

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

WELFARE TO WORK

HANDBOOK



A GUIDE TO THE COUNTY OF KERN
EMPLOYMENT SERVICES
WELFARE TO WORK PROGRAM

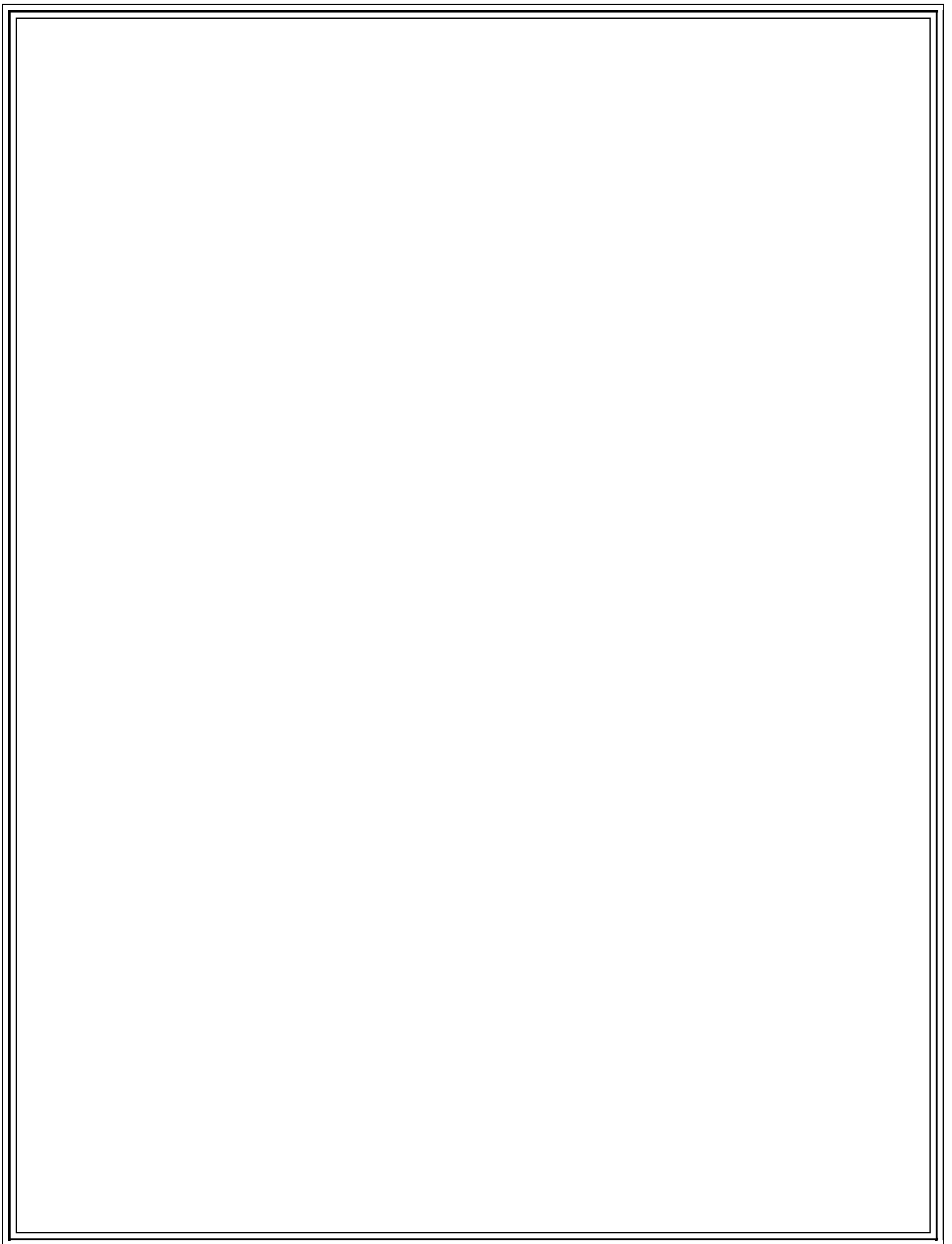


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Welfare to Work Handbook

“Pathway to Self-Sufficiency”

Welcome to the Welfare to Work Program. The information in this handbook will help you understand how the Welfare to Work Program works for you and your family.

Your Employment Social Service Worker will meet with you and explain the steps you will take in the Welfare to Work Program. You will meet regularly with your Employment Social Service Worker while you are participating in the program. Talk with your Employment Social



Service Worker whenever you have a question or do not understand what you are required to do in the Welfare to Work Program.

Be sure to keep this handbook to refer to as you participate in the program.

How Can the Welfare to Work Program Help Me?

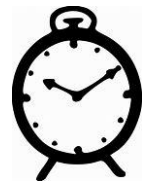
The purpose of the Welfare to Work Program is to help you prepare for work and find a job. Finding a job will help you become self-sufficient and your family will enjoy a better way of life. Your job will help you serve as a positive role model for your children, increase your self-confidence, and build your future.

The Welfare to Work Program has been designed with you in mind. You **can** succeed.

- Welfare to Work helps you find a job to become self-sufficient.
- You can upgrade your job skills or learn new skills to help you get a job in today’s work force.
- Employment Social Service Workers are with you every step of the way and will assist you with important supportive services such as childcare, transportation, and work or training related expenses.
- Through Welfare to Work, everyone wins. You gain a job and a future for your family. Your employer gains a skilled employee.

What Should I Know About Welfare to Work Time Limits?

As of May 1, 2022, there is a five-year (60-months) total lifetime limit on cash aid for adults. Your 60-month clock starts in any month or partial month in which you begin to receive a cash grant. There are exceptions to the 60-month time limit rule. Your Employment Social Service Worker can explain the exceptions to you. The time limit does not apply to children.



Who Must Participate in the Welfare to Work Program?

Mandatory Participants:

You will participate in the Welfare to Work Program if you are a California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) cash aid recipient, and you are not exempt. You are called a “mandatory participant.” If you are a mandatory participant you must:

- Keep appointments made by your Employment Social Service Worker.
- Sign activity agreements and attend all assigned activities.
- Meet all Welfare to Work requirements.
- Maintain required attendance in your assigned activities.
- Provide proof of satisfactory progress in your assigned activities.
- Not quit your job or lower your earnings.

We will determine if you must participate in Welfare to Work when:

- You apply for aid or when your eligibility is determined for renewal.
- You have a change in your exemption status.

Exemptions:

If you are physically or mentally unable to work, you may qualify for an exemption from Welfare to Work participation requirements. Exemptions will be discussed on page 10.

How Many Hours Will I Participate in Welfare to Work Activities?

Single Parent Families:

If you are the adult in a one-parent CalWORKs family and you are not exempt, you must participate in your assigned Welfare to Work activities for a total of at least 130-hours per month (on average 30-hours per week). If you have a child under the age of 6 you must participate at least 87-hours per month (on average 20-hours per week).



Two-Parent Families:

If you are an adult in a two-parent CalWORKs family and you are not exempt, you and/or the other parent in your assistance unit must participate in assigned Welfare to Work activities for a total of at least 152-hours per month (on average 35-hours per week).

Both parents may participate to meet the 152-hours per month requirement. If one parent is exempted or sanctioned, the other parent must meet all of the hourly requirements.



Note: If you are in a two-parent household but only one parent is CalWORKs aided due to the other parent being a non-citizen or a recipient of SSI/SSP benefits, then you will fall under the single parent with all children over six category, which will be 130 hours per month.

If you are in two-parent household and both parents are CalWORKs aided but the other parent is taking a medical exemption as they are unable to work or participate at the moment, then you will also fall under the single parent all children over six category.

What Will I Be Doing?

There are many paths open to Welfare to Work participants. Your path may not involve every step in the Welfare to Work Program. A lot depends on your education and job history. Remember: The purpose of Welfare to Work is to help you prepare for work and find a job so that you can support yourself and your family.

You will complete the following steps in the Welfare to Work Program:

Appraisal:

Your first activity in Welfare to Work is an Online CalWORKs Appraisal Tool (OCAT) appraisal appointment with your Employment Social Service Worker. Together, we look over your work history, job skills, education, and other information about you and your family. We also review your need for transportation, childcare and other resources. This information helps you and your Employment Social Service Worker decide your next steps in the program. At this appointment, you will sign your Welfare to Work activity agreement agreeing to participate in the activities that you are assigned to. You will receive a copy of your signed activity agreement.

