

Disability Benefits Advocacy as an Essential Strategy to End Homelessness



October 14, 2022
California Welfare Directors' Association Conference

CHANGEWELLPROJECT
PARTNERING TO STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY SYSTEMS

Agenda



1

INTRODUCTIONS

- **CDSS Housing & Homelessness Division**
- **Change Well Project**

2

WHAT DOES ENDING HOMELESSNESS REQUIRE?

3

HDAP PROGRAMS ARE BRIDGING A CRITICAL GAP

4

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Panelists



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CDSS

Housing and Homelessness Division

Our Approach



About CDSS Housing & Homelessness Division

- The State has invested significant funding over fiscal years 2021-22 and 2022-23 to address homelessness
- Just over **\$2 billion** of these funds were invested in CDSS/HHD programs over fiscal years 2021-22 and 2022-23.
- CDSS's Housing and Homelessness Division (HHD) programs function at the intersection of housing and social services, serving about 100,000 individuals and families annually with critical housing related supports and services.



CDSS Housing & Homelessness Division

CalWORKs Housing Support Program



CalWORKs Programs

Bringing Families Home



Child Welfare System

Home Safe



APS

Housing & Disability Advocacy Program (HDAP)



Low-income clients with disabilities

Project Room Key



CalWORKs Housing Support Program

GOAL

To foster housing stability for families experiencing or at risk of homelessness in the CalWORKs program.

55 Counties are operating CalWORKs HSP Programs.

FUNDING

FY 2021-22 Funds

\$285 million

FY 2022-23 Funds

\$285 million



Bringing Families Home

GOAL

To increase family reunification and prevent foster care placement among participants in cases where housing instability prevents reunification or could lead to foster care placement.

51 Counties & one Tribe are operating Bringing Family Home Programs.

FUNDING

FY 2021-22 Funds

\$92.5 million

FY 2022-23 Funds

\$92.5 million



Home Safe

GOAL

To provide housing support to seniors and adults with disabilities who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness and are served by, or in the intake process for, Adult Protective Services (APS).

58 Counties are operating CalWORKs HSP Programs.

FUNDING

FY 2021-22 Funds

\$92.5 million

FY 2022-23 Funds

\$92.5 million





Housing & Disability Advocacy Program (HDAP)

GOAL

To secure disability benefits for participants and stabilize them in permanent housing.

57 Counties and two Tribes are operating HDAP Programs.

FUNDING

FY 2021-22 Funds

\$175 million

FY 2022-23 Funds

\$175 million





Notice of Fiscal Year 22-23 Funding

[All County Welfare Director's Letter \(ACWDL\) dated September 21, 2022](#)

- The Notice of Fiscal Year 2022-23 Funding letter announces \$645M in funding available across four HHD programs including for the CalWORKs Housing Support Program (HSP), Bringing Families Home (BFH) Program, Housing and Disability Advocacy Program (HDAP), and the Home Safe Program.
- Counties and continuing Tribes may submit requests for funds through **November 2, 2022**.



CHANGE WELL PROJECT

Partnering to Strengthen Community Systems

Our Activities

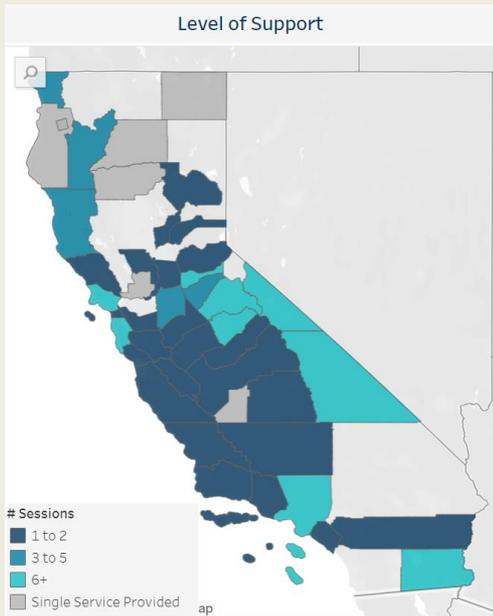
Over the past year, the Change Well Project has partnered with CDSS to help counties and tribal communities overcome challenges in creating, implementing, and scaling their CDSS funded homelessness programming.



Comprehensive Technical Assistance



Training and Workforce Preparation



Training & Workforce Development			
Events	28	Audience	Participants 2,349
Webinars & Events	21	Program Office Hours	7
		System Leaders	14
Cohort Learning	5	Direct Service Leaders	5
CWP Digital Learning Platform	2	Program Leaders	2
			262
			1,276
			784
			27



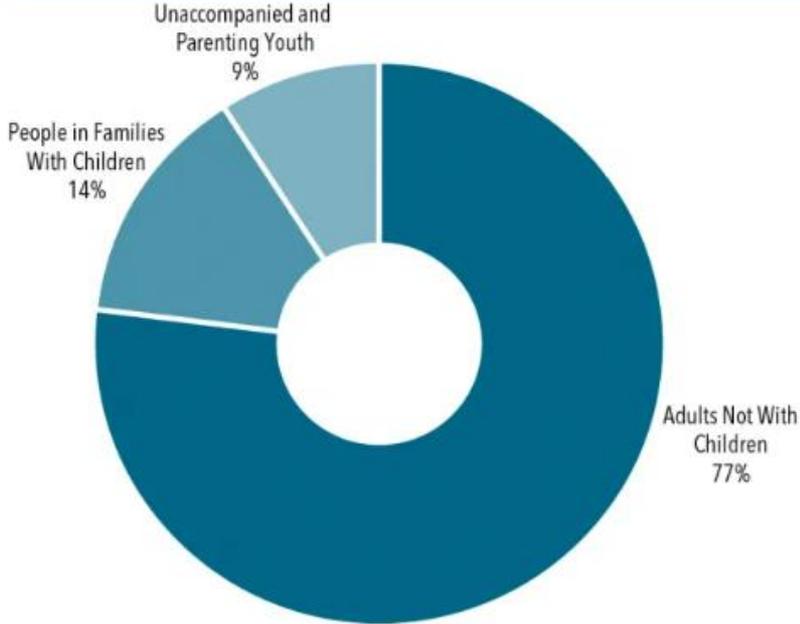
ENDING HOMELESSNESS

What does it require?

