

Date of Hearing: March 24, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Alex Lee, Chair

AB 2567 (Celeste Rodriguez) – As Amended March 17, 2026

**SUBJECT:** CalWORKs: immediate assistance

**SUMMARY:** Requires counties to authorize immediate assistance or housing assistance to eligible applicants without requiring the applicant to apply for unconditionally available income as a prerequisite for eligibility determination.

**EXISTING LAW:**

- 1) Establishes in state law the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program to provide cash assistance and other social services for low-income families through Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). Under CalWORKs, each county provides assistance through a combination of state, county and federal TANF funds. (Welfare and Institutions Code [WIC] § 11200 *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) Requires counties, at the time of application, to determine whether a CalWORKs applicant needs, and is eligible for, immediate assistance because the applicant does not have sufficient resources to meet their emergency needs. (WIC 11266 (a))
- 4) Requires immediate assistance to be \$200 or what the applicant is eligible for, whichever is less. (WIC 11266 (b))
- 5) Establishes eligibility requirements for immediate needs applicants including that an applicant must apply for any unconditionally available income. (California Department of Social Services Manual of Policies and Procedures, Division 40-129)

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

**COMMENTS:**

**Background:** *CalWORKs Overview.* CalWORKs is the state's primary cash assistance program. More specifically, CalWORKs implements the federal TANF program, which is a federal flexible block grant with the objective of providing income and support to families with children. CalWORKs provides eligible low-income families with cash grants and education, employment and training programs, and supportive services to give families opportunities to build resilience and achieve critical economic mobility.

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2024-25, 358,942 families received assistance, and the Administration projects a 1.3% increase to 363,766 families. As of October 2025, the maximum monthly grant for a family of three on CalWORKs (one parent and two children), if the family has no other

income and lives in a high-cost-of-living county, is \$1,175, which is 53% of the 2025 Federal Poverty Level (FPL). The average grant amount in FY 25-26 was \$999.

*Immediate Need Assistance.* When a CalWORKs applicant is in an emergency situation and cannot wait for their CalWORKs benefits, they may qualify for an advance on their benefits. An immediate need request can be requested at the time of the CalWORKs application or by a verbal or written indication of an emergency situation after the CalWORKs application has been submitted. A determination of eligibility for immediate needs assistance must be made no later than the next working day following receipt of the request.

In order to be eligible for an immediate need payment, the applicant must be eligible for CalWORKs, have an emergency situation, without regard to whether it could have been anticipated, which cannot be addressed by the issuance of food stamps or homeless assistance or by referral to a community resource, does not have resources that do not exceed the resource limitation, and complied with social security enumeration, application for unconditionally available income (including unemployment benefits), work registration of the principal earner who is exempt from welfare-to-work due to remoteness, work registration of the nonfederal principal earner, and cooperation with the District Attorney. An emergency situation is defined as:

- **Lack of Housing** - The applicant is homeless.
- **Pending Eviction** - The applicant has received any type of eviction notice, including a three-day notice to pay or quit, evicting the family from its current residence.
- **Lack of Food** - The applicant does not have enough food to sustain the family for a period of three calendar days.
- **Utility Shutoff Notice** - The applicant has received notice of termination of utility service, or such service has been terminated.
- **Transportation** - The applicant is unable to meet essential transportation needs such as those relating to food, medical care, or job opportunities.
- **Clothing** - The applicant lacks essential clothing, such as diapers or clothing needed for inclement weather.
- **Other** - The applicant has other emergencies of similar importance to the family's immediate health and safety.

*This bill* would eliminate the need for an applicant to apply for any unconditionally available income prior to receiving an immediate need payment.

*Homeless Assistance Program.* The CalWORKs Homeless Assistance Program provides eligible families with both temporary and permanent housing support once every 12 months. The daily temporary assistance rate increased from \$65 to \$85 for families of up to four people as of January 1, 2019. Each additional family member qualifies for an extra \$15 per day, with a maximum daily limit of \$145.

This assistance may be used to cover temporary lodging while families search for permanent housing. Assistance can also help pay up to two months of overdue rent to prevent eviction, or

cover a security deposit and the first month's rent for a new home. To qualify, the rent must not exceed 80% of the household's total monthly income.

