



CDSS

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STATE OF CALIFORNIA—HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY  
**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

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EDMUND G. BROWN JR.  
GOVERNOR

October 28, 2016

ALL COUNTY LETTER NO. 16-83

REASON FOR THIS TRANSMITTAL

- State Law Change
- Federal Law or Regulation Change
- Court Order
- Clarification Requested by One or More Counties
- Initiated by CDSS

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS  
 ALL COUNTY WELFARE TO WORK COORDINATORS  
 ALL COUNTY CALWORKS PROGRAM SPECIALISTS  
 ALL COUNTY REFUGEE COORDINATORS  
 ALL COUNTY CAL-LEARN COORDINATORS  
 ALL TRIBAL TANF ADMINISTRATORS  
 ALL COUNTY CONSORTIUM PROJECT MANAGERS

SUBJECT: CALIFORNIA HIGH SCHOOL EXIT EXAMINATION SUSPENSION  
 AND CHANGES TO THE CALIFORNIA WORK OPPORTUNITY  
 AND RESPONSIBILITY TO KIDS (CaWORKs) CAL-LEARN  
 PROGRAM

REFERENCES: SENATE BILL (SB) 725 (CHAPTER 225, STATUTES OF 2015  
 AND SB 172 (CHAPTER 572, STATUTES OF 2015)

The purpose of this letter is to provide clarification regarding the suspension of the California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE) as a condition for receiving a diploma of graduation and the CaWORKs Cal-Learn Program.

**Background**

Beginning with the 2003-2004 school year, and each year thereafter, Assembly Bill (AB) 1609 (Chapter 716, Statutes of 2001) required each student completing grade 12 to successfully pass the CAHSEE as a condition of graduation from high school. AB 1609, Section 3, Section 60859(a), also granted the State Board of Education an option to delay the date upon which students completing grade 12 would be required to pass the CAHSEE to a date other than the 2003-2004 school year. Students in California public schools were required to pass the CAHSEE to demonstrate competency in grade-level skills in reading, writing, and mathematics in order to earn a high school diploma beginning with the 2005-2006 school year.

SB 725 (Chapter 225, Statutes of 2015) suspended passage of the CAHSEE as a condition for receiving a diploma of graduation or a condition of graduation from high school for a student who has met all other high school graduation requirements in school year 2014-2015. Local educational agencies (LEA's) were instructed to immediately begin issuing diplomas to eligible students.

SB 172 (Chapter 572, Statutes of 2015) was signed by the Governor on October 7, 2015. Effective January 1, 2016, this bill extended the suspension of the CAHSEE as a condition of graduation from high school for the 2015-2016, 2016-17, and 2017-2018 school years. SB 172 also requires LEAs to grant a diploma to any student who completed grade 12 in the 2003-2004 school year, or a subsequent school year, and met all applicable graduation requirements other than passage of the CAHSEE. SB 172 does not require LEAs to identify and contact students who may be eligible to receive their diploma, although student outreach is encouraged. It is unknown what requirement for students may occur after suspension ends in the 2017-2018 school year that will impact current and/or former students.

### The Cal-Learn Program

The Cal-Learn Program was created to aid pregnant and parenting teens in acquiring high school diplomas or equivalents and rewarding them with supplements for satisfactory progress and bonuses upon verification of graduation. Pregnant and parenting teens receiving CalWORKs services are required to participate in the Cal-Learn Program to obtain their high school diploma or its equivalent, unless exempt, per Manual of Policies and Procedures (MPP) Section 42.763.1.

Satisfactory progress bonuses of \$100 are issued to the assistance unit (AU) when a Cal-Learn participant's report card reflects satisfactory progress. Upon graduation, or its equivalent, a \$500 bonus is issued in the name of the teen parent. County Welfare Departments (CWDs) must verify the required documentation has been submitted to earn a high school diploma or its equivalent prior to granting the bonus per MPP Section 42-769.1.

### **Implementation**

For current Cal-Learn pregnant and/or parenting teens, the CAHSEE is no longer a graduation requirement. Therefore, when a student submits documentation to their case manager showing graduation from high school or its equivalent and graduation has been verified with the high school, the case manager shall provide the \$500 bonus.

If a previous Cal-Learn teen contacts a county office and provides their diploma as documentation showing graduation from high school or its equivalent, other than

passing the CAHSEE, they are deemed to have graduated. The CWD should issue a \$500 bonus to the teen if otherwise eligible at the time of graduation. The diploma must have been earned during the period in which the student was an active Cal-Learn participant.

**Examples of Former Cal-Learn Teens:**

**Example #1:** Marie contacts her former CWD and indicates that she was in the Cal-Learn program in 2007. She states that she did not graduate and receive a \$500 bonus at that time as she did not pass the CAHSEE. She provides documentation from her former school showing that she now meets all current graduation requirements from high school and requests a retroactive bonus for graduating. The CWD should verify her documentation and if eligible, issue a \$500 bonus.

**Example #2:** Michelle becomes aware of Senate Bill legislation that suspended the CAHSEE as part of California's high school graduation requirements. She visits her old high school and obtains documentation showing that she has met all graduation requirements as of June 2014, other than passing the CAHSEE. The CWD contacts the school and verifies her graduation requirements were met. Prior to issuing the bonus, the CWD looks into Michelle's case and finds that she discontinued out of Cal-Learn in May 2014. Since Michelle was not in the Cal-Learn program during the month she graduated in June 2014, she is not eligible to receive a \$500 bonus.

**Cal Learn Data Reporting**

If you have any program policy questions regarding this letter, please contact your CalWORKs county consultant directly or call the CalWORKs Employment Bureau at (916) 657-2128.

Sincerely,

***Original Document Signed By:***

KAREN DICKERSON, Chief  
CalWORKs Employment and Eligibility Branch