[Who is Experiencing Homelessness in California](#) (Feb. 2022)

Over 3 in 4 Californians Experiencing Homelessness Are Adults Not With Children

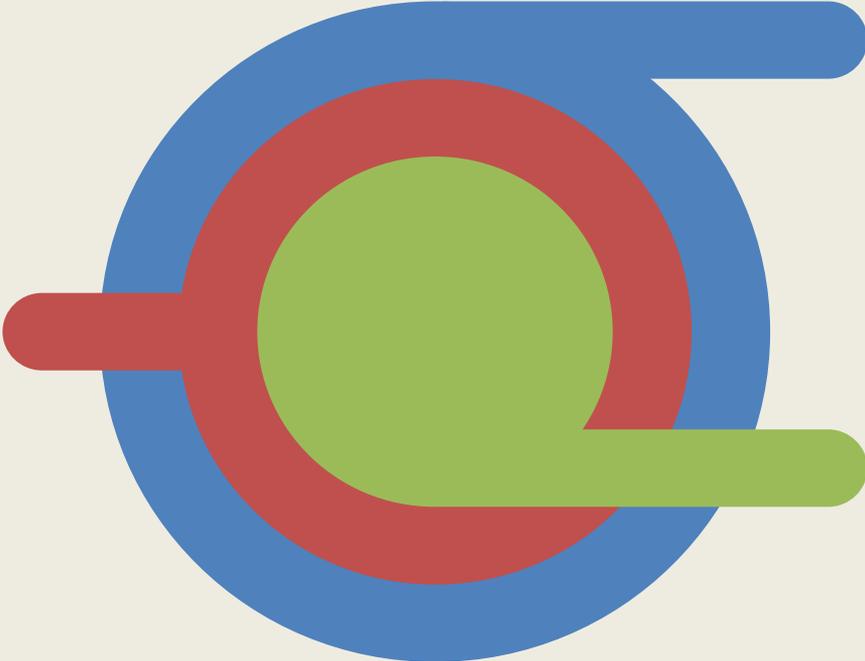
Percent of Californians Who Are Homeless by Household Type, January 2020



Note: Categories are mutually exclusive. Unaccompanied and parenting youth include people under age 25 alone or only with other people under age 25, including children of parenting youth. People in families with children include adults and children, excluding parenting youth and their children. Adults not with children include noncustodial parents and exclude unaccompanied youth not with children. Source: Budget Center analysis of US Housing and Urban Development Point-in-Time Count data

What will it take to end homelessness?

ADEQUATE INCOME



APPROPRIATE SERVICES



AFFORDABLE HOUSING



Concept Created by:

redesign





ADEQUATE INCOME

Our State & County Ecosystem



Adults who can work or return to work

Work income
Unemployment Insurance Benefits
State Disability Insurance



Households with Children

CalWORKs
Foster Care Payments
Adoption Assistance Payments



Single adults

GA/GR
CAPI (for some immigrants)

CalFresh

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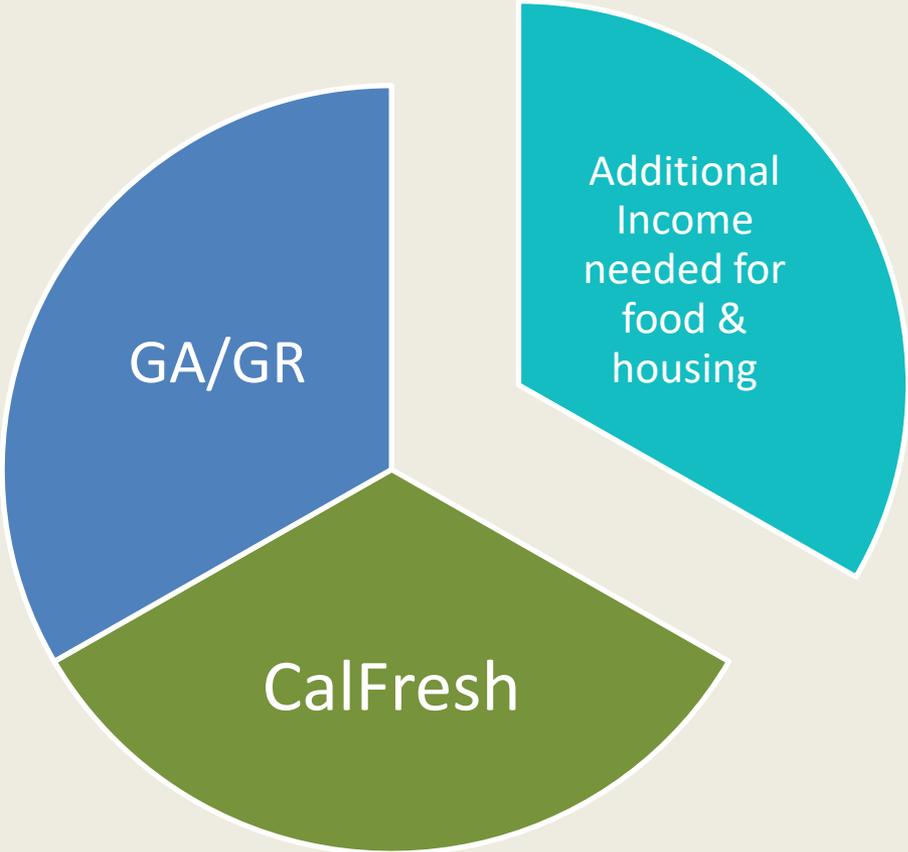
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Low-income Senior Citizens



Low-income individuals not able to work due to a long-term disability



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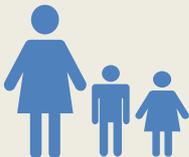
PARTNERING TO STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY SYSTEMS



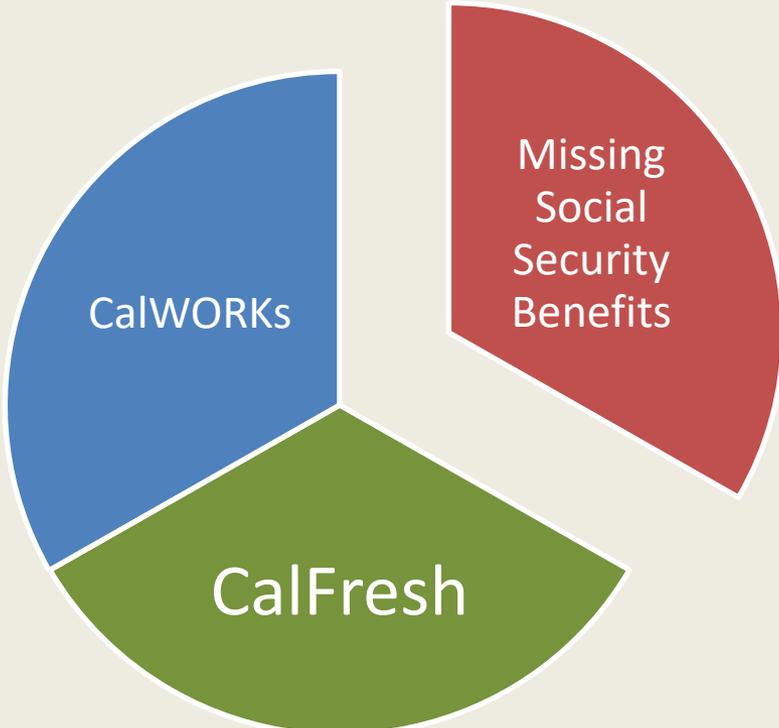
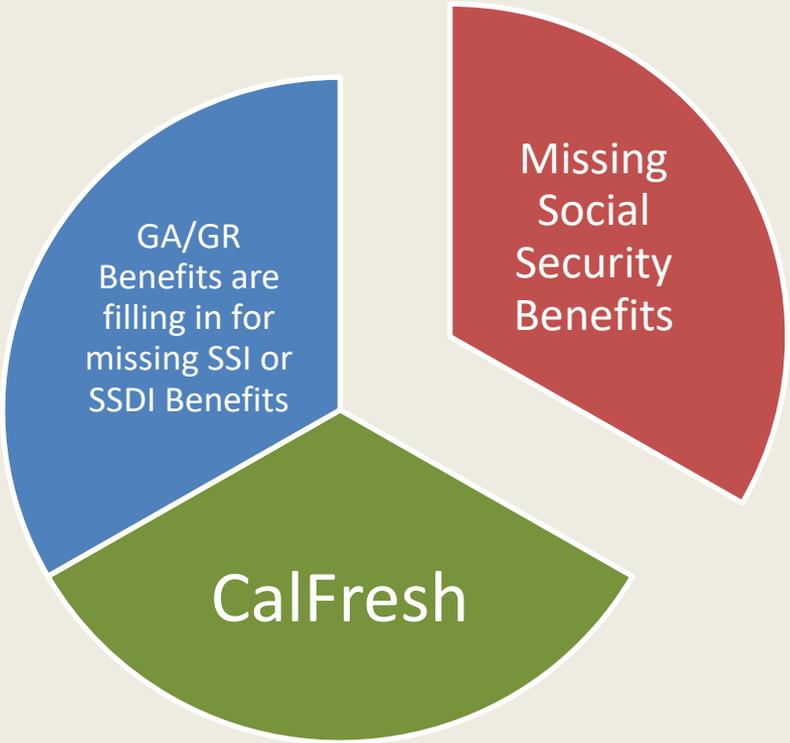
Low-income Senior Citizens



Low-income individuals not able to work due to a long-term disability



CalWORKs Families where parent is unable to work due to a long-term disability



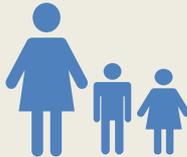
For qualifying immigrants not eligible for SSI/SSDI



