

emergency aid. For families with little or no cash on hand, even short delays can mean going without food, housing, utilities, diapers, or other essentials. [This bill] streamlines access to emergency CalWORKs assistance by clarifying that counties must determine a family's apparent eligibility based on the information available at the time of application, without first requiring applicants to apply for other potential income.

- 2) **Background.** The California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program provides cash assistance and supportive services to low-income families with children. Families often turn to CalWORKs during moments of acute financial crisis, such as facing eviction, lacking food, or being unable to meet basic needs for their children. Each month, California receives 30,000-40,000 CalWORKs applications. A component of CalWORKs is immediate assistance, including a one-time \$200 emergency payment available when families apply for CalWORKs cash aid.

CalWORKs Homeless Assistance is an entitlement that helps stabilize families by providing permanent housing benefits to families at risk of eviction or losing housing access through security deposit, rental support, or other aid, as well as temporary aid to families to support shelter expenses.

When families apply for CalWORKs, counties must determine whether the applicant has an urgent need due to an emergency, such as lack of housing, food, utilities, diapers, or transportation, and may provide temporary homeless assistance or immediate need benefits while the application is pending.

Existing law requires CalWORKs applicants pursue unconditionally available income, such as unemployment insurance benefits, Social Security benefits, veterans' benefits, or State Disability Insurance, before counties determine eligibility for immediate assistance.

Advocates assert that for families facing eviction or homelessness, applying for these programs can require internet access, detailed work histories, bank information, and navigation of complex systems, delaying access to critical emergency support.

Under this bill a county must make an apparent eligibility determination for immediate need and homeless assistance without requiring applicants to first apply for other income they may be eligible to receive.

The County Welfare Directors Association of California, cosponsor of the bill, asserts, "This bill helps ensure that immediate assistance can be delivered more quickly to families experiencing urgent financial hardship. [This bill] aligns with the purpose of CalWORKs immediate assistance program by ensuring families in crisis receive timely support."

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