Following Appraisal, most participants are assigned to a Job Search activity lasting four weeks.

Learning Disabilities Screening:

Many people have a learning disability, but don't know it. You can find out if you have a learning disability by answering some questions. This is called a "screening."



Did You Know?

- Up to 2 out of 5 adults on aid have learning disabilities.
- Most people with learning disabilities are of above-average intelligence.

Why get screened?

If you have a learning disability:

- You can learn your strengths and find ways to make it easier for you to learn and help you be more successful at school and on the job.
- The county can help you get into the right kind of Welfare to Work activity, such as training.

Some signs of learning disabilities:

- Do you have a hard time filling out forms? Following directions? Getting people to understand what you are trying to say?
- Ever been in special education or received extra help in school as a child?

These are signs you may have a learning disability.

If you have a learning disability, it may be hard for you to:

- Read
- Listen

- Understand directions
- Write
- Spell
- Do math
- Organize things
- Say your ideas out loud
- Pay attention

People with learning disabilities can have a lot of problems with some of these things, but do great with others.

What is the screening like?

- The screening is very simple. It only takes about 15-minutes. It is just a few questions about your learning experiences and health.
- The screening is confidential, and it is your choice if you want to do it. Let your Employment Social Service Worker know if you want to be screened.

What happens after the screening?

- The screening will help you decide if you want a referral to a specialist to find out if you have a learning disability.
- The specialist can help you find your strengths and weaknesses so the county can help you get the services you need.
- It is your choice if you want to see a specialist for an evaluation. Let your Employment Social Service Worker know if you want to be referred to a specialist.

What are Welfare to Work Activities?

Participating in More Than One Activity at a Time:

You may be assigned to participate in more than one activity at the same time to help you reach the participation requirement of 87, 130, or 152 hours per month. The activities must be consistent with the recommendations of your assessment. You are required to participate in each of your assigned activities.

Assessment:

You will participate in Assessment during your initial job readiness workshop. You may attend Assessment directly after your Appraisal appointment based on the availability of job readiness workshops and testing dates.



The purpose of Assessment is for you and your Employment Social Service Worker to put together a plan to help you get a job. To do this a qualified third party evaluator will:

- Appraise your abilities, interest, work history and education.
- Compare your skills and the jobs available in your area.
- Consider any physical or mental disabilities you have that limit your ability to work or participate in activities.

If you are in a Self-Initiated Program (SIP), an activity agreement may be signed based on your Appraisal.

You may be sent to Assessment if you need another activity at the same time so that you are participating in Welfare to Work activities for the required number of hours per month.

For more information about a SIP please refer to page 8.

Post Assessment Appointment:

When your Assessment Report is completed, you will meet with your Employment Social Service Worker to discuss your assessment results and prepare and sign your Welfare to Work activity assignment based on these results and your goals.

Unsubsidized Employment:

Employment with a public or private employer, either part-time or full-time, where you earn a wage that meets or exceeds the current minimum wage may be assigned as an approved activity. Pay stubs must be provided for verification.

Self-Employment:

Profitable self-employment that is not subsidized. You must earn a net profit (after expenses) that equals or exceeds the minimum wage for the number of hours you work.

Job Search and Job Readiness Assistance:

Job Readiness workshops help you learn job seeking and self-sufficiency skills. Job search consists of contacts with potential employers. All job contacts are reported to your Employment Social Service Worker.

Employment Zone, also known as Ezone, is a job readiness workshop that provides job search assistance. Ezone facilitators will help you create a

professional resume, help you improve your interviewing techniques, and practice mock interviews to prepare you to have a successful job search. Ezone networks with employers throughout Kern County and you will receive job leads from local employers who are looking to hire.



Employers Training Resource, or ETR, is a job readiness activity that provides job search assistance. Unlike Ezone, you must be ready to work and already have a resume or recent work history to participate in ETR job search. ETR is offered at America's Job Center and you will be meeting with a Program Specialist weekly.