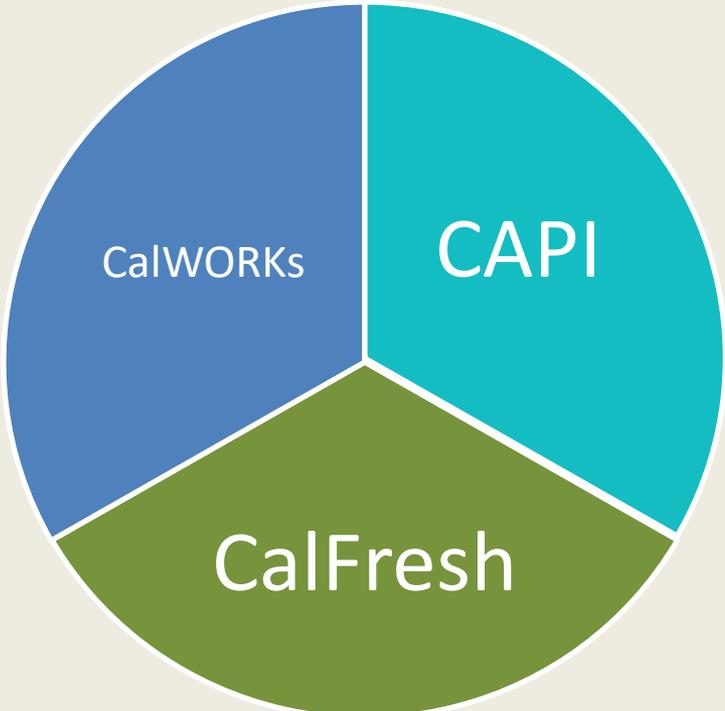
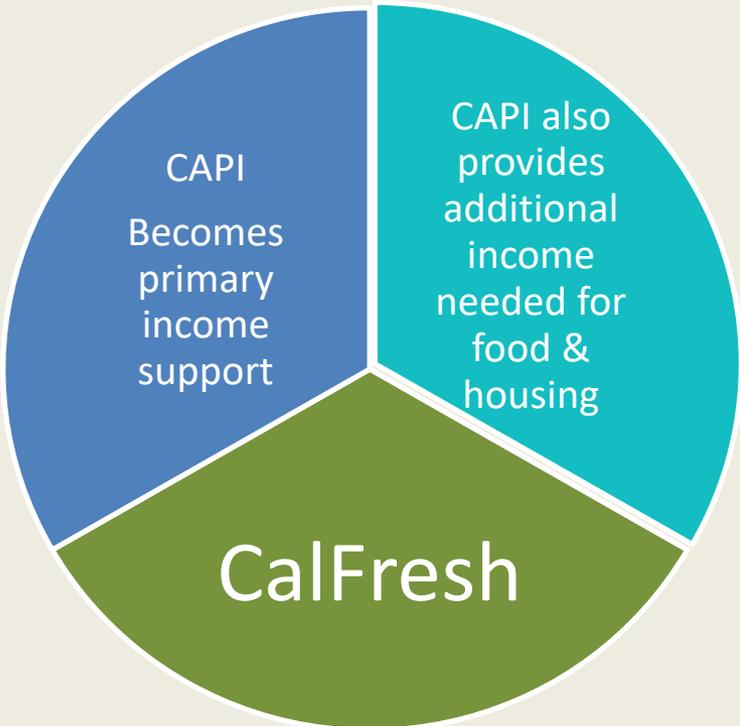
Low-income Senior Citizens



Low-income individuals not able to work due to a disability



CalWORKs Families where parent is unable to work due to a disability

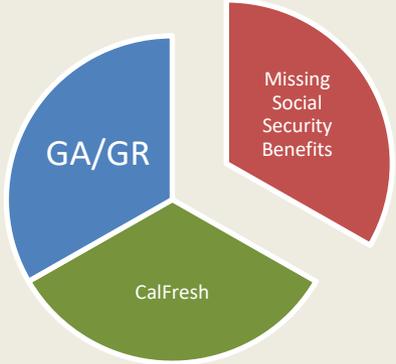


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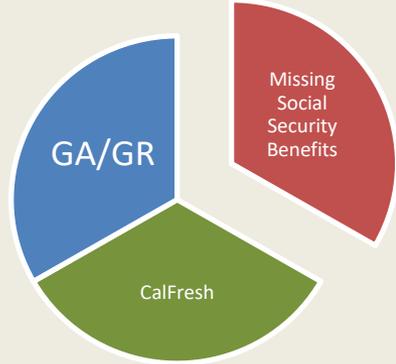
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Transition-age youth aging out of foster care with a serious long-term disability



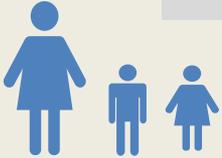
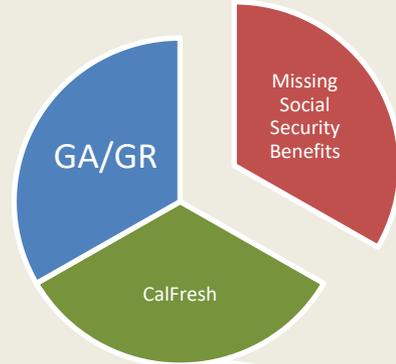
Low-income individuals not able to work due to a disability



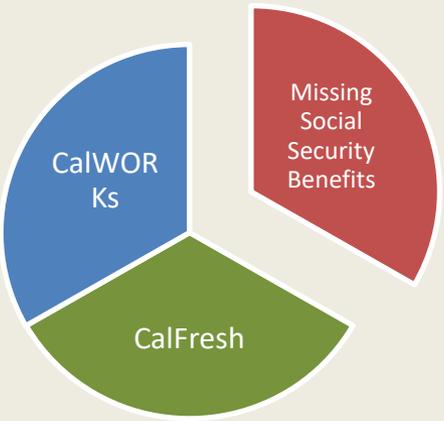
Our communities are missing income



Low-income Senior Citizens living alone



CalWORKs households where an adult cannot work due to a long-term disability



Senior citizens living in low-income families



For these community members, access to federal benefits is key to increasing income.

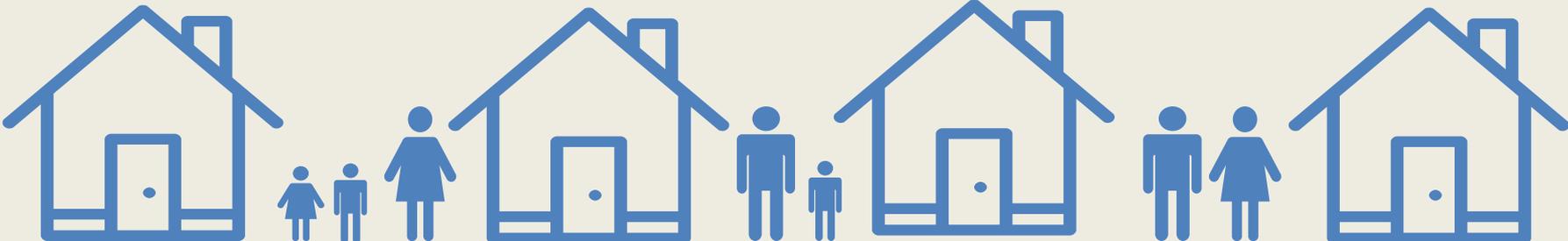
Individuals with disabilities who are experiencing homelessness

Low-income seniors in low-income households

Youth with disabilities aging out of foster care

Low-income parents who have a serious disability

Low-income adults with disabilities who are living alone



Individuals with disabilities are disproportionately likely to experience homelessness

“People with disabilities are disproportionately likely to experience homelessness. Point-in-time counts (i.e., counts of the people in a community experiencing homelessness on a single night) suggest that nearly [one quarter](#) of individuals experiencing homelessness have a disability, [including](#) physical, intellectual, and developmental disabilities, as well as mental health and/or substance abuse disorders.”

