

April 22, 2021

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS LETTER

The purpose of this letter is to provide County Welfare Departments with information regarding the CalFresh Employment and Training (E&T) Laptop Loaner Pilot (the Pilot). The California Department of Social Services has partnered with Cell-Ed, Inc. to provide digital access to CalFresh E&T participants via the Pilot.



KIM JOHNSON
DIRECTOR

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DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
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April 22, 2021

ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS

FROM: JENNIFER HERNANDEZ
Deputy Director
Family Engagement and Empowerment Division

SUBJECT: CALFRESH EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING LAPTOP LOANER
PILOT

REFERENCE: [ALL COUNTY INFORMATION NOTICE I-55-20](#)

The purpose of this letter is to provide County Welfare Departments (CWDs) with information regarding the CalFresh Employment and Training (E&T) Laptop Loaner Pilot (the Pilot) and the future Laptop Loaner Program. The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) has partnered with Cell-Ed, Inc. to provide digital access to CalFresh E&T participants via the Pilot. Pilot outcomes will be used to inform implementation of the Laptop Loaner Program in Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2022.

BACKGROUND

In response to the pandemic emergency, the CDSS partnered with Cell-Ed, as described in [All County Information Notice \(ACIN\) I-55-20](#) issued on July 1, 2020, to create opportunities for CDSS program participants to establish and maintain remote connections with critical workforce development programs and supportive services. The CDSS and Cell-Ed partnership has now expanded to include the Pilot with the goal of providing connection to technology and facilitating digital literacy among CDSS program participants.

Many businesses have been forced to reduce staff, or close entirely, as a result of the pandemic emergency, and low-wage earners have disproportionately experienced hardships as a result. CalFresh E&T is a critical component of an equitable economic recovery effort and program services delivered via alternative strategies that promote required public health practices like social distancing, are in immediate demand.

Many CalFresh E&T service providers have adapted their programs to remote learning platforms in place of traditional in-person service delivery to meet this demand. However, one in four households lack access to digital devices such as cell-phones or laptops which are critical to virtual program participation. Further, many participants lack crucial digital literacy skills needed to navigate a device and successfully engage with program services and other available supports. The Pilot seeks to understand how best to address these challenges through CalFresh E&T.

Based on the outcomes of the Pilot, CalFresh E&T will establish a Laptop Loaner Program for participants to better gain access to devices, including laptops and cell-phones, that will connect participants to digital E&T programs and services and narrow the digital literacy gap experienced by vulnerable populations. The Laptop Loaner Program may be implemented in counties that have opted to provide CalFresh E&T beginning October 1, 2021.

LAPTOP LOANER PILOT PHASE

Prior to implementing the Laptop Loaner Program, the CDSS is launching a three-month Pilot, starting in May 2021 and ending in July 2021. San Francisco County, Butte County, and Fresh Success are participating in the Pilot. During the Pilot, the CDSS Cell-Ed, and the participating E&T counties and partners, will establish administrative processes and procedures, determine participant needs, usage trends, and base inventory needs, as well as assess the impact of the Pilot in terms of engagement and skills gain. During the Pilot, technical assistance needs will also be identified to ensure the Laptop Loaner Program can be implemented effectively at scale.

Administrative Processes & Procedures

The Pilot will test a variety of administrative processes and procedures, including device distribution, that will inform processes and procedures for the Laptop Loaner Program. The intent is to ensure that participants with digital learning needs can effectively access devices and that counties and third-party partners can readily distribute, track, and collect devices from participants at the end of program participation.

Participant Needs, Usage Trends, and Base Inventory

The Pilot will seek to understand the technology access and digital needs of E&T target populations, as well as usage trends. Information will be used to inform the type and number of devices needed, based on anticipated participants, to implement the Laptop Loaner Program at scale. This information will also be used to establish a base inventory level.

Programmatic Impact

The Pilot will measure participant engagement and skills gained to determine program efficacy and value. Information collected about programmatic impact will be used to

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inform the need for the Laptop Loaner Program and to better understand the costs and benefits of the Laptop Loaner Program.

At the conclusion of the Pilot phase, the CDSS, Cell-Ed and participating E&T partners will share lessons learned, including opportunities and challenges, with E&T partners statewide. Lessons learned will inform implementation of the Laptop Loaner Program beginning in FFY 2022. Information about the Laptop Loaner Program will also be released via letter.

If you have any questions or need additional guidance regarding the information in this letter, contact the CalFresh Policy & Employment Bureau via email at CalFreshEandT@dss.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Original Document Signed By

JENNIFER HERNANDEZ, Deputy Director
Family Engagement and Empowerment Division