

## Solano County

### Local Plan PY17-21 Modification – CalFresh Attachment

#### CalFresh

##### *Partnerships to Serve CalFresh Participants*

The Workforce Development Board (WDB) of Solano County will work with the Solano County Department of Health and Social Services (HSS), as well as local stakeholders to better serve CalFresh participants in Solano County. HHS recently developed new contracts with Goodwill of the Greater East Bay (Goodwill) and with the Solano County Office of Probation (Probation) to implement CalFresh Employment and Training (E&T) programs. The WDB will partner with Goodwill and Probation to leverage Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) service delivery with their E&T clients. Goodwill provides transitional jobs to E&T participants, and Probation provides expanded employment and training services to individuals on probation that receive CalFresh assistance. The WDB will partner with HHS and other partners working with CalFresh recipients to provide America’s Job Centers of California (AJCC) services, such as increased Road to Employment community sites, and ensuring CalFresh recipients receive priority of services for WIOA Title I services under the Adult program.

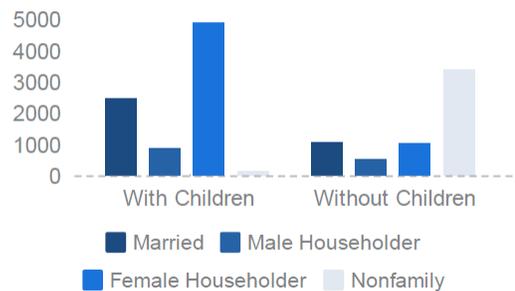
##### *CalFresh Population Overview<sup>1</sup>*

At the end of Quarter 3 Fiscal Year 2019, HHS provided CalFresh assistance to 38,019 individuals in Solano County. This constitutes 9.5% of the total county population, and shows a 116% increase in recipients over the last 10 years. The majority of recipients (21,145 individuals) are female, and the most common household type is female head of household, or single mothers. The majority of recipients (16,495 individuals) are under the age of 18, leaving 57% or 19,491 in the predominant working age group of 18-64.

The race/ethnicity makeup of Solano’s caseload is diverse, with the largest race being Black or African American at 30% of the population (11,227 individuals), followed by Hispanic at 25% (9,324 individuals) and White at 22% (8,455 individuals). Despite the diversity, 88% of the caseload cites English as their Language spoken (33,274 individuals), with 10% of the population speaking Spanish and 1% of the population speaking Tagalog. Compared to the general population, CalFresh households have a significantly higher rate of having an individual in the household with a disability at 46%. This provides significant opportunities to increase service alignment between CalFresh and disability employment services. No

Characteristic	Percentage
<b>Female</b>	56%
<b>Spanish Speaking</b>	10.3%
<b>African-American</b>	29.5%
<b>Unemployed</b>	13.4%
<b>Recipients Under Age 18</b>	43%
<b>Households with Disability</b>	46%

#### Household Types



<sup>1</sup> Statistics compiled from data provided from H&SS caseload records dated 10.31.2018 and from the U.S. Census American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates 2017.

data is currently available on foreign-born or formerly incarcerated subsets of CalFresh participants, nor on specific characteristics of the CalFresh E&T population; increasing tracking of these data points is a future goal of HHS.

### *Needs Assessment for People Receiving CalFresh*

CalFresh participants often face multiple barriers to employment that can seem insurmountable to the individual. Many CalFresh participants are either unemployed, or more frequently, underemployed. Some CalFresh participants are also eligible for General Assistance from HHS, but the majority are not. Currently, the majority of the CalFresh population served by HHS do not have access to the E&T 50% federal reimbursement opportunities in the county, due to eligibility requirements for those services. Additional service delivery options are needed for CalFresh recipients.

At the WDB's stakeholder engagement session for individuals receiving CalFresh assistance in Solano County, a number of barriers were identified. Many CalFresh recipients struggle with making the transition to work, either due to lack of wrap-around services or difficulty making the mindset shift to employment. The county has a number of resources available to individuals, but awareness of these resources are lacking among the population that could most benefit from them. In addition, accessibility of these resources may be difficult due to geographic distribution, transportation challenges, or other barriers. The community-based organizations and agencies that do offer wrap-around resources often do not have the capacity or funding to fully address the volume of need in the county.

