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Employment Support Initiative Update

The Santa Clara County CalWORKs population has been undergoing a slow, but steady transformation over the past several years. As illustrated on pages 2 and 3, the overall trend reveals a declining caseload that is becoming older, with over three-quarters of all families headed by a single parent. In 2016, over half of all Employment Services participants are employed, compared to just 37% a mere five years ago. One-fifth of clients are also participating in educational programs aimed at increasing their long-term earning potential to secure a future.

These changes to the CalWORKs and Employment Services caseloads paint an eye-opening picture of the changing face of poverty in the region. According to the U.S. Census Bureau's Official Poverty Rate, nearly 23% of California children lived in poverty in 2014, yet only half of those children were receiving CalWORKs assistance.

The sobering reality for low-income families in the state is further detailed in a recent report from the California Budget & Policy Center (see Appendix A). With no new investments for CalWORKs on the horizon, the maximum grant for a family of three falls below 40% of the federal poverty line. This leaves them far short of affording the fair market rental rate of \$1,582 for a one-bedroom apartment in San Jose.

In Santa Clara County, we are concentrating our efforts on strengthening and expanding existing programs, improving service delivery and creating new initiatives to move our clients closer to self-sufficiency.

This update offers a glimpse into these efforts and recent accomplishments, as we continue our strong tradition of providing innovative programs and services to the at-risk families we serve. The year is off to a strong start; we have sustained high Work Participation Rates, added a new Rapid Re-Housing Program, launched exciting CalFresh outreach efforts and hosted an incredible celebration of the 25th anniversary of the CalWORKs Client Achievement Awards.

As shown in the pages that follow, Employment Services remains committed to building upon our strong programs in the fight against the debilitating effects of poverty and the pursuit of self-sufficiency for all CalWORKs families.

Rafaela Perez

Administrator
Employment Services



A Growing Housing Crisis

Low income families in Santa Clara County are engaged in an uphill battle with the area’s increasingly competitive housing market. In a recent analysis, the California Budget and Policy Center found that at present minimum wage rates, a single mother of two in California would have to work 116 hours per week in order to afford a two bedroom apartment at the statewide fair market rate. This issue is compounded in high cost areas like Santa Clara County, where rental rates have risen faster than wages. This leaves families devoting more of their income to keeping a roof over their heads with little left over for other basic needs.

Locally, the CalWORKs program has been working intensely to develop viable solutions to keep clients ahead of the alarming housing crisis.

Family Services

Now in its second year, the Family Services Program continues to provide the critical link for at-risk families facing a housing crisis. At the heart of the program lies a specialized, multi-disciplinary unit of Employment Counselors, Social Workers, Housing Support Specialists, Mental Health Specialists and a Domestic Violence Advocate.

Working side by side with clients, the Family

Services Unit provides intensive case management and referrals to help families overcome the barriers that are preventing them from participating in their Welfare-to-Work activities. Through their efforts, they’ve served 217 families throughout the first half of the fiscal year.

Upon entering the program, each client attends a Focus Team Meeting to uncover issues that have impacted their housing circumstances. Working together, the team co-develops a Family Services plan that is tailored to address the client’s specific needs and barriers. These plans include direct services or referrals to services designed to address the issues that undermine family stability, including housing assistance, emergency food and clothing, domestic violence services, mental health services, at-risk youth and children’s services, substance abuse counseling, financial literacy and expedited placement into employment.

CalWORKs Housing Support

For those who have lost their housing and are homeless, the CalWORKs Housing Support Program provides extensive assistance needed to secure new housing. Families may be eligible for temporary motel stays, moving costs, utility deposits, security deposits and rental subsidies.

Throughout the first half of the fiscal year, the CalWORKs Housing Support Program has received 122 referrals. Sixty-eight of these families were eligible and enrolled in the program, receiving case management services and emergency hotel assistance for temporary shelter. Since November 2014, the program has served a total of 219 families, which includes 703 children. Families also received follow-up employment counseling to aid them in job search or enrollment into employment, the first step toward self-sufficiency and maintaining housing costs following the subsidy period.

Homelessness Prevention

Families in danger of losing their housing are referred to the Homelessness Prevention Program to receive services. A Homelessness Prevention plan may include assistance with unpaid rent or utilities, eviction assistance, moving costs or security deposits for a new home.

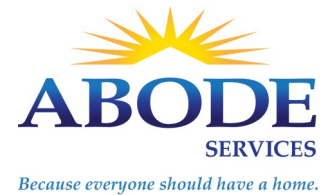
The Homelessness Prevention Program has received 73 referrals and helped 66 eligible families maintain a stable home. The program helped to resolve housing crises, allowing families to refocus on attaining self-sufficiency.

SSA Rapid Re-Housing

CalWORKs Employment Services and the Office of Supportive Housing have recently partnered on a new initiative to develop the Rapid Re-Housing Program (RRP). In collaboration with Abode Services, the RRP provides housing related services and employment assistance to eligible non-CalWORKs families.

The goal of the new program is to extend stabilizing services to families that fall outside of the traditional scope of CalWORKs, but are equally at risk of experiencing homelessness. Eligible populations may include: CalFresh families, CalWORKs Post-Aid Services families and families with parents who are not eligible for Welfare-to-Work. Through the RRP, families may receive case management, housing search and placement assistance, move-in costs and deposits, short-term housing subsidies, job search and job placement.

Abode Services began accepting referrals to the new program in March. If you are working with a family that falls into one of the above categories and needs help in resolving a housing issue, contact their assigned Eligibility Worker or Employment Counselor.



Lifeline to a Secure Future

A survivor of domestic violence, single mother Marquita spent her nights fearfully sleeping in her vehicle, the last safe haven she and her daughter could find. When she reached out to the CalWORKs program for help, she was immediately referred to the Family Services Unit for specialized support in her time of need. Acting quickly, her Employment Counselor, Sandra Loreda, linked her to counseling services and helped her find temporary housing at a motel until she could be placed into a more permanent home.

Through the CalWORKs Housing Support Program, our partners at Abode Services were able to locate an affordable two bedroom home for Marquita and her daughter. Abode Housing Specialists, Meghan McPhail and Crystal Pretel, went the extra mile to provide them with basic home items, including beds, a couch and a dining table.

During her housing search, Marquita worked closely with Helenea Huffman, her Employment Counselor at

the Employment Connection Center, to find a job through the EC Works Subsidized Employment Program. She is now employed full-time as a Staffing Coordinator, earning enough to maintain her new home.

Marquita is thankful for the support from CalWORKs staff and the supportive services that have helped her to turn her life in a safe and positive direction. A critical link between succumbing to crisis and overcoming extreme life circumstances, the Family Stabilization Unit and the CalWORKs Housing Support Program are providing families with a lifeline to secure their futures.



Marquita and her daughter, with Sandra Loreda (left) and Crystal Pretel (right)