[Homelessness Among Individuals with Disabilities: Influential Factors and Scalable Solutions](#) (June 14, 2019)

Individuals experiencing homelessness in California are increasingly older adults

“Roughly 45% of unhoused Californians in adult-only households who came in contact with the homelessness response system in the 2020-21 fiscal year were aged 50 and older.”

[Who is Experiencing Homelessness in California?](#) (Feb. 2022)

SSI has historically had low participation rates

Only 50-60% of older individuals eligible for SSI are receiving benefits.

[“Understanding Participation in SSI” \(Jan. 2015\)](#)

SSI awards decreased significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic

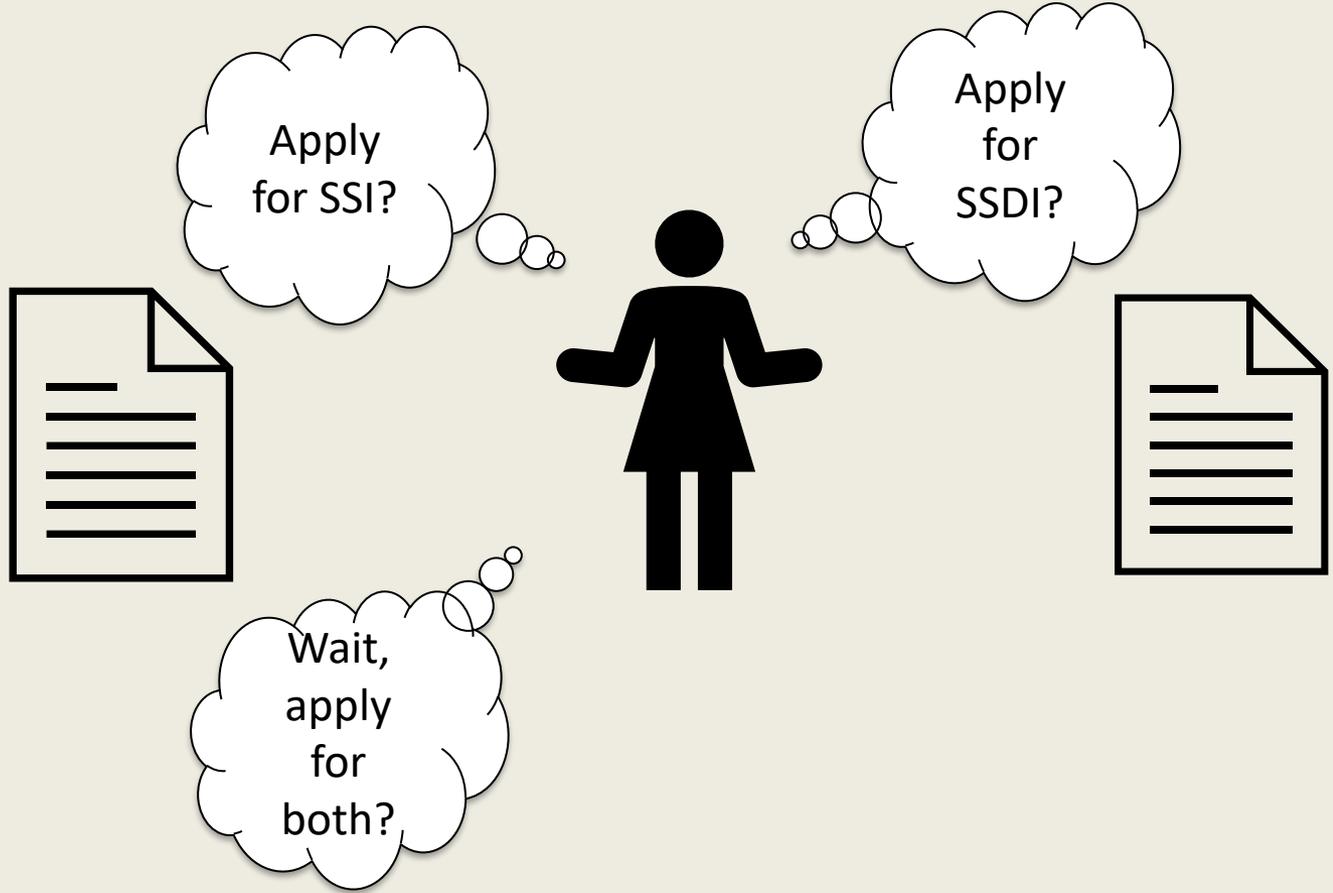
SSI new awards of benefits dropped 30% in the 1st year of the pandemic.

[“Huge Drop in Federal Aid for the Poorest Blamed on Closed Social Security Offices” \(Feb. 19, 2021\)](#)

BARRIERS IN THE DESIGN

The SSI/SSDI System

Apply Step 1. Choose what to apply for.



Apply Step 2. Complete the application.



Apply online

The SSDI application is online
 The SSI application is not completely on-line and only available to certain individuals.

Apply by phone or submitting paper forms

A disability-based application for SSI is more than 50 pages of forms.

24 pages

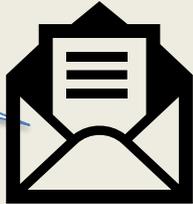
12 pages

10 pages

8 pages

Apply Step 3. Take additional steps to ensure SSA & DDS have all needed information.

