area
- Group Employment Preparation (GEP) or Job Club—six weeks of job readiness classes and workshops

- JobsNOW Prep Workshop—prepares PAES participants to sign up for JobsNOW subsidized jobs

## **JobsNOW**

San Francisco’s JobsNOW program, started five years ago, serves both CalWORKs and CFET participants through providing subsidized employment opportunities. According to the City and County of San Francisco’s CFET, “a tiered job placement, subsidized employment approach [is used] in order to provide employment opportunities for job seekers at all levels of job readiness.”<sup>1</sup>

- Those with low levels of experience and job readiness can participate in highly supported transitional employment opportunities where the employers offer on-the-job coaching and participants have access to career development classes and case management services.
- The Public Service Trainee program partners with other San Francisco agencies and allows participants to work side-by-side with regular employees gaining skills and experience that will help them transition to unsubsidized employment in local government.
- The Wage Subsidy program is the third tier and matches CFET and Welfare-to-Work participants with private industry employers. San Francisco pays subsidized wages for five to six months with the expectation that the employer will retain the participant at the end of the subsidy period.

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<sup>1</sup> Austin, T. (2015). *CalFresh Employment & Training Plan FFY 2016*. San Francisco: City & County of San Francisco.

## **Vocational Training & Education**

San Francisco partners with several vocational training providers to support participants who need skill development or enhancement. Most vocational training opportunities will result in the participant receiving some sort of certification upon completion. Employment certifications are often transferable and allow job seekers additional employment opportunities.

For some participants, additional education is needed before they can become job seekers. Some opportunities for education available in San Francisco include Adult Basic Education, English as a Second Language, High School Equivalency (GED), and selected post-secondary education. San Francisco has chosen to include these components because functional illiteracy, limited English proficiency, and a lack of a high school diploma or GED are serious barriers to many jobs and training programs.<sup>2</sup>

## **Supportive & Ancillary Services**

CFET participants are also eligible to receive supportive services for items, such as transportation, interview clothes, costs for eligibility certifications, and childcare subsidies. San Francisco HSA's CFET specifically targets single adults, therefore, incurring no childcare costs but all other ancillary expenses are allowed and reimbursed or paid directly to the provider.

## **Budget & Staffing**

San Francisco HSA's CFET budget is approximately \$20 million dollars annually, with 50% of the funds coming from the county General Fund and 50% coming from federal matching funds. These funds can serve approximately 10,000 program participants. According to the October-December 2015 Stat 47 Report, Part F, San Francisco had 15,203 work registrants and 11,704

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<sup>2</sup> Austin, T. (2015). *CalFresh Employment & Training Plan FFY 2016*. San Francisco: City & County of San Francisco.

ABAWDs compared to Contra Costa County's 12,653 and 6928, respectively. San Francisco has 54 Full Time Equivalents (FTE) dedicated to CFET across several classifications. In comparison, to accommodate the number of potential CFET participants in Contra Costa, the county would need approximately 40 FTEs to operate a program similar to San Francisco's.

### **Program Outcomes**

San Francisco has had significant success with their CFET programs, especially JobsNOW. In a report covering July 2011 through June 2014, SF-HSA reported 57% of JobsNOW clients had earnings in the quarter after exiting the program. Even more impressive, JobsNOW clients' average quarterly earnings more than doubled after participating in the program. Six months after exiting JobsNOW, 49% of clients were no longer on CalFresh. After 18 months, 46% of clients still had earnings, with the average income steadily rising, and 53% of clients were no longer on CalFresh 18 months after exiting.

San Francisco has clearly demonstrated the effectiveness of its CFET program for its clients and has systematically and thoughtfully developed a program that uses public and private industry partners, building strong community relationships. Funding is an important consideration, as San Francisco's model is expensive and relies on city and county support. Human service agencies in other counties that do not have comparable access to the same level of general funds will need to rely on community based organizations (CBOs) to match available federal funds to provide services.

### **Implications for Contra Costa County**

Contra Costa County's EHSD is currently participating in the SNAP to Skills Pilot Project.

