CalWORKs - Quick Reference Guide For Applicants

CalWORKs (CW) is California’s cash aid welfare program for low income people who have children under 19 years old. CalWORKs provides money for children and the relatives caring for them. Work and training are required of most adults, and most adults can only get CalWORKs for 48 months in a lifetime. Eligible persons can apply for CalWORKs at their local Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) office or online. If you qualify for CalWORKs, you are also entitled to Medi-Cal for health care and CalFresh (formerly known as Food Stamps) for food.

Eligibility Rules

• Applications for CW are considered by family unit, or Assistance Unit (AU).
  o Every AU must contain an eligible child, who is under 19 and deprived of one or both parents’ support or care.
  o Every AU must have a “caretaker relative” (i.e. grandparent, mother, father, cousin, step-relatives).
• All applicants must meet income, property and resource limits:
  o Must have <$2,000 in resources / savings (or <$3,000 if someone in the family on aid is older than 59 years of age).
  o Any cars owned must be <$4,650 (value of the car above that amount is considered a resource and will count towards the resources limit).
  o If own a home but live in it, it will not be considered a resource.
• You also must meet residency requirements:
  o You must reside in California with intent to stay indefinitely.
  o You must be citizen or immigrant with documentation.
  **Note:** A citizen child is still eligible to receive aid even if the parent is undocumented.
• You cannot get CW if:
  o you have been convicted of a drug-related felony after December 31, 1997. (**BUT:** Children can still qualify for aid.)
  o you are a fleeing felon or probation violator (**Note:** Simply being on probation is okay; special rules apply when you have a warrant - please talk to an attorney to verify your rights.)
  o you were ever convicted of welfare fraud.

Special Note for Previous Recipients:

• You cannot get more cash aid for children born while the family is getting CalWORKs unless the family did not get cash aid for two consecutive months in the ten months prior to the birth of the new child or the child was born as result of failed contraception. This is called the Maximum Family Grant (MFG) rule.

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Required Documents

• ID (birth certificate, driver’s license, ID card, etc.) If you do not have an ID, you can fill out form “PA 853,” which is a sworn statement saying you are who you claim to be.
• Social Security Number
• Proof of income (check stubs, W2, copy of tax return, employment letter)
• Proof of county residence (Document that has name and address on it)
• Proof of citizenship, alien or immigration status for each person on the application that has it.
• Proof of housing situation (rent receipts, lease agreements, etc.)
• Letters from doctor (if anyone is disabled, pregnant, or has a special medical or dietary needs)
• Other legal documents. *Note that additional documents are needed for children: proof of immunizations for children under age 6, proof of school attendance for children under 16, etc.*
• Any papers having to do with marriage, divorce, child support, or other circumstances that apply

*All adults (18 and over) and teen parents must be fingerprinted in order to apply for and get CalWORKs. If a you refuse to be fingerprinted, your cash aid will be cut; however, children can get their cash aid.*

Participation Limits and Requirements

Welfare to Work and Employability

• You are required to participate in “Welfare-to-Work” activities, called Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN) and Refugee Employment Program (REP), in order to stay on cash aid.
• Participation in GAIN or REP is mandatory for all CalWORKs participants unless you are exempt or have a “good cause” for non-participation.
• DPSS must give you exemption if you are:
  o Under 16 years old or older than 59 years of age.
  o Pregnant and have medical verification that GAIN/REP/work activities will harm your pregnancy.
  o Caring for a first child under 12 months old, or any later child under 6 months old.
  o Taking care of children related to you but not your own.
  o Taking care of an ill or disabled household member.
  o Attending high school full time, regardless of age.
  o If you have a learning disability.
  o Mentally or physically unfit for work as verified by a doctor for 30 days or more.
• If you miss appointment or do not complete a GAIN/REP activity, you can be “excused” (that is, your benefits will not be impacted) if you have “good cause.” Good cause can include things like taking care of a child sick at home from school, not having transportation, being homeless, etc.
• If you are under 19 years of age, are pregnant or parenting, and have not yet completed your high school education, you will be required to enroll in high school or an equivalent program instead of participating in GAIN.

Time Limits

• As of July 2011, there is a 48 month time limit for adults receiving cash aid, counted retroactively starting January 1, 1998.
• There are exceptions for domestic violence survivors and persons with mental or physical illness.
  o If you have had any episodes of domestic violence while receiving benefits, you should request a meeting with your GAIN worker to evaluate your so-called “time clock.”
  o If you are are unable to work because of mental or physical health condition, make sure to let your eligibility worker know as soon as possible. This may mean telling him/her about your limitations right away when you apply.
• You may not want to get cash aid if you have other income. Any month you get cash aid counts against the 48-month time limit, even if you are entitled only to a few dollars a month.

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Reporting Requirements

• You must submit a regular report to DPSS detailing whether there have been any changes.
• Since October 2013, the Quarterly Report (QR-7) has changed from every three months to every six months. The report is called SAR or Semi Annual Reporting.
• Participants must report the following information on their SARs:
  o Address changes
  o If anyone in the AU is considered a fleeing felon
  o Any parole or probation violations
  o Any drug convictions
  o If the income goes over the income reporting threshold (IRT)
• In addition, it is wise to report certain information to DPSS right away, even if the SAR is not yet due. The information that should be reported is:
  o If the income goes over the income reporting threshold (IRT).
  o If there are changes in household size (e.g. if someone moves out or the children are no longer in your care).

Maximum Aid Payment

• The amount of benefits you can get depends on how many people are within your family, or assisted unit (AU).
• In addition, AUs are divided in exempt and non-exempt types.
  o A non-exempt AU is one that headed by parents who are considered available for employment.
  o An exempt AU is one that headed by parents who receive certain disability benefits or by non-needy, non-parent relatives.

Additional Programs and Services

• Families that receive CW can also get other services through DPSS, such as child care or extra money for special non-recurring needs.
• Instead of selecting to get cash aid for a continuous period, you can apply for a large amount of money called a “diversion payment” to help you get or keep a job.
  o To get a diversion payment, you must be eligible for CalWORKs, have a job or immediate job opportunity, and have an unexpected one-time need.
  o The usual payment is up to the grant amount for your family size for three months or $2000, whichever is larger. For a “compelling need” you can get up to $4000.
  o **Note:** The diversion payment counts as time against the 48-month clock.
• Also, CW households are usually eligible to receive other aid, such as Medi-Cal for health care and CalFresh to help with food. Make sure to let your worker know that you wish to apply for all eligible programs when filling out the initial application.

(continued on next page)
Tips and Recommendations

- Applying for any benefits, including CW, can be a long and taxing process, especially if you go to the DPSS office to do so.
  - Be prepared for long wait times in the lobby. Getting to speak to a worker and the process of filling out all the paperwork can take time, so try not to go to the office on a day on which you have other pressing appointments.
  - Do not get discouraged by the wait times or what people tell you, even what the DPSS worker says. If the worker is being rude or does not answer your questions, insist on talking to a supervisor or the supervisor’s manager.
  - **Do not sign anything you do not understand.** In particular, do not sign a “withdrawal” of your application unless you understand and agree with the written reason you are given.
- Keep in touch with your DPSS eligibility worker and make sure you know his/her name. Make sure to inform the worker of any significant changes, such as income or family changes.
- Document all contacts and conversations you have with DPSS. You may want to start a journal and write down things like days and times you called, appointments you had, the contents of the conversation with your worker, etc.
- If you are asked to mail additional papers to the DPSS office, ask the worker for a stamped envelope addressed to him or her. If you take in papers, get a receipt.
  - Always keep your original paperwork; give DPSS copies only. If you must submit an original document, make sure to get a copy beforehand.
- If the DPSS denies, changes, or cuts your aid, they must send you a letter explaining the reason. These letters are called “Notice of Action” or NOA.
  - You have the right to “appeal” the denial and request a hearing (or meeting) with someone who did not make the initial decision nor was the supervisor of the person who made the original decision.
  - You must request a hearing within 10 days of receiving the NOA. Each NOA has a form on the back that you can fill out and send to DPSS to request your hearing.

(see next page for office listings)
CalWORKs Office Locations

Apply for CalWORKs online at [https://www.dpssbenefits.lacounty.gov/ynb/index.html](https://www.dpssbenefits.lacounty.gov/ynb/index.html) or in person at one of the district offices:

Belvedere (05)
5445 Whittier Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90022
(323) 727-4542

Compton (26)*
211 E. Alondra Blvd.
Compton, CA 90220

Cudahy (06)
8130 S. Atlantic Ave.
Cudahy, CA 90201
(323) 560-5192

East Valley (11)*
14545 Lanark St.
Panorama City, CA 91402

El Monte (04)*
3350 Aerojet Ave.
El Monte, CA 91731

Exposition Park (12)*
3833 S. Vermont Ave.
Los Angeles, CA 90037

Florence (17)*
1740 E. Gage Ave.
Los Angeles, CA 90001

Glendale (02)
4680 San Fernando Rd.
Glendale, CA 91204
(818) 546-6100 or
(818) 546-6200

Lancaster (34)*
349-B East Ave. K-6
Lancaster, CA 93535

Lincoln Heights (66)
(Paramount Sub-Office)
4077 N. Mission Rd.
Los Angeles, CA 90032
(323) 342-8180

Metro East (15)
2855 E. Olympic Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90023
(323) 260-3718

Pomona (36)*
2040 W. Holt Ave.
Pomona, CA 91768

Metro Family (13)*
2615 S. Grand Ave.
Los Angeles, CA 90007

Rancho Park (60)*
11110 W. Pico Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90064

Metro North (38)*
2601 Wilshire Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90057

San Gabriel Valley (20)*
3352 Aerojet Ave.
El Monte, CA 91731

Norwalk (40)*
12727 Norwalk Blvd.
Norwalk, CA 90650

South Central (27)
10728 S. Central Ave.
Los Angeles, CA 90059
(323) 563-4401

Santa Clarita (51)*
(Paramount Sub-Office)
27233 Camp Plenty Rd.
Canyon Country, CA 91351

South Family (31)*
17600 A Santa Fe Ave.
Rancho Dominguez, CA 90221

Southwest Family (83)*
8300 S. Vermont Ave.
Los Angeles, CA 90044

Pasadena (03)*
955 N. Lake Ave.
Pasadena, CA 91104

West Valley (82)*
21415-21615 Plummer St.
Chatsworth, CA 91311

Learn more at publiccounsel.org

* - offices marked with the asterisk only receive calls through the Customer Service Center.
Regards of your office, you can also call the Customer Service Center at (866) 613-3777 to find out general as well case specific information. You will need a 10-digit Customer ID Number and a 6-digit Personal Identification Number (PIN) to get case specific information. If you do not have those numbers, you can request them when speaking with a Customer Service Representative.

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