Employment Preparation Program (EPP):

An activity assignment in a public or nonprofit agency that provides basic job skills and current work experience leading to employment. You will not be paid, but you will continue to get your cash aid and other benefits. EPP is limited to six months.

After two months, depending upon funding availability, you may transition into the Paid Work Experience program, or PWEX, where you are now being paid California minimum wage and are eligible to work up to 40-hours per week for six months. You will transition to an Employment activity to meet your participation requirements during this time.

Vocational Education/Training:

Education and training courses geared toward a specific license, degree, or certificate for employment. Vocational education and/or training may need to be approved in your Assessment Report.

Work Study:

Paid employment at the school or college where you are attending an educational program.

Adult Basic Education/GED/High School Diploma:

Basic reading and mathematical skills geared toward attaining your High School Diploma, General Education Development certificate (GED) or improving your English (ESL).

NOW Workbooks:

Workbook titles include Word for Dummies, Excel for Dummies, and Crucial Conversations. Books will be given with a section review to complete.

NOW Workshops:

Workshops that provide assistance with identifying and addressing employment barriers that may exist within our families. NOW Workshops focus on developing life skills through a variety of topics including:

- Self-Sufficiency Workshops
- Cognitive Behavioral Workshops
- Family Dynamics Workshops
- Personal Well-Being Workshops.



Kern Behavioral Health Services:

Referrals are made to treatment services to help with mental health, substance abuse, or domestic abuse issues.

With a referral from your Employment Services Social Service Worker, trained behavioral health counselors will work with you to help you make positive changes in your life.

Services offered to you include:

- Individual and group counseling to assist you in managing emotional issues that you may be facing.
- Substance abuse counseling in one-on-one sessions and confidential groups to help you overcome drug and alcohol problems.
- Domestic abuse counseling in a confidential environment to help you and your family. Referrals are provided to legal services and other community resources. Assistance is provided to help you find safe shelter.
- Life skills classes on topics such as stress management, pre-employment issues and building communication skills.

Participating in behavioral health services is an activity that can count toward your required hours of participation for Welfare to Work.

Self-Initiated Programs (SIPs):

Parents who are enrolled in an undergraduate degree or certificate program at the time of their first Welfare to Work Appraisal appointment may be able to continue in that program without Assessment approval.

The parent must be making satisfactory progress in the program. The program must provide education and training that will likely lead to a job. A program will be determined to lead to a job if it is on the list of programs that the County Welfare Department and local education agencies and providers agree leads to in-demand employment.

There are special rules for SIPs. Talk to your Employment Social Service Worker about your program to determine if it meets the rules for a SIP.

What is Satisfactory Participation?

Attendance:

When you sign your activity agreement, you agree to attend and complete each of your assigned activities. You agree to attend each activity for the required number of hours per week. You cannot be absent or late more times than your activity provider allows. Any absence must be reported to your Employment Social Service Worker prior to the start of your activity.

Satisfactory Progress:

All participants are required to make satisfactory progress toward completing their assigned activities. Satisfactory progress in your assigned activity may include skills improvement, academic advancement, and obtaining a license or

certificate. Satisfactory progress includes regular attendance.

Completion of Welfare-to-Work Activity Assignments:

The requirements for each of your activity assignments will be explained to you. Our goal is for you to complete each assigned Welfare to Work activity. You will have successfully completed an assignment if:

- You attended all of the required hours and/or obtain the objective of the activity assignment.
- We determine that you will not benefit from further participation in that activity.
- We determine a different activity will be more appropriate for you.
- You go off cash aid.

What are Supportive Services?

We understand that you may need help with childcare, transportation, and work or training expenses to participate in your Welfare to Work activities. Your Employment Social Service Worker will discuss your need for supportive services and tell you how we can help pay the expenses. We can pay for these supportive services if other funding sources are not available to pay all or part of the costs. You may be able to get an advance when you begin an activity.

Childcare:

You can get paid childcare while you work and/or participate in other Welfare to Work activities. You can receive childcare for each child in your CalWORKs assistance unit who is 13

years old or younger. You may get help for a child who lives with you, but is not in your CalWORKs assistance unit, when not having childcare keeps you from getting a job or participating in Welfare to Work.

