

ASSEMBLY THIRD READING

AB 1746 (Davies)

As Amended May 18, 2026

Majority vote

SUMMARY

Requires California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) applicants and recipients to be provided a written notice and be verbally informed of the availability of paid childcare at the time of application, approval, and when signing an original or amended welfare-to-work plan, annual certificate of eligibility, or semiannual report form.

Major Provisions

- 1) Requires a county, upon receipt of a CalWORKs childcare request form and eligibility information, to approve the request for childcare or deny the childcare within 10 calendar days.
- 2) Requires the written notice to additionally include rules regarding retroactive payments and specifies that "written notice" includes a CalWORKs childcare request form.
- 3) Extends from January 1, 2021, to January 1, 2028, contingent upon the readiness of the Statewide Automated Welfare System, the date by which the written notice must additionally be provided to a CalWORKs recipient at the time of orientation and when they are assigned to a program activity, among other program events.

COMMENTS

Background: *CalWORKs Childcare*. Eligible CalWORKs recipients can receive paid childcare. To be eligible, CalWORKs recipients must be working or participating in an approved county welfare-to-work activity, which includes any county-approved CalWORKs activities or employment listed in the recipients' welfare-to-work plan. Childcare is broken up into three stages:

- 1) CalWORKs Stage One Child Care provides childcare to CalWORKs families when they are determined eligible for CalWORKs and are not exempt from participating in welfare-to-work activities. The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) administers the Stage One childcare program through the county welfare departments. Counties may contract with local Alternative Payment Program agencies to administer Stage One.
- 2) CalWORKs Stage Two Child Care is for families when the counties determine they are stable. For example, after six months of participation in a welfare-to-work plan or after being employed, or when the parent(s) or guardian(s) are discontinued from cash aid. The counties have the flexibility to determine when a family's situation is stable. Families remain in Stage Two until they have been off cash aid for two years. CDSS contracts with Alternative Payment Program agencies to administer this program
- 3) CalWORKs Stage Three Child Care is used for families that have exhausted two years of CalWORKs Stage Two Child Care. This program provides care contingent upon available funding and continued family eligibility. CDSS contracts with Alternative Payment Program agencies to administer this program.

Childcare under CalWORKs is permitted with eligible providers only. Eligible providers are limited to licensed child care providers, providers who are not licensed but have their background checked and become registered through a program called "TrustLine", or grandparents, aunts, or uncles of the children, with a completed form called a Declaration of Exemption From TrustLine Registration and Health and Safety Self-Certification. The state reimburses childcare for children under 13 years of age, and for older children with disabilities that prevent them from being left alone. In two-parent families, if a parent is home and able to care for the children, the state will not reimburse the childcare. The parent is considered available to provide care unless they are working, doing a county-approved welfare-to-work activity, or have a condition, verified by a doctor, that prevents them from caring for the child. Currently, CalWORKs applicants are given notice that they might be eligible for childcare assistance at multiple points during their application process. Counties report that, at a minimum, eligibility workers give notice during the time of application as well as during planning for their welfare-to-work plan.

Childcare is often a reported barrier to work or school. This disproportionately impacts women. Roughly 46% of unemployed mothers in 2021 cited childcare issues as their reason for leaving the workforce, disproportionately affecting women compared to men.¹ To address access to childcare, CalWORKs offers options, as discussed above; however, if recipients or applicants do not know this exists, they will be forced to continue to be unemployed. *This bill* may help raise awareness of the available services.

According to the Author

"For many California families, the lack of accessible childcare is the single greatest barrier to maintaining stable employment and achieving self-sufficiency. [This bill] simplifies the path for CalWORKs recipients by replacing outdated notices with a streamlined, mandatory childcare request form that requires a response within ten working days. By ensuring parents are informed of their options at every step, from application to annual renewal, we are removing the bureaucratic hurdles that far too often leave families in limbo. Our goal with this legislation is to provide our most vulnerable residents with the timely, reliable support they need to focus on their work and the future of their children."

Arguments in Support

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), AFL-CIO writes, "One of the most significant barriers CalWORKs participants face when attempting to engage in employment or supportive employment services is access to reliable childcare. While childcare assistance is available through the program, many participants are unaware of the full scope of benefits or the steps necessary to request and secure services. As a result, families may struggle to participate in required activities or accept employment opportunities.

"[This bill] helps address this challenge by ensuring that applicants and recipients are consistently informed about the availability of CalWORKs childcare assistance at key points throughout their participation in the program. By requiring counties to provide the CalWORKs childcare request form and clear written notice during application, eligibility renewals,

¹ <https://www.ffyf.org/2023/03/08/the-first-five-things-you-need-to-know-impact-of-the-child-care-crisis-on-women-mothers/>

employment services, and other program interactions, the bill promotes greater transparency and helps families access the childcare support they need.”

Arguments in Opposition

None on file.

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee on May 14, 2026:

One-time General Fund (GF) costs to the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) in the low- to mid-hundreds of thousands of dollars for automation updates to the California Statewide Automated Welfare System (CalSAWS) and BenefitsCal. These costs include printing, postage, updates for forms and in multiple languages, and updates to notify CalWORKs applicants and recipients of childcare availability during the additional touch points throughout their time on aid, among other things.

CDSS also anticipates ongoing GF costs to counties of \$234,000 for printing additional childcare availability notices and forms.

The Legislative Analyst’s Office recently warned of General Fund structural deficits of around \$35 billion per year in the 2027-28 fiscal year and ongoing.

VOTES

ASM HUMAN SERVICES: 7-0-0

YES: Lee, Castillo, Gipson, Elhawary, Jackson, Solache, Tangipa

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 15-0-0

YES: Wicks, Hoover, Aguiar-Curry, Calderon, Caloza, Dixon, Fong, Mark González, Krell, Pacheco, Pellerin, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Ta, Tangipa

UPDATED

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