

Date of Hearing: April 18, 2023

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Corey A. Jackson, Chair

AB 510 (Jackson) – As Amended April 13, 2023

SUBJECT: Public social services: purposes

SUMMARY: Updates the purposes of public social services for which state grants-in-aid are made to counties. Specifically, **this bill**:

- 1) Deletes references to “dependent families” and “handicapped or deprived persons subject to social or legal disability” in the provisions related to the purposes for public social services.
- 2) Recasts the purposes of the public social services for which state grants-in-aid are made to counties as follows:
 - a) To provide on behalf of the general public, and within the limits of public resources, reasonable support and maintenance for needy and vulnerable children, adults, and families;
 - b) To provide timely and appropriate services to assist individuals to develop or use whatever capacity they can maintain or achieve for self-care or self-support; and,
 - c) To provide protective services to individuals with a physical, mental, or other disability and to children and others subject to exploitation that jeopardizes their present or future health, opportunity for normal development, or capacity for independence.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) States legislative intent that aid shall be administered and services provided promptly and humanely, with due regard for the preservation of family life, and without discrimination on account of ancestry, marital status, political affiliation, or any characteristic as described. (Welfare and Institutions Code [WIC] WIC 10000)
- 2) Defines the purposes of the public social services for which state grants-in-aid are made to counties as follows:
 - a) To provide on behalf of the general public, and within the limits of public resources, reasonable support and maintenance for needy and dependent families and persons;
 - b) To provide timely and appropriate services to assist individuals develop or use whatever capacity they can maintain or achieve for self-care or self-support; and,
 - c) To provide protective services to handicapped or deprived persons subject to social or legal disability, and to children and others subject to exploitation jeopardizing their present or future health, opportunity for normal development, or capacity for independence. (WIC 10001)
- 3) Defines “public social services” as activities and functions of state and local government administered or supervised by the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) or the California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) and involved in providing aid or

services or both, including health care services and medical assistance, to those people of the state who, because of their economic circumstances or social condition, are in need thereof and may benefit thereby. (WIC 10051)

- 4) Defines “aid” as financial assistance provided to or in behalf of needy persons under the terms of this division, including direct money payments and vendor payments. (WIC 10052)
- 5) Defines “services” as those activities and functions performed by social work staff and related personnel of CDSS and county departments with, or in behalf of, individuals or families which are directed toward the improvement of the capabilities of the individuals or families maintaining or achieving a sound family life, rehabilitation, self-care, and economic independence. (WIC 10053(a))
- 6) Provides that services for children must include the coordinated efforts of CDSS and the California Department of Education to ensure that all children in receipt of aid under CalWORKs are afforded the opportunity to participate and progress under an educational program that will lead to their functioning at full capacity upon reaching maturity. The educational services aspect of public social services includes education for parents in food preparation and provision for nutritional supplements to the extent necessary and as authorized by Article 9 (commencing with Section 49510 of Chapter 9 of Part 27 of the Education Code. (WIC 10053 (b))

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

COMMENTS:

Background: California administers a number of public assistance programs to uplift those in poverty. Many of those programs are housed within CDSS and then administered by each county.

At the county level, California administers three federally funded safety net or public assistance programs: CalFresh (federally known as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or SNAP), CalWORKs (federally known as the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families or TANF), and Medi-Cal (federally known as Medicaid). Each county works to determine eligibility set forth by federal and state standards and then helps disburse the aide.

CalFresh uses federal funds to provide a nutrition benefit to individuals and families with low incomes. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is responsible for setting specific eligibility requirements for programs like CalFresh including a gross and net income test, work requirements, and other documentation requirements. The maximum allowable gross income is 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). Households with elderly or disabled members are not subject to gross income criteria but must have a net monthly income at or below 100% of the FPL. Other households must meet both gross and net monthly income tests. CalFresh is administered locally by county human services agencies, and the federal, state, and county governments share in the cost of administration of the program. Individuals can complete the CalFresh application online, over the phone, in-person at their county CalFresh office, or through the mail.

CalFresh benefits are distributed through monthly electronic benefits for food purchases through an automated teller machine (ATM)-like electronic benefits transfer (EBT) card. CalFresh recipients cannot access CalFresh funds through withdrawal at point-of-sale terminals or at ATM machines.

Instead, CalFresh benefits can only be used to purchase food items to be prepared and consumed at home, as well as seeds and plants that can be grown at home and produce food.

CalWORKs is also administered at the local level through counties. CalWORKs is funded in part by the federal TANF block grant and aims to help children and families meet basic needs and move out of poverty. Families receive cash assistance and have access to a variety of services, including, where applicable, child care, as well as services aimed at addressing mental health needs, substance use disorders, instances of domestic violence, and learning disabilities, among other issues. Parents are required to develop and participate in a welfare-to-work plan, unless otherwise exempted.

Medi-Cal is known as Medicaid at the federal level and offers free and low-cost healthcare to everyone eligible in California, including undocumented individuals. DHCS oversees Medi-Cal, but counties are responsible for administration. Medi-Cal offers general health, vision, dental, and long-term care benefits for those that meet eligibility requirements.

Author’s Statement: According to the Author, “This bill will update outdated language and terminology that sets the tone for California statute governing public social services and helps destigmatize necessary and needed services.”

Need for this bill: This bill recasts the intended purposes of public social services to use more inclusive language and more accurately describe the population the state works to serve.

Equity Implications: This bill seeks to address the recipients of California’s social services programs, a population that is overwhelmingly Black, Latino, low-income, food-insecure, and overburdened by the daily costs of living, including housing, transportation, food, and health care. Fewer than one-in-ten CalWORKs adult recipients have education beyond high school, which is less than the average of six-in-ten adults in the overall population. As of 2017, the vast majority (81.4%) of CalWORKs recipients are children. According to data reported by the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC), California provides cash assistance to more families than other states (in 2015, 65 out of every 100 in poverty received assistance, compared with a national average of 23). Data from PPIC also show the CalFresh food assistance and the federal earned income tax credit each mitigate child poverty by four percentage points. While these safety net programs have been effective in reducing poverty for many, there is still a long way to go to ensure that all Californians in need can get the assistance required to lead an independent and productive life free from the constraints of poverty where a person’s race, ethnicity or zip code will not be a predictor of their financial outcomes.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

None on file

Opposition

None on file

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