

Children and Families

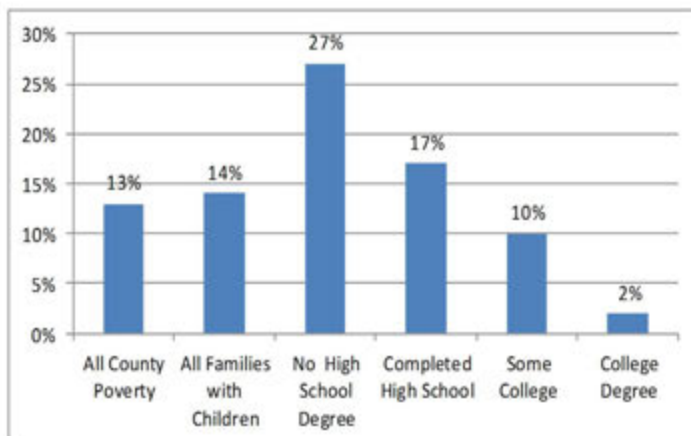
More than one in five Alameda County residents are age 18 or younger (340,270). Almost one-third of County households are families with children (at least one family member under 18). Of these, nearly three in ten are headed by a single adult. **One in four of these families live below the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) and 60,000 children live in poverty.**

Food security is a significant issue for our children. Almost 62,000 Alameda County children rely on CalFresh for basic food needs. This is about half of all Alameda County residents who use CalFresh to supplement their meals. Almost one in five Alameda County children report ongoing issues with hunger, which has an impact on physical and emotional development, educational achievement, and social issues.

Education and Poverty

Educational attainment is a strong indicator of poverty in Alameda County and throughout the nation. The chart below shows that families with children are as likely as the overall County population to have income below the FPL. When we factor in at least some college, these families do better than the overall population. With no college, families with children do worse economically.

Family Poverty by Education
(% Families Living Below Federal Poverty Level)



A Child Care Crisis

A recent Stanford University study (Fernald) identified a **30% advantage in language proficiency among the 2-year-old children of high-income families compared to low-income.** The study supports a body of work connecting early language skills to educational achievement through school years and income levels as an adult. California ranks 24th nationally in access to early learning programs for pre-school.

More than half of the 50,000 Alameda County children eligible for subsidized early childhood education are not receiving it. This not only highlights the need to re-invest in the 1,000 subsidized child care slots that were lost through State budget cuts, but indicates a much greater investment is needed.

Federal Impacts

A settlement in the Federal Sequestration standoff results in restoration of many important family support programs like Head Start, housing subsidies, and child care block grants. Cuts to food assistance and long-term unemployment benefits are making it harder for low-income families to become self-sufficient.

Additional impacts to the programs listed below are described on the following pages.

- ◆ CalWORKS
- ◆ Children's Behavioral Health
- ◆ Child Care and Preschool Programs
- ◆ Children and Family Services

CalWORKs

What is CalWORKs?

The California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) Program provides time-limited **cash aid**, as well as **employment** and **employment support services**, to eligible adults with children. CalWORKs services are designed to promote self-sufficiency and provide parents with assistance to enter or re-enter the workforce. Most CalWORKs families also receive Medi-Cal and CalFresh (Food Stamp) benefits.

Funding Reductions and Program Changes

CalWORKs benefits and services have been cut repeatedly throughout the economic downturn. These changes include reducing the **lifetime limits** for employable adults to receive aid from **60 months to 48 months** and then in 2013 instituting even stricter requirements that limit non-exempt adults to **24 months of aid**, unless they meet federal work participation requirements. In addition, California reduced monthly cash grants and changed the exemption rules for parents with young children. The time limit changes mean that families have less time on CalWORKs to utilize the employment programs and supports to become self-sufficient and support their children.

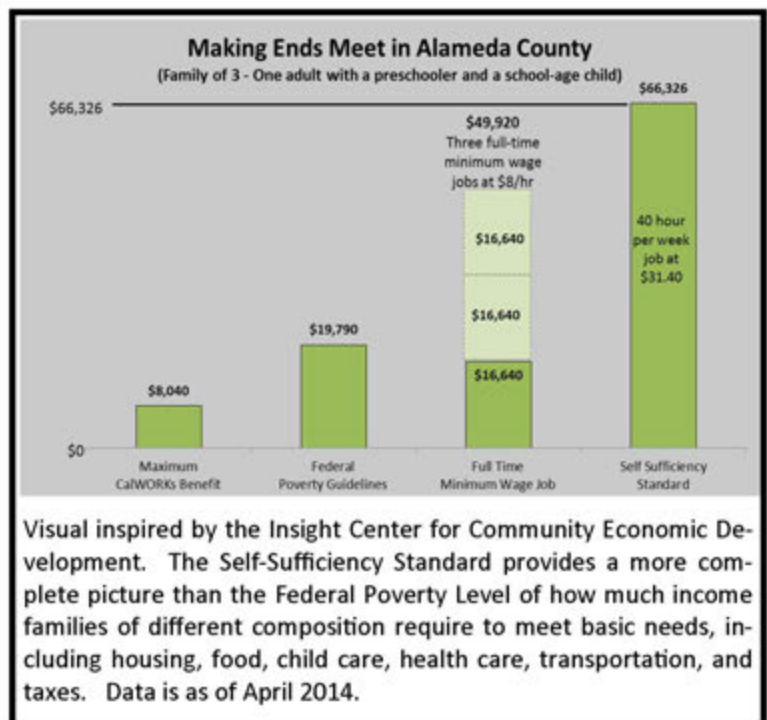
Looking Forward

The 2013-14 State budget included new funding for family stabilization, subsidized employment, and an employment appraisal tool. It also included a 5% CalWORKs grant increase that started in March 2014. However, after decades of budget cuts, **CalWORKs grants are still below 50% of federal poverty levels**. The current maximum CalWORKs grant is \$670 for a family of three. This is similar to the rate families received in the late 1980s and does not come close to meeting the true costs of living in Alameda County. The low grant rates impact not only recipients (**78% of Alameda County CalWORKs recipients are children**), but also the local economy.



Human Impacts

The number of households receiving CalWORKs rose steeply through the economic downturn (to over 20,500 cases) and then declined due to policy changes that reduced benefits and limited access (current caseload is approximately 18,400). The CalWORKs grant has shrunk to an amount too small to provide basic necessities for most households; the current **average monthly grant is approximately \$455**. Cuts have resulted in fewer families qualifying for CalWORKs aid, while hurting the efficacy of the program for many of those who do qualify.



Greg's Story

Greg became a single father almost four years ago. "I had a good job, a nice condo, was single and raising three children. Life was good! Then the economy tanked, and work started slowing down. Finally, I was laid off. I began looking for work in a very depressed job market, and the few jobs that were available were low paying. I would have taken a low paying job except that I could not get one; the competition was stiff ... I was competing for low paying jobs with younger, more educated applicants. I did not even have a high school diploma, much less a college degree. I continued to look for work, went to school at night, and received my GED. After that, I realized I could actually earn a college degree. It was about this time that I ended up on CalWORKs." Through the support of the CalWORKs program, Greg enrolled at Ohlone College and worked towards earning his degree. "Ohlone CalWORKs has allowed me to continue my education. In turn, this has given me the opportunity to set the example for my teenage son as well as my two daughters. Now I can look to the future where I have a more satisfying career." Funding reductions and additional program restrictions make it even harder for other parents like Greg to complete their education and find employment that will allow them to provide for their family.

Child Care and Preschool Programs

Alameda County Overview

Less than half of eligible Alameda County children receive child care and preschool services through State subsidies for low-income families from a subset of the County's 2,500 Early Care and Education providers. This means that **thousands of children and families are not receiving services** for which they are eligible. The list of families who live just in Oakland and have requested financial assistance with child care and preschool expenses is 3,768. