

Date of Hearing: March 25, 2025

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Alex Lee, Chair

AB 607 (Celeste Rodriguez) – As Introduced February 13, 2025

**SUBJECT:** CalWORKs: Home Visiting Program

**SUMMARY:** Extends the allowable duration of the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) Home Visiting Program (HVP). Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Adds supporting positive health, development, and well-being outcomes for tribal families to the purpose of the CalWORKs HVP.
- 2) Increases the duration pregnant people, parents or caretaker relatives, and children can be served in the CalWORKs HVP by requiring services for at least 24 months, and not to exceed the duration of the applicable HVP model, from the current duration of 24 months or until the child's second birthday, whichever is later.
- 3) Updates the criteria for a voluntary participant to permit an individual that is pregnant or an individual that is a parent or caretaker relative of a child less than 36 months of age, instead of 24 months of age, at the time the individual enrolls in the program.
- 4) Permits, in order to promote continuity of services, a voluntary participant whose participation would otherwise be terminated because the participant no longer meets CalWORKs income, eligibility, or need criteria to continue through the duration of the HVP or for up to an additional 12 months, whichever is longer.

**EXISTING LAW:**

State law:

- 1) Establishes the CalWORKs program to provide cash assistance and other social services for low-income families through TANF. Under CalWORKs, each county provides assistance through a combination of state, county and federal TANF funds. (Welfare and Institutions Code [WIC] § 11120 *et seq.*)
- 2) Establishes income, asset, and real property limits used to determine eligibility for the CalWORKs program, and CalWORKs grant amounts, based on family size and county of residence. (WIC §§ 11150-11160, 11450 *et seq.*)
- 3) Exempts the following from consideration as income for purposes of public social services, including CalWORKs programs, as specified:
  - a) Income that is received too infrequently to be reasonably anticipated, as exempted in federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program regulations;
  - b) Income from college work-study programs;
  - c) An award or scholarship provided by a public or private entity to or on behalf of a dependent child;

- d) Income or stipend paid by the United States (U.S.) Census Bureau, a governmental entity, or a nonprofit organization for temporary work related to the decennial census; and,
  - e) Any federal pandemic unemployment compensation, so long as the federal pandemic unemployment compensation is exempt as income for purposes of establishing eligibility for the CalFresh program. (WIC § 11157(b-d))
- 4) Establishes the CalWORKs HVP as a voluntary program for the purpose of supporting positive health, development, and well-being outcomes for pregnant and parenting people, families, and infants born into poverty, expanding their future educational, economic, and financial capability opportunities, and improving the likelihood that they will exit poverty. (WIC § 11330.6(a))
- 5) Requires the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), subject to an appropriation, to award funds to participating counties in order to provide voluntary evidence-based home visiting services to any assistance unit that meets specified requirements. (WIC § 11330.6(b))
- 6) Requires a county's application for HVP funding to describe the all of the following:
- a) How the program's purposes will be accomplished;
  - b) How the county will integrate and coordinate the evidence-based HVPs with county workers and core CalWORKs services to maximize the utilization of those services provided to CalWORKs recipients;
  - c) How the county consulted with existing HVPs, if applicable;
  - d) The county's plan to recruit and retain home visitors that reflect the population of its CalWORKs program; and,
  - e) The voluntary population of CalWORKs applicants and recipients the county intends to serve, which shall include those populations identified in 8) below. (WIC § 11330.6(c)(1))
- 7) Requires a voluntary participant to meet both of the following criteria:
- a) The individual is one of the following:
    - i) A member of a CalWORKs assistance unit (permits counties to serve additional individuals not part of an assistance unit with CDSS approval);
    - ii) The parent or caretaker relative for a child-only case;
    - iii) An individual who is apparently eligible for CalWORKs aid; and,
  - b) The individual is pregnant or the individual is a parent or caretaker relative of a child less than 24 months of age at the time the individual enrolls in the program. (WIC § 11330.6(c)(2))

Federal law:

- 8) Establishes the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, which provides block grants to states to develop and implement their own state welfare-to-work programs designed to provide cash assistance and other supports and services to low-income families. (42 United States Code § 601 *et seq.*)

**FISCAL EFFECT:** Unknown, this bill has not been analyzed by a fiscal committee.

**COMMENTS:**

**Background:** *What is a Home Visiting Program?* Home Visiting is a preventative approach or strategy designed to provide support to low-income pregnant persons and new parents in their homes by pairing them with a support person to connect families to services as they go through the early stages of raising a family. This strategy is aimed at improving outcomes in infant and child health, education, school readiness, and preventing entry into the child welfare system. This nationwide strategy is voluntary in each state. Home visitors are typically trained nurses, child development specialists, and/or social workers and they connect parents to prenatal care, coach parents to develop healthy attachments with their infants, and advise on how best to aid in their child's development. In California, there are two modes of home visiting: 1) California Department of Public Health's (CDPH) California Home Visiting Program, administered through local health jurisdictions, and 2) CDSS' CalWORKs HVP administered through county welfare departments. Each has different eligibility requirements including the duration and population served. CDPH's program does serves more than CalWORKs clients and participants are eligible until five years of age.

*This bill* will extend the eligibility timeframe for CalWORKs HVP to allow families to participate for the full duration of the evidence-based models currently used in counties, instead limiting participation to a duration of 24 months or until the child's second birthday, whichever is later.

*Brief History of the CalWORKs Home Visiting Program.* In 2018, AB 1811 (Committee on Budget), Chapter 35, Statutes of 2018, established the Home Visiting Initiative, contingent upon appropriation, as a voluntary program for the purpose of supporting positive health, development, and well-being outcomes for eligible pregnant and parenting women, families, and infants born into poverty. The target demographic was first-year parents. AB 1811 made participation in the program optional for counties and required a county that applies for funds under the program to agree to the terms of the program. In the first year of implementation (2019), 44 counties opted in. According to CDSS, 41 counties participated in fiscal year 2023-24.

SB 80 (Committee on Budget), Chapter 27, Statutes of 2019, expanded the Home Visiting Initiative to become the now-known HVP and made the program permanent. SB 80 expanded eligibility to include parents beyond a first-time parent and pregnant individuals, and permitted noncustodial parents to benefit from services.

HVP supports and resources include: (1) prenatal, infant, and toddler care; (2) infant and child nutrition; (3) child developmental screening and assessments; (4) parent education, and training in parent/child interaction; (5) child development and child care referral; (6) job readiness and barrier removal; (7) domestic violence and sexual assault services; and, (8) mental health and

substance abuse treatment and support. Each county may deliver services using the following models:

- Early Head Start – Home Based Option (EHS-HBO) is available for low-income pregnant women and families with children birth to age 3. EHS- HBO provides early, continuous intensive and comprehensive child development, and family support services in accordance with Head Start Performance Standards.
- Healthy Families America works with pregnant and parenting families of children prenatally up to age 5. Services are offered for a minimum of 3 years and up to 5 years.
- Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) services are provided until the child exits kindergarten. The HIPPY program provides parents with a curriculum that lasts for 30 weeks. Home visits take place once per week.
- Nurse Family Partnership (NFP) requires families to initiate services prenatally by the 28th week of pregnancy. Families can participate in the NFP program for two-and-a-half years. Home visits take place based on a family’s level of need and a child’s age. Services are provided until the child’s second birthday.
- Parent as Teachers (PAT) allows enrollment anytime between pregnancy and kindergarten. Services are designed to deliver services for at least 2 years. Home visits take place based on each family’s experiences and stressors.
- Promoting First Relationships-Home Visiting Intervention Model (PFR-HVIM) can be delivered to a family with a child between the ages of birth and 5 years of age and provides weekly, hour-long visits for 10 to 14 weeks; however, the duration can be extended based on a family’s needs.

*This bill* increases the allowable duration participants can be served in the CalWORKs HVP by allowing services to be provided for at least 24 months, and not to exceed the duration of the applicable HVP model, while also allowing pregnant individuals or those who are a parent or caretaker relative of a child less than 36 months of age, instead of 24 months, at the time the individual enrolls in the program, to become participants.

As an effort to promote continuity of services, *this bill* also allows a participant whose participation would otherwise be terminated because they no longer meet CalWORKs income, eligibility, or need criteria to continue through the duration of the HVP or for up to an additional 12 months, whichever is longer.

*Effectiveness of the CalWORKs HVP.* AB 1811 also required an independent, research-based institution to provide an evaluation report. The University of California San Francisco, School of Nursing conducted a program evaluation that was published on January 7, 2022, which found that HVP is successful. The evaluation found, “Clients, home visitors and HVP staff consistently reported a high level of satisfaction with the program activities and services. The interviews and focus groups provided many specific examples of how vital HVP was in helping clients meet basic needs and strengthened client and child health and development.” (Rienks et al. 2022) The evaluation contained several key program implementation improvement recommendations, which include:

- 1) Explore with models and counties how to offer flexibility to home visitors to implement HVP program models while maintaining model fidelity, with attention to supporting home visitors to build rapport and trusting relationship with HVP clients who are often in a state of crisis.
- 2) Explore opportunities to strengthen collaboration with CalWORKs as the key referral source for HVP clients.
- 3) Explore ways to address workforce challenges, including recruitment and retention of home visitors as well as ongoing training and support needs.
- 4) Explore opportunities to support the program and staff learning collaboratives to promote sharing of best practices and up-to-date information, with special interest groups by county size, region or specific program model(s).

**Author’s Statement:** According to the Author, “To support the healthy development and stability of families, the CalWORKs Home Visiting Program (HVP) provides voluntary home visiting services. These programs are administered by counties, are backed by decades of research, and are proven to increase families’ economic self-sufficiency, foster healthy child development, promote school readiness and reduce child maltreatment. [This bill] aims to ensure families can receive the maximum benefits of these programs by extending the enrollment period to families with children up to 36 months, as well as allowing families to participate for the full duration of the applicable HVP model.”

**Equity Implications:** Research shows HVPs are overall effective and successful tools for prevention into the child welfare system and aid in child development; however, there is not enough research evaluating the efforts on closing racial disparities. According to James J. Heckman, a Nobel Memorial Prize winner in economics and an expert in the economics of human development, it is important to “...provide developmental resources to children AND their families. Direct investment in the child’s early development is complemented by investment in parents and family environments. Quality early childhood education from birth to age five, coupled with parent-coaching, such as home visitation programs for parents and teen mothers, has proven to be effective and warrants more investment.” *This bill* increases the time period someone is eligible to receive services from the HVP and thus may increase the positive impact of the program.

#### **RELATED AND PRIOR LEGISLATION:**

***SB 1396 (Alvarado-Gil) of 2024***, identical to this bill, would have extended the duration of the CalWORKs HVP. *SB 1396 was held on the Assembly Appropriations Committee suspense file.*

***SB 120 (Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review) of the current legislative session***, conforms the CalWORKs HVP, with enacted statute that provides aid to a pregnant person as of the date of the application for aid; deletes the provision limiting eligibility for the HVP with respect to pregnant CalWORKs applicants who have not reached the 2nd trimester; and authorizes CDSS to implement and administer these provisions by means of all-county letters or similar instructions from the department until regulations are adopted.

***SB 80 (Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review), Chapter 27, Statutes of 2019***, see comments above.

*AB 1811 (Committee on Budget), Chapter 35, Statutes of 2018*, see comments above.

**REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**

**Support**

Children Now (Co-Sponsor)  
County Welfare Directors Association of California (Co-Sponsor)  
All for Kids  
American Congress of Obstetricians & Gynecologists - District IX  
California Alliance of Caregivers  
California Family Resource Association  
Child Abuse Prevention Center and Its Affiliates Safe Kids California, Prevent Child Abuse  
California and The California Family Resource Association  
Child Care Resource Center  
County Health Executives Association of California (CHEAC)  
Everychild Foundation  
First 5 California  
First 5 Orange County  
First 5 Sacramento  
LA Best Babies Network  
Para Los Ninos  
Parents As Teachers National Center  
Western Center on Law & Poverty

**Opposition**

None on file.

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