Underemployment is also a struggle for CalFresh recipients. Although many CalFresh recipients are working, the economic landscape in Solano County creates barriers to livable wage jobs for many in the county. Four of out the top five occupations in Solano County have wages below the self-sufficiency standard. This is indicative of our county's economy that either has a significant volume of low-wage/entry-level jobs or highly-skilled opportunities that many of our CalFresh recipients do not have the technical skills to qualify for. Therefore, access to technical skills attainment is imperative for our county's CalFresh population, coupled with wrap-around supports to help recipients address basic needs as they increase their earning potential.

Many CalFresh recipients and other low-income individuals that the WDB serves are discouraged and believe that employers are not interested in hiring them. They feel a disincentive to take low-wage job opportunities, because it can negatively affect their eligibility for public assistance, yet the wages they can gain will not meet their basic living needs. In addition, entry-level jobs tend to be less forgiving when parents need to take off for childcare, medical, or personal reasons. Per the stakeholders engaged in the local planning process, the WDB and partners need to address the fear of losing benefits through strategies such as financial planning, planning with participants around balancing work and life responsibilities, and longer-term supports to aid in retention.

Individuals with disabilities particularly struggle with the fear of losing benefits. For many, disability and public assistance payments are seen as sustainable income, whereas employment is not. Many individuals with disabilities fear an increase in medical costs that they will not be able to afford. Benefits counseling is needed for individuals with disabilities so they can better understand how working will affect their disability and public assistance benefits, and how to become financially stable once employed. The Solano County Office of Education (SCOE) employs benefits counselors and will partner with the WDB and other stakeholders to provide benefits counseling to individuals with disabilities who need assistance in transitioning to work.

Mental health is another significant need for CalFresh recipients and other low-income individuals. First 5 Solano has conducted research and awareness in Solano County around Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). ACEs are experiences that create trauma for individuals that can have long-term consequences. Individuals in poverty, including many CalFresh recipients, have higher rates of ACEs, trauma, and mental illness. To effectively serve CalFresh recipients and other low-income individuals, the WDB and partners must develop strategies around mental health resources. The WDB has recently engaged HHS's behavioral health unit and will explore ways to connect individuals to mental health resources through the county as needed.

#### *Prospective Partnerships*

The WDB currently partners with HHS around services for CalWORKS participants. The WDB and HHS will leverage this partnership to expand service delivery capabilities to CalFresh recipients as well. In FY2018, 107 CalFresh recipients (or 25%) received WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, or Youth services. HHS and the WDB will look at the current caseload of CalFresh recipients to identify ways to better support these individuals in their career path. In addition, the WDB will work with HHS to deliver AJCC services through Road to Employment onsite at HHS during CalFresh orientations to build awareness and connection to services.

The WDB currently partners with Goodwill and Probation to align and coordinate service delivery, including outreach. The WDB will identify co-enrollment and/or employer engagement opportunities with these two contracts of CalFresh E&T services to increase the intensity of services provided to CalFresh recipients.

The WDB will work with HHS and other stakeholders to develop and implement strategies to successfully connect CalFresh recipients to these resources and provide a more holistic service delivery. The WDB will utilize its CommunityPro referral system to build a network of resources of which CalFresh recipients can take advantage. The CommunityPro system will be utilized to increase the accessibility and awareness of supportive services, additional resources, and programs that can aid in the success of CalFresh recipients in obtaining and retaining quality employment opportunities.

In addition, the WDB will facilitate continuing conversations among stakeholders to build countywide partnerships around employment and training services for CalFresh recipients and other low-income residents. At the engagement sessions, stakeholders appreciated the discussion and called for more open and authentic conversations around increasing access and opportunities for this population. The WDB will ensure these conversations continue. Together, the partners will tackle topics such as researching the population to gain a better understanding, providing wrap-around services, cross-training staff, facilitating cross-referrals and co-enrollment, and tracking outcomes effectively.

HHS currently has a waiver to delay implementation of Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) work requirements until 2020. The WDB has agreed to support development of strategies for employment and services that meet the ABAWD work requirements. This strategizing will uncover additional potential partnerships to improve service delivery for CalFresh recipients.