Your Employment Social Service Worker will refer you to Community Connection for Child Care. You can choose the kind of childcare provider you want such as a childcare center, licensed in-home childcare provider, relative, friend, or neighbor. If you do not have a childcare provider, you can receive help finding someone to provide care for your children.

If your childcare provider is not licensed, he or she must be fingerprinted for registration (unless this person is your child's aunt, uncle, or grandparent). We cannot pay if the person you choose to provide childcare is in your CalWORKs assistance unit, is the child's legal guardian, or the child's parent or a person under 18 years of age.

Payments are made directly to the childcare provider. The most we can pay for childcare is the rate based on what is normally charged for childcare in the area where you live.

Transportation:

We can help pay transportation costs for traveling to and from your Welfare to Work activities and to take your children to and from your childcare provider. You are able to get a monthly bus pass or you can request monthly mileage reimbursement up to the amount of a monthly bus pass.



Work or Training Needs (Ancillary Payments):

We can help you with work or training related costs that you need for your job or to participate in your assigned Welfare to Work activities. These costs may include books, tools, uniforms or other special clothing.

NOTE: If you are paid more money for child care, transportation, and/or work or training related needs than is required for you to participate in your Welfare to Work activities, you will have to pay the money back. You must use the money for the reason it was issued to you. If you are paid more money than you need to participate, you must call your Employment Social Service Worker immediately.

What Happens if I Do Not Cooperate with Welfare to Work Program Requirements?

If you are a mandatory participant in the Welfare to Work Program, you must cooperate with Welfare to Work Program requirements unless you have a good reason for not participating. (See the Section titled "Good Reasons for Not Participating" on page 11.

You must contact your Employment Social Service Worker immediately if there is a reason you cannot participate. Your Employment Social Service Worker will work with you to help resolve any problems.

If you fail or refuse to cooperate with the Welfare to Work Program requirements, the following will happen:

Cause Determination:

If you do not meet Welfare to Work Program requirements, you will receive a *Notice of Action* in the mail giving you an appointment to meet with your Employment Social Service Worker and explain why you did not participate. You will have twenty calendar days (20) after the date of the notice to meet with or call your Employment Social Service Worker.

If the County decides you have a good reason for not doing what the Welfare to Work Program requires, your Employment Social Service Worker will help you meet the program requirements.

If you do not have a good reason, you can agree to sign a Compliance Plan. If you meet the requirements of the Compliance Plan, no penalties will be applied to you.

Financial Sanctions for a Mandatory Participant:

A financial sanction takes place if you do not have a good reason for not participating and you do not resolve the problem by signing and completing a Compliance Plan.

When a financial sanction takes place, you will not receive aid for yourself until you cure your sanction, so the cash aid grant for your family is lower each month. You cannot participate in the Welfare to Work Program or receive supportive services while you are sanctioned.

Sanctions for Two-Parent Families:

If a parent who must participate in the Welfare to Work Program causes a financial sanction, the other parent must

participate in the Welfare to Work Program (unless the other parent is medically exempt or has good cause for not participating). If the other parent is required to participate and does not cooperate with the program requirements, both parents will lose their cash aid due to financial sanctions.

How to Cure a Sanction:

If you are currently sanctioned and you want to cooperate with the Welfare to Work Program, contact your local office for Sanction Orientation procedures. In order to cure your sanction, you may need to sign a curing plan and participate for up to 30-days. Once your sanctioned is cured, your cash aid will be restored the 1st of the following month.

Who is Not Required to Participate in the Welfare to Work Program?

Exemptions from the Welfare to Work Program:

You do not have to participate in the Welfare to Work Program if you are exempt. You will be required to provide verification of your exemption. We will continue to review your situation and we may ask you for additional verification. (If you are eligible for the Cal-Learn program or participated in the Cal-Learn program, some of these exemptions may not apply to you). Exemptions include:

- You are under 16 years old.
- You are 16, 17, or 18 years old and go to school (not college) full-time.
- You are 60 years of age or older.

