



CCWRO Welfare News

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March 2016 SSI Recipients Lose \$122 Million While Enduring Food Insecurity - For 2016 = \$1.5 Billion Loss

Prior to 1975, less than 25% of the aged, blind or disabled received food stamps. At that time, in order to obtain food stamps, the applicant had to make a personal appearance at the county welfare office. Frequently, the

If SSI recipients were allowed to receive CalFresh, at an estimated \$135 a month per single SSI recipient – approximately 1 million single SSI recipients in California would not be food insecure today.

application process to get food stamps was too burdensome for aged, blind or disabled applicants. In 1975, the process changed. In California, SSI recipients started to receive \$10 in their SSI grant allocated to the purchase of food

instead of getting food stamps. This process resulted in more money coming to California since 100% of SSI recipients got the \$10 benefit.

In 1975, SSI recipients received a combined state and federal benefit that equaled 109% of the federal poverty level. In 1987, SSI benefits equaled 122% of the federal poverty level. Today, the SSI benefits for a single person is equal to 90% of the federal poverty level, which includes the \$10 food stamp money. SSI benefits were reduced when the SSI and CalWORKs COLA's were suspended during the recession in 2008-2009.

If SSI recipients were allowed to receive CalFresh today, a single SSI person would receive an estimated \$135 a month – about 1 million single SSI recipients in California would not be food insecure today. The combined SSI and CalFresh benefits would bring their combined benefits to 106% of the federal poverty level.

With the ability to submit CalFresh applications on-line and the use of other forms of technology, most SSI recipients would not have to attend an in-person meeting at the welfare department.

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California's Proposed Budget Transfers \$1.4 billion from CalWORKs Families to the General Fund for Budget Year 2016-2017

It is California State Budget time and again the CalWORKs program is slated for another round of cuts that take money from 500,000 babies and children living at 31% of the federal poverty level. This year's proposed budget proposes to transfer \$852 million from the CalWORKs program to the CalGrant program. CalGrant is a student assistance program for low-income students with income below 200% of the federal poverty level in community and state colleges. Most of these students are not eligible for CalWORKs. CalGrant is a great program, but it is not a CalWORKs program. The Governor and the Legislature want to increase the CalGrant amount without using General Fund money or Prop 98 money, so they raid the CalWORKs line item. **Table # 1** is a brief history of the funds transfer from CalWORKs to the CalGrant from 2013-2014.

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Dollars taken away from CalWORKs and given to CalGrant

Fiscal Year	Millions Taken
FY 13-14	\$542 million
FY 14-15	\$377 million
FY 15-16	\$521 million
FY 16-17	\$826 million

The ideal proposed maximum CalWORKs grant for 2016-2017, according the Legislative Analyst office will be \$704 for a family of three and Cal-Fresh will be \$497. The total benefits for a family of three would be \$1,201. The reality is that the majority of families of three do not receive the maximum amount of aid for a family of three. As a result of sanctions due to the Maximum Family Grant (MFG) rule, or being timed out, they receive aid for a family of two or one.

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SSI Recipients to be Deprived of \$1.5 billion in Food Stamps While Many Go Hungry

In March 2016, California failed to restore CalFresh for SSI recipients. This means that California refused to utilize \$122 million in 100% federal CalFresh dollars. Using the [Zhandi Economic multiplier](#), effectively California gave up about \$4 billion a year that would have created over 40,000 jobs in California.

In April 2016, about one million SSI recipients in California will continue to endure food insecurity because they can't get CalFresh. **It is time to STOP food insecurity for about one million SSI recipients NOW.**

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CalWORKs Budget Raided by Lawmakers While Children Live in Deep Poverty

Over 120,000 families receive reduced benefits due to the MFG rule. The punishment is swift and severe – deep poverty. As evidenced by research reports, another major reason why parents are excluded from the CalWORKs grant is for not participating in a welfare-to-work program. This often happens because they did not have child care and transportation and the county REFUSED to verify that the family needed transportation and child care services before being required to participate in a welfare-to-work activity.

The CalWORKs program is infested with ways to punish poor families for being poor. So what does the average family of three receive in California today? **Table # 2** reveals the average benefit level according to the DSS budget documents versus the maximum for 2015-2016 and maximum according to the Legislative Analyst office.

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Major 2016-2017 CalWORKs Initiatives To Bring Children Out of Deep Poverty NOW!

Budget Initiative	Cost
Repeal of Maximum Family Grant	\$230 million
Bring CalWORKs Grants up to 50% of the federal poverty level with the Goal of having grants reached the level of the CalWORKs minimum basic standard of adequate care - W&IC§ 11452.	\$600 million

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Maximum CalWORKs (CW) & CalFresh (CF) Benefits v. the Actual Average CW & CF Benefits for a Family of Three (3)

Benefit Type	Maximum Benefit	Average Benefit	Difference
CalWORKs	\$704	\$497	\$207
CalFresh (Also known as SNAP)	\$511	\$307	\$204

Table # 3 below is a partial list of programs that will receive CalWORKs funds for 2016-2017 for persons not eligible for CalWORKs.

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2016-2017 State Budget TANF Funds Not Used for CalWORKs Eligible Families

Budget Item	
Student CalGrant Commission	\$826 million
CDE Child Care Programs not Serving 100% CalWORKs Recipients*	\$257 million
Transfer to Title XX	\$364 million
Total Available	\$1,447 million

Source: DSS and Legislative Analyst Reports

Source - Department of Social Services

* -This reflects the exclusion of \$312 million of stage 3 money that is used for CalWORKs

California has secured the shameful honor of having the highest poverty rates for children in the nation in the terms of the supplemental poverty rates. This could change if the lawmakers did two things:

- 1) A \$600 million investment would insure that CalWORKs families do not suffer deep poverty, defined as having a fixed income over 50% of the federal poverty level. \$600 million represents a little over 40% of the more than \$1.4 billion slated to be transferred out of the CalWORKs budget. See **Table #4**;
- 2) Approximately \$230 million would be needed to repeal the barbaric Maximum Family Grant (MFG) that affects over 130,000 poor babies and children. After these two changes, the California lawmakers would still be able to transfer \$500 million from the CalWORKs program.