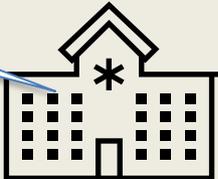
Please fill out these additional forms



Please attend these medical exams we have scheduled



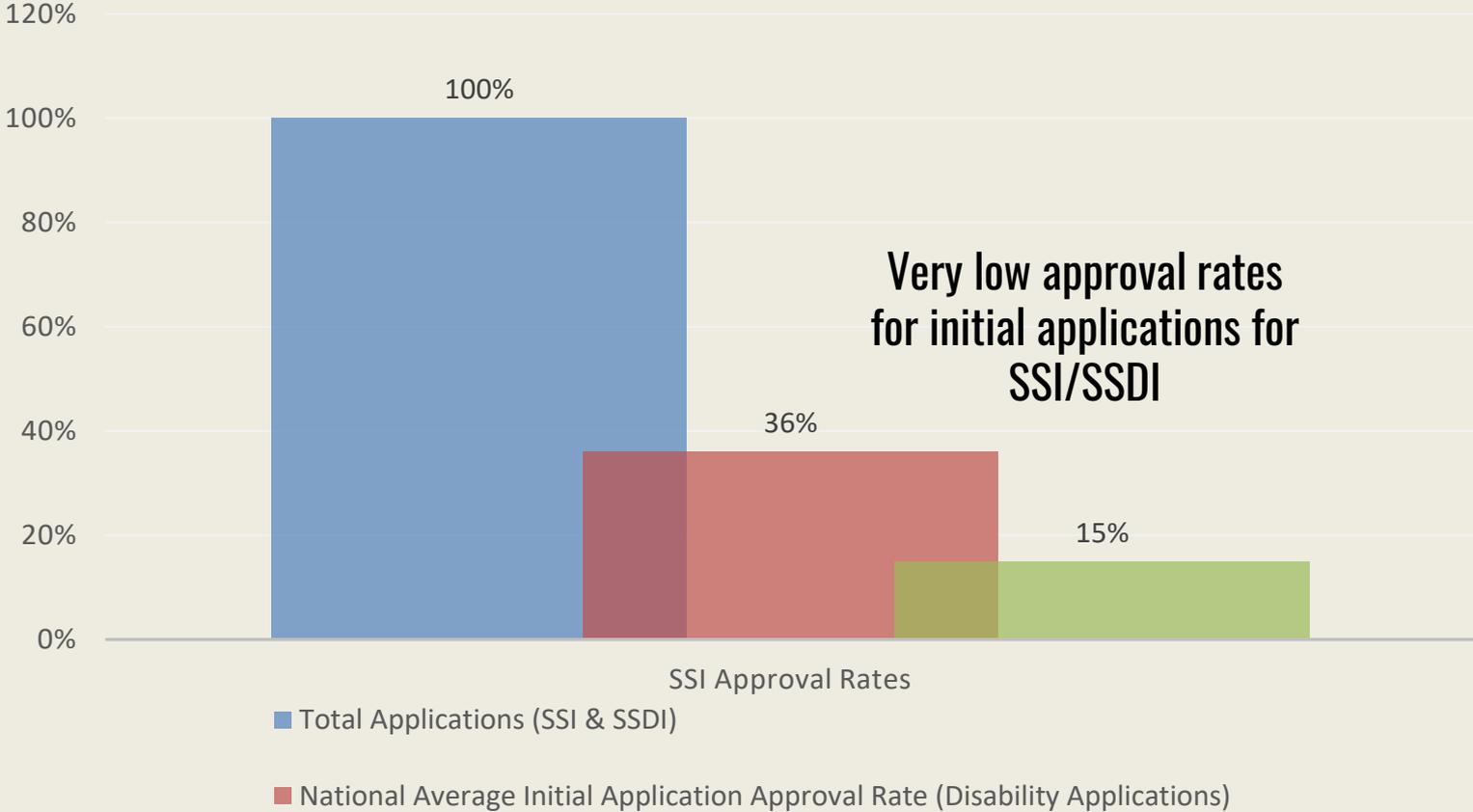
Please send us your medical records



We never got the forms you mailed. Can you mail them again?



What is the result?



**Initial
Application
Decision**
6 month wait



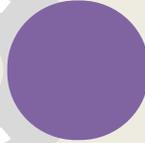
**1st Appeal
(Reconsideration)**
+ 3-4 months



**Administrative
Hearing**
+ 13-21 months



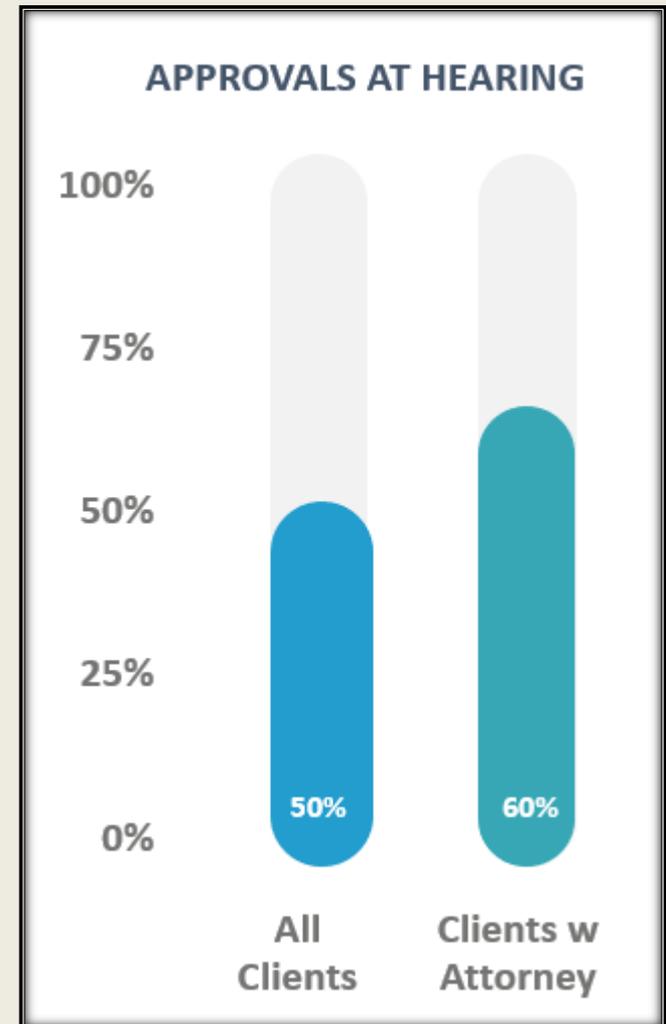
Getting Benefits
*+ Another 3-4
months*



How long does someone wait for SSI/SSDI?

