

CALWORKS FACT SHEET



This Fact Sheet is not a substitute for State CalWORKs regulations. The County of Santa Cruz Human Services Department has copies of the state regulations you may review.

WHAT IS CALWORKS?

The California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program offers temporary cash aid, employment services, and health insurance to eligible California families with children under age 18 or graduating before they turn 19.

CALWORKS BENEFITS

CalWORKs may provide several benefits to families if eligible, including:

- Temporary cash aid (EBT card or direct deposit)
- CalWORKs Employment Services help families become self-sufficient, including:
 - Child care
 - Substance abuse and mental health services
 - Transportation reimbursement
 - Job training
 - Educational assistance
 - Diapers
- Medi-Cal health insurance
- CalFresh (formerly Food Stamps), if eligible

CALWORKS EMPLOYMENT SERVICES (CWES) REQUIREMENTS

CalWORKs recipients are required to work or participate in work-related activities for 20–35 hours per week.

If the CalWORKs recipient is a single parent with a child under 6, the individual must work or participate for 20 hours per week. Single parents of older children are required to work or participate for 30 hours per week. In a two-parent family, adult CalWORKs recipients must work or participate for a minimum of 35 hours per week. The 35-hour requirement is a combined hourly requirement for both parents. Exemptions for participation requirements are granted for many life circumstances.

APPLICATION PROCESS

The CalWORKs application includes completing forms and an interview with a Benefits Representative. Aid cannot begin until all conditions of eligibility have been verified. As an applicant, you must:

- Provide a picture identification and Social Security number
- Verify citizenship or show proof of legal immigration status
- Verify income and property
- Apply for potentially available income, such as unemployment benefits
- Sign an agreement to cooperate with Child Support Services to locate absent parents, establish paternity, and obtain child support
- Agree to participate in the CalWORKs Employment Services Program, if required

Immediate Need payments may be made for families with emergencies while the CalWORKs application is processed (maximum of \$200).

CALWORKS PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY

After submitting your application, you will be given an appointment to meet with a Benefits Representative. If you are in a two-parent household, both parents must be present and sign the application at the appointment. Basic eligibility factors for children and needy parents or caretaker relatives include:

Deprivation: Children who will be aided must be deprived of parental support or care because at least one parent is:

- Deceased, or
- Physically or mentally incapacitated, or
- Continually absent from the home, or
- For two-parent families, if the parent who earned the most in the past 24 months is not working or working less than 100 hours per month

CALWORKS FACT SHEET

Age: Children may be eligible for CalWORKs until their 18th birthday or are 18 years old, in high school full-time, and expected to graduate before age 19.

Property: The property of a child and parent(s) must be within the limits:

- Family members may have \$12,552 combined personal and real property per family. Families with elderly members (60 years or older) may have \$18,829 combined personal and real property per family.
- Furniture, clothing, and appliances are exempt.
- The family home is exempt, provided the family lives in it.
- The equity value of each vehicle over \$33,626 will be counted towards the maximum property limit.

Residency: There are no durational residency requirements. Families must live in California and intend to continue living here to be eligible. CalWORKs-eligible family members must be legal residents of the United States.

INCOME LIMITS FOR APPLICANTS

CalWORKs regulations provide a gross income limit, which is determined by subtracting \$450 (effective July 1, 2024) from the earned income of each employed person, then adding all remaining earned and unearned income to determine the gross income for the family. That amount is then compared to the Minimum Basic Standards of Adequate Care (MBSAC) level for the family size. MBSAC is a tool used by California's Department of Social Services to determine CalWORKs eligibility. If the family's total gross monthly income after the \$450 earned income deduction for each earner exceeds the MBSAC level for the family size, the family is not eligible. The following chart reflects the current MBSAC levels as of July 1, 2026:

Household Size	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
\$ Limit	\$963	\$1,581	\$1,960	\$2,325	\$2,653	\$2,983	\$3,280	\$3,569

AMOUNT OF CALWORKS CASH ASSISTANCE YOU MAY BE ELIGIBLE FOR

With CalWORKs, adults may receive temporary cash aid for up to 60 months (effective May 2022) in their lifetime.

Your household's size and monthly income determine how much you receive each month. This chart reflects the maximum aid before earned and unearned income, and any applicable deductions are applied as of October 1, 2026.

Household Size	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Maximum Aid Amount	\$747	\$947	\$1,196	\$1,441	\$1,689	\$1,936	\$2,184	\$2,432

HOW TO ACCESS YOUR CALWORKS BENEFITS

Recipients of CalWORKs are issued a plastic card called an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card that they can use at ATMs to withdraw cash. Purchases can also be made at stores that have POS (point of sale) machines, through which recipients will swipe their EBT cards. CalWORKs recipients may also request that their cash aid be automatically deposited into their bank account.

Never give out your Social Security number, EBT card info, or PIN to anyone online, over the phone, when using 3rd party phone apps, or by text.

YOUR RIGHTS

Whether you are eligible, you have the right to be treated with dignity, respect, and courtesy when you apply for CalWORKs. The Human Services Department will not discriminate against anyone because of race, color, national origin, political affiliation, religion, age, sex, sexual or gender orientation, marital status, pregnancy, or physical or mental disability. If you believe you have not been treated equally, contact the Human Services Department Civil Rights Coordinator at (831) 454-4113.

HOW TO APPLY FOR CALWORKS

Apply online: <http://www.benefitscal.com>

Or visit us at the Human Services Department's Customer Service Centers located at:

- 1020 Emeline Avenue, Santa Cruz, CA 95060
- 500 Westridge Drive, Watsonville, CA 95076
- Customer Service Centers are open Monday–Friday, 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM
- TTY for Hearing Impaired (831) 454-4763

Or call the Phone Service Center Monday – Friday 8:00 AM – 4:00 PM toll-free at 1 (888) 421-8080 to have an application mailed or start an application over the phone.