Families can receive CalWORKs Homeless Assistance once every 12 months if they are 1) currently receiving CalWORKs, or 2) qualify for the program and are either homeless or at-risk of becoming homeless. A family is considered at risk if they have received a "pay rent or quit" notice, including any eviction-related notice, regardless of the reason stated.

In certain situations, families may qualify for assistance more than once within a 12-month period. Exceptions apply when homelessness is caused by events such as natural disasters, domestic violence, or unsafe living conditions due to sudden and unforeseen circumstances beyond the family's control, or medically verified physical or mental health conditions. Additionally, CalWORKs applicants fleeing domestic abuse may qualify for a one-time expansion of temporary homeless assistance.

**Author's Statement:** According to the Author, "CalWORKs immediate assistance is meant to help families facing urgent crises meet their basic needs without delay. Yet in practice, some applicants are required to first pursue other income they are not currently receiving before counties determine their eligibility for emergency aid. For families with little or no cash on hand, even short delays can mean going without food, housing, utilities, diapers, or other essentials.

"[This bill] streamlines access to emergency CalWORKs assistance by clarifying that counties must determine a family's apparent eligibility based on the information available at the time of application, without first requiring applicants to apply for other potential income. By removing unnecessary barriers and delays, this bill helps ensure families can quickly access the support they need to stay safe, stable, and meet their basic needs during times of crisis."

**Equity Implications:** CalWORKs applicants who demonstrate they are in need of immediate relief are currently experiencing deep poverty including homelessness and food insecurity. Households in deep poverty suffer from food shortages, unemployment, unstable housing, inadequate medical care, electrical shutoffs, and isolation. The Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) reports that deep poverty is rising<sup>1</sup>. In 2023, 1.7 million people were in deep poverty, compared to 1.6 million in 2022. PPIC further reports that safety net programs keep people out of poverty. Without safety net programs, about 2.6 million more Californians (6.7%) would have been in poverty.

Because immediate needs applicants have to apply for other programs and be denied before receiving help, it delays the help they could receive. Applications for unemployment, disability, or veteran's benefits typically require a computer and internet access, and are not processed immediately. *This bill* may result in reduced barriers for people experiencing hardship and facing deep poverty.

**Arguments in Support:** The sponsors, County Welfare Directors Association of California, write that this bill "clarifies that counties must make an apparent eligibility determination for immediate assistance based on available information at the time of application, without requiring applicants to first apply for other income they may be eligible to receive but do not currently have. By removing this prerequisite, the bill helps ensure that immediate assistance can be delivered more quickly to families experiencing urgent financial hardship. [This bill] aligns with

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ppic.org/publication/poverty-in-california/>

the purpose of CalWORKs immediate assistance program by ensuring families in crisis receive timely support. This will support quicker stabilization for vulnerable families and will help prevent deeper economic hardship during the CalWORKs application process.”

**Arguments in Opposition:** None on file.

**Policy Considerations:** This bill removes the requirement for unconditionally available income to be applied for when determining eligibility; however, unconditionally available income is an undefined term in statute.

*Should this bill move forward, the Author may wish to specify what unconditionally available income means.*

**Proposed Committee Amendments:** In order to address the above policy considerations, the Committee proposes the Author take the following amendments:

**(A) Unconditionally available income includes but it is not limited to, unemployment Insurance Benefits, Social Security, Veterans’ Benefits, or State Disability Insurance**

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

*SB 187 (Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review), Chapter 50, Statutes of 2022*, removed the requirement for immediate assistance recipients to have children or provide medical verification of pregnancy.

#### **REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**

##### **Support**

California Partnership to End Domestic Violence (Co-Sponsor)  
Coalition of California Welfare Rights Organizations (Co-Sponsor)  
County Welfare Directors Association of California (Co-Sponsor)  
End Child Poverty California Powered by GRACE (Co-Sponsor)  
Parent Voices California (Co-Sponsor)  
SEIU California (Co-Sponsor)  
Western Center on Law & Poverty (Co-Sponsor)

##### **Opposition**

None on file.

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