The pilot is receiving technical assistance from the Seattle Jobs Initiative (SJI) to develop a CFET program that includes leveraging federal funding to provide services by partnering with local CBOs who have matching non-federal funds. EHSD can use lessons learned, including successful program components from San Francisco's HSA, when developing its own program. Additionally, Contra Costa County will lose its ABAWD waiver at the end of 2017 and will need to create a workfare component to assist county residents in maintaining CalFresh eligibility beyond three months in a 36-month period. EHSD should use the next two years to develop and implement a comprehensive CFET that can not only provide workfare for the county's ABAWD population, but also provide employment and training opportunities that will result in a living wage and financial independence from public benefit programs.

Given San Francisco's program size and use of county matching funds, Contra Costa County will need to evaluate funding sources and consider all options for allocating matching funds for program administration costs that exceed the 100% Federal E&T Grant monies of approximately \$140,000. EHSD will also need to seek qualified CBOs to partner with to draw down federal matching funds to offer CFET components to clients.

### **Recommendations**

EHSD should explore developing a CFET model similar to San Francisco's given available resources. The steps towards this end can include:

- Partnering with community based organizations with experience offering employment resources to the target population, as this would allow EHSD to maximize available funding through a 50/50 match.



- Developing a workfare program for job-ready CalFresh (CF) recipients where they can meet program participation hours.
  - EHSD will need to locate partner organizations willing to supervise workfare participants. Like SF-HSA, EHSD should partner with other county government departments, including Public Works, the Department of Conservation and Development, and Animal Services. If the CF recipient does not want to participate in an EHSD sponsored activity, the recipient could locate a local non-profit organization willing to provide workfare activities and provide verification.
  - The workfare program would need to meet ABAWD requirements for regaining eligibility including the minimum number of participation hours.
- Developing a Job Club for CFET similar to the Welfare-to-Work Job Club and the SF-HSA GEPS program, providing Job Readiness Workshops, credit counseling/repair, appropriate dress, and help finding and retaining employment. GEPS also helps identify next steps and assesses barriers to employment, including behavioral health barriers, and provides referrals to appropriate support agencies.
- Developing a supervised/unsupervised Job Search component with a specified number of verifiable job search contacts required per month.
- Given EHSD has the local Workforce Development Board (WDB) integrated in the department, the department should consider contracting with WDB to provide employment and training to CF recipients. WDB has established processes and resources in place to assist CF recipients in finding living wage employment.
- Exploring opportunity to provide subsidized employment opportunities to CF recipients. Subsidized employment has been extremely successful with Welfare to Work

participants. They receive six months of on-the-job training with local employers with their earnings being partially funded. During the March 2016 SNAP to Skills Convening, the State of Arkansas discussed contracting with Goodwill Services to provide CFET and being able to fund “retail apprenticeships” with 50/50 matching funds.

- Exploring developing a counseling program similar to CAAP Counseling which is through Behavioral Health Services and leverages Medi-Cal funding.
- Maximizing partnership opportunities with the local Workforce Development Board including program administration as it is imbedded within EHSD.

EHSD is in the planning phases of implementing a CFET program and has a target date of late 2016 for a pilot project with a local community based organizations. The information gained through this BASSC project will provide valuable insight on how to develop, staff, and implement a CFET program that will provide support to an underserved portion of the local community.

### **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank San Francisco Human Services Agency for its generosity as I worked to complete my BASSC project. Terri Austin (Administrative Manager), Jovita Ramos (Center Manager of the Tenderloin Workforce Center), and Bernadette Santos (Workforce Development Division Manager) were instrumental in providing me with all of the information necessary to understand their CalFresh Employment & Training Program. Everyone was extremely gracious and informative. Terri and Jovita were excellent hosts as I visited the JobsNOW Center and the Mission Street Office. The materials and documents provided about SF-HSA’s CFET provided clarity and insight into the inner workings of CFET and how Contra Costa County could

replicate efforts. I would like to thank Rebecca Darnell (Workforce Services Deputy Director) for her support and guidance as I investigated EHSD's efforts to develop a CFET program. Additionally, I would like to thank Kathy Gallagher (EHSD Executive Director) for her support as I completed the BASSC program.