Social Security Hearings

- ½ of SSI/SSDI applicants who attend their hearing will be approved by the Judge
- Clients are more likely to be approved when represented by an attorney
- HDAP programs can sub-contract appeals representation to legal aid.



The SSI/SSDI System

1.

**LONG
APPLICATION
FORMS AND
COMPLEX
PROCESSES**

2.

**VERY LOW
APPROVAL
RATES**

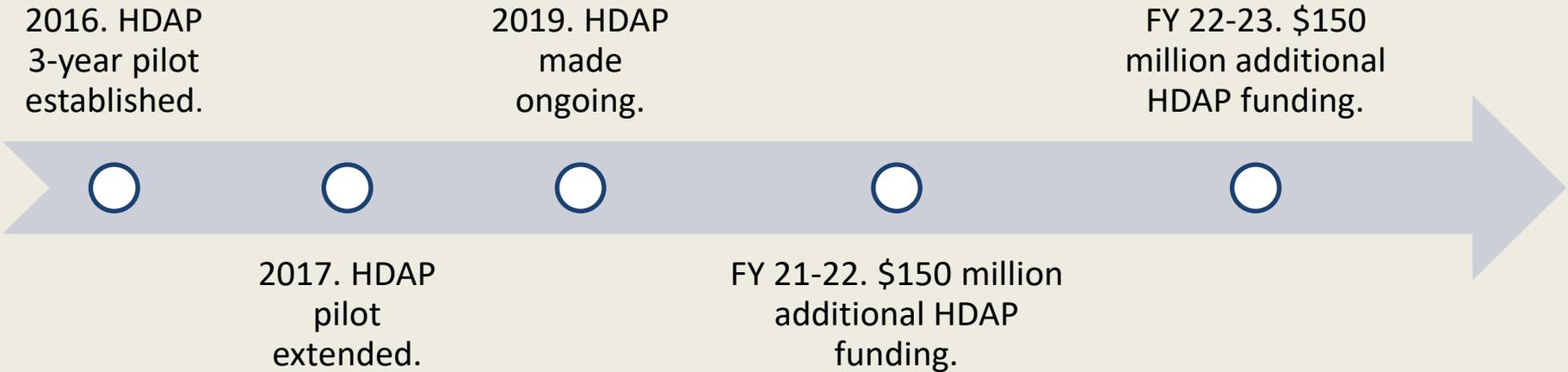
3.

**LONG WAITS FOR
DECISIONS,
VERY LONG WAITS
FOR APPEALS**

BRIDGING THE GAP

The Housing & Disability Advocacy Program (HDAP)

Housing & Disability Advocacy Program



HDAP assists people experiencing or at risk of homelessness stabilize in housing while also advocating for disability benefits including SSI.

57 Counties and 2 Tribes Operate HDAP Programs



Alameda	Alpine	Amador	Butte	Calaveras	Colusa	Contra Costa	Del Norte
Dry Creek Rancheria Band of Pomo Indians	El Dorado	Fresno	Glenn	Humboldt	Imperial	Inyo	Kern
Kings	Lake	Lassen	Los Angeles	Madera	Marin	Mariposa	Mendocino
Merced	Modoc	Mono	Monterey	Napa	Nevada	Northern Circle Indian Housing Authority (NCIHA)	Orange
Placer	Plumas	Riverside	Sacramento	San Benito	San Bernardino	San Diego	San Francisco
San Joaquin	San Luis Obispo	San Mateo	Santa Barbara	Santa Clara	Santa Cruz	Shasta	Siskiyou
Solano	Sonoma	Stanislaus	Sutter	Tehama	Trinity	Tulare	Tuolumne
	Ventura		Yolo		Yuba		

HDAP CORE SERVICE COMPONENTS

OUTREACH

To identify eligible HDAP participants.



HOUSING ASSISTANCE

Housing case management & direct financial assistance.



MEDICAL CARE COORDINATION

Clients need help providing medical evidence of their disability.



DISABILITY BENEFITS ADVOCACY

Specialized disability benefits advocacy staff will need to be skilled in navigating the complex SSI/SSDI process.



HDAP GOALS MET

Client is stabilized in permanent housing & approved for disability benefits.



HDAP Successes

Since HDAP's inception in FY 2017-18 through December 2021:



Over 4,900
people
enrolled in
HDAP



Over 2,400
people
permanently
housed



Over 5,500
disability
applications
submitted



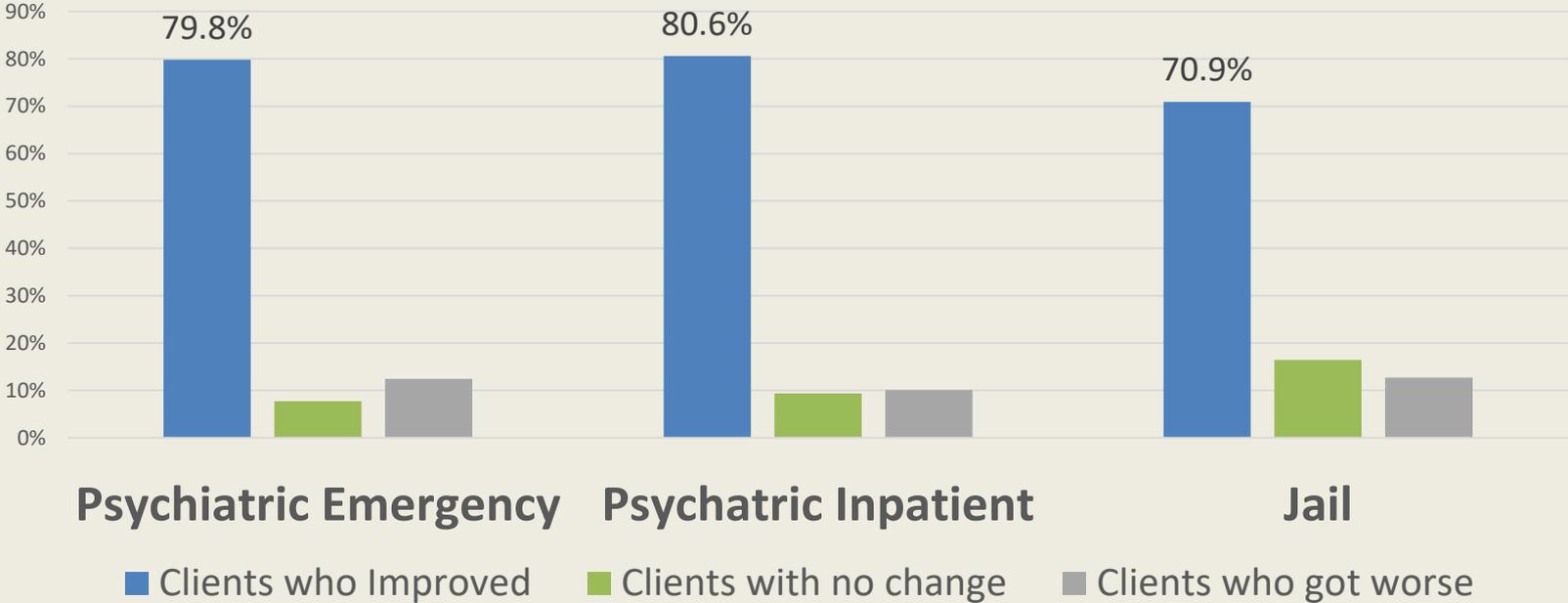
Over 1,600
disability
applications
approved

Of total HDAP applications disposed, HDAP
has an approval rate of 78%.

Additional details can be found in the [2021 Annual Report to the California Legislature on HDAP.](#)

Disability Income Improves Health Outcomes

Impact of Disability Benefits on Crisis Events



Data from Alameda County's Disability Benefits Advocacy Program.

Leveraging HDAP to create a Disability Benefits Advocacy Program

Other funding sources may be used at a county level, along with HDAP funding, to build a larger disability benefits advocacy program

LOCAL FUNDING	STATE & FEDERAL FUNDING
Mental Health Services Act	HDAP
Measure A	County Service Block Grant (CSBG)
General Fund	Medi-Cal
General Assistance Reimbursement	Specialty Mental Health
AB 109	PPS Rate
	Medi-Cal Administrative Activities (MAA)

SUCCESS AT A LOCAL LEVEL

HDAP Programs at a County Level



**Placer
County**

Quick Stats

Population (2020): 404,739

Point-in-Time Count (2022)

- 750 individuals experiencing homelessness
- 54% unsheltered, 46% sheltered
- 34% chronically homeless

HDAP Program Model: Snapshot

Placer County has an HDAP team that provides both:

- Housing case management and direct financial assistance
- Disability Benefits Advocacy

HDAP team is embedded in their Adult System of Care (which also includes behavioral health services).

Sub-contract with Legal Services of Northern CA (LSNC) to represent HDAP clients at hearing level.

Placer County HDAP Program Successes:

Disability Benefits Advocacy

- 63% approval for SSI/SSDI initial applications
- 80% approval rate at hearing

Housing

Out of 78 HDAP clients who were homeless or in temporary shelter, 48 are now in permanent housing.

Collaboration is part of their culture

Examples of collaboration:

- Granite Wellness Center (substance use treatment)
- Nonprofits such as VOA (housing)
- Shelter providers
- Housing Authority for vouchers

They are deeply connected to community

- Receive referrals for HDAP from many sources: hospitals, shelters, other County depts. People know them.
- Work with any entity they can to ensure HDAP participants can access needed services

They leverage county systems

- Leverage positioning in County to connect HDAP clients to health/behavioral health care system
- Were able to add their funding for hearing representation to an existing County contract with legal aid



FREED Center for Independent Living

Quick Facts

Founded in 1985 and was one of California's first rural independent living centers.

Is a disability and aging resource center providing services to residents of a five-county area: Nevada, Sierra, Yuba, Sutter and Colusa Counties.

Formed by people with disabilities & are consumer-controlled (majority of Board and Staff have disabilities).

HDAP Contracted Partner: Snapshot

Contracted by two county HDAP Programs.

Nevada County HDAP subcontracts both:

- Housing case management (HDAP)
- Disability Benefits Advocacy

Yuba County HDAP subcontracts:

- Disability Benefits Advocacy

Provide other community services such as:

- Independent Living Services
- Assistive Technology
- Transition home services from hospitals and nursing homes

FREED as an HDAP Contracted Partner Works Because:

The moment someone walks in the door to FREED, they are working to connect that individual to all needed services. HDAP participants benefit from this broad-scope assistance.

Trusted by the community

- Founded and led by individuals with disabilities. Deep roots in disability advocacy.
- “Everyone knows FREED.” Identify HDAP participants through existing reach in the community.

Disability Benefits Advocacy Experience

- Have been doing disability benefits advocacy since before HDAP existed.
- Have built relationships with SSA and DDS and are trusted by them.
- Person-centered model of assistance.

Leverage their services & community connections

- Connect HDAP participants to the many services they provide, such as transportation.
- Leverage community relationships to access housing and services like ID replacement.
- Have built relationships with CoCs.

Q&A SESSION

Questions for the Panelists

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