- You have a physical or mental disability that is expected to last at least 30-calendar days and you cannot work or participate in Welfare to Work activities. You must continue to seek appropriate medical treatment.



extending the 12-week exemption period. Good reasons may include, but are not limited to the availability of childcare, labor market conditions, availability of transportation, and the medical or health issues of your child. You may be asked to provide verification to your Employment Social Service Worker

- You are pregnant and a doctor states that you cannot work or participate in Welfare to Work activities.
- You must stay at home to take care of someone in the household who is unable to take care of him or herself. Your caretaking responsibilities must prevent you from being regularly employed or being able to participate in Welfare to Work activities on a regular basis.
- You are the non-parent relative caretaker of a child who is a dependent or ward of the court, a child who is receiving KinGAP benefits or a child at risk of being placed in foster care.
- You are a parent or caretaker relative who chooses to be exempt from Welfare to Work due to being primarily responsible for the care of a child 23-months or younger. This is a once in a lifetime exemption.

Volunteers:

If you are exempt from Welfare to Work due to being primarily responsible for the care of a child 23-months or younger, you can ask to participate in Welfare to Work activities. You are called a “volunteer.” As a volunteer, you will have no participation requirements, but you have the option to receive supportive services while participating in any approved Welfare to Work activity of your choice.

What are Good Reasons for Not Participating in the Welfare to Work Program?

You may have a good reason for not signing your Activity Agreement, for not taking part in one of the Welfare to Work activities that you agreed to in your Activity Agreement, for not accepting a job offer or a job referral, for quitting a job, or for reducing your earnings. If you cannot participate in Welfare to Work, you must discuss this with your Employment Social Service Worker right away.

- You are the parent or caretaker relative of a child 12-weeks or younger and personally providing care for the child. Our Employment Social Worker will review your case with you if you have a good reason for



Reasons for not participating related to you:

- You need transportation assistance and/or work or training related expenses paid for you to participate and these have not been provided.

- You are the victim of domestic abuse and participating would be harmful to you and your family.
- Licensed or exempt child care is not reasonably available during your training, employment or travel time for:
 - A child 10 years of age or younger;
 - A child in foster care or an SSI recipient, not included in the assistance unit.
- Travel time to work or training from your home is more than two hours round trip by car, bus, or other mode of transportation.
- If you are walking because other transportation is not available, the round trip is more than two miles.
 - Travel does not include taking children to and from school or childcare providers.
- Conditions at the job or training violate health and safety standards or could cause you serious injury or death.
- The job or work activity does not provide Worker's Compensation insurance.
- Accepting a job or work activity would interrupt or interfere with an approved education or training assignment, except Work Experience or Employment Preparation Program.

What Happens When I Get a Job?

When you have accepted a job offer you need to tell us. Your Employment Social Service Worker will ask you questions about the job including:

- The name and address of the company.
- What day did you start?
- How much are you being paid?
- How many hours are you going to be working every week?
- When do you expect your first paycheck?



Reasons for not participating related to your activity assignment or job:

- Accepting a job or work activity would cause you to violate the terms of your union membership. Your union membership dues must be currently paid.
- Discrimination at the job or training activity because of age, sex, race, color, religion, national or ethnic origin, physical or mental disability, or marital status.
- The job requires more daily or weekly hours than is normal or customary.

There may be some other information that your Employment Social Service Worker will need depending on your specific case. If you require anything job related, you need to let us know right away. Remember we can help with required work related expenses.

Just because you start working, that doesn't mean your cash aid will stop. Your Human Services Technician will determine how your cash aid will change and send you a letter.

Remember that each month, regardless of amount, when you receive a cash grant, that month counts towards a month on your 60-month clock. You can ask for your cash aid to stop to save eligible months on your 60-month time clock. Contact your Human Service Technician for more information.

What Services Are Available When I Am Working and No Longer Receive Cash Aid?

Job Retention Services:

Career Advancement Services shifts the focus from preparing you for employment to assisting you with advancement opportunities. Retention services are available for up to 6-months if you are working.

The retention resources that are available to help when you go off cash aid include the following:

Transportation:

You can receive help with your transportation expenses for up to 6-months if you are working.

Childcare:

When you go off cash aid and are working, assistance with childcare expenses can continue. You must contact Community Connection for Child Care directly for Stage 2 services. Depending on your income, you may pay a share of your childcare costs.

Other Job Related Expenses:

You may receive help with other job related expenses like uniforms or special clothing after you go off cash aid if you are employed.

Health Coverage:

Your health coverage continues when you start working and your cash aid stops. You and your children are eligible for no-cost or low-cost health coverage under the Medi-Cal Program.

CalFresh:

Your Human Services Technician will provide information to you about your continuing eligibility for CalFresh. The new amount of your household income will be used to determine your food stamp amount and your continuing eligibility.

Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC):

When you work and have low income, you can usually get the Earned Income Tax Credit or EITC. You must file a federal tax return to get the EITC. The money you get from the EITC will not lower your cash aid grant. Ask your Human Service Technician for more information.

What Can I Do if I Do Not Agree with Decisions in the Welfare to Work Program?

penalties will be applied while the grievance is being decided.

There are three actions you can take if you do not agree with a decision in the Welfare to Work Program.

State Hearing:

If you disagree with any county decision regarding your Welfare to Work activity, your supportive services, your participation requirements, or your status (standing) in the Welfare to Work program, you can ask for a state hearing.



For Welfare to Work financial sanctions, you can use the same process that is used when you disagree with the action we take regarding Welfare to Work participation.

Your Employment Social Service Worker can help you file for a state hearing. You can request a rehearing after the state hearing decision has been reached.

Formal Grievance:

Your Employment Social Service Worker will tell you how the grievance process works. If you use the formal grievance process, you must continue to participate and meet Welfare to Work Program requirements. If you continue to participate in the program, no

Welfare to Work Program Summary

- As of May 1, 2022, a five-year (60-months) total lifetime limit on cash aid for adult benefits was imposed.
- Most adults are required to participate in work, training or educational activities.
- Welfare to Work (WTW) activities help individuals prepare for work and find a job.

Work Requirements

- A “Work First” attitude is stressed through work participation requirements.
- Adult recipients in single parent families with a child under the age of 6 participate in employment or Welfare to Work activities for at least 87-hours per month.
- Single parent families with all children 6 and over participate in employment or Welfare to Work activities for at least 130-hours per month.
- Adult recipients in two-parent families participate in employment or Welfare to Work activities for at least 152-hours per month.
- Non-compliance with Welfare to Work Program requirements may result in a reduction of a cash grant, called a financial sanction.

Welfare to Work Activities

- Employment
- Job Search and Job Readiness Assistance
- Unpaid Work Experience
- Vocational Training
- Job Skills training related to Employment
- Education directly related to Employment
- NOW Workbooks
- NOW Workshops
- Behavioral Health Counseling

Other Available Services

- Learning Disabilities screening
- Mental Health services
- Substance Abuse services
- Domestic Violence services
- Transportation assistance
- Child Care assistance
- Job Retention services

Quick Reference Resource Guide

Call **2-1-1** for help with resources in your community (24 hours a day, 7 days a week)

CityServe

7001 Auburn St.
(661) 558-4441

Home Emergency Assistance Program (HEAP)

300 19th St
(661) 336-5203

Salvation Army

4417 Wilson Road
(661) 837-4243

Rescue Mission

816 E. 21st Street
(661) 325-0863

American Red Cross

5035 Gilmore Ave
(661) 324-6427

Catholic Charities

825 Chester Ave
(661) 281-2130

Bakersfield Homeless Center

1600 East Truxtun Avenue
(661) 322-9199

Community Action Partnership of Kern

5005 Business Park
(661) 336-5236

Kern County Housing Authority

601 24th Street
(661) 631-8500

Garden Pathways

1616 29th St.
(661) 633-9133

Mortgage Help

1-888-995-4673

Social Security Administration

2575 Haley St.
(800) 772-1213

BALANCE (Consumer Credit Counseling)

4949 Buckley Way Ste. 111
(800) 777-7526

Bakersfield Police Activity League (PAL)

301 E. 4th St.
(661) 283-8880

Alliance Against Family Violence and Sexual Assault

1921 19th Street
(661) 322-0931 or 1-800-273-7713

Boys and Girls Club of Kern County

801 Niles St.
(661) 325-3730

Greater Bakersfield Legal Assistance

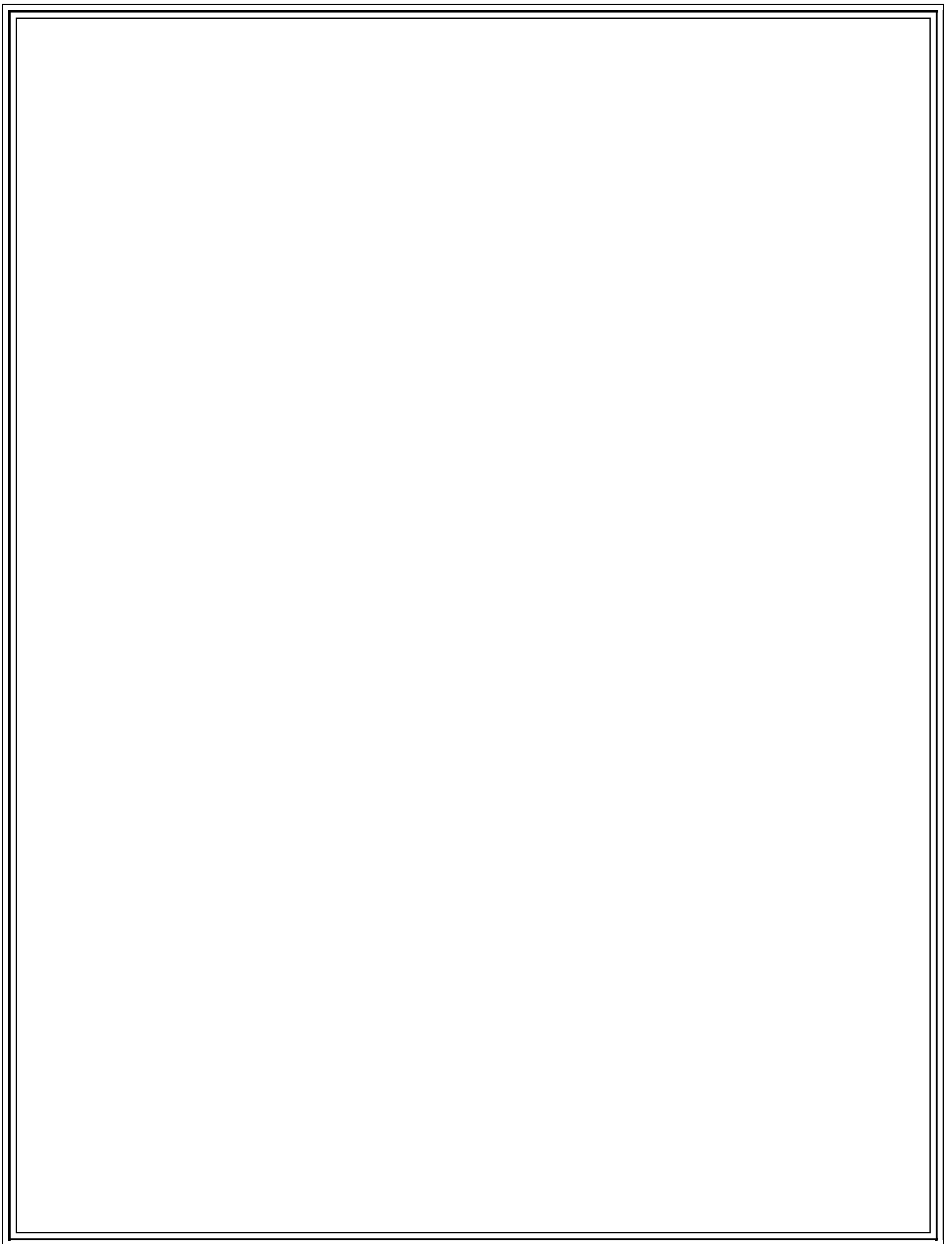
615 California Ave.
(661) 334-4679

California Unemployment Insurance (EDD)

(Apply by phone only)
1-800-300-5616

Kern County Department of Human Services – 100 E. California Ave.

<http://www.co.kern.ca.us/dhs/>
(661) 631-6000



***“The Most Important Tool for Success is
the Belief That You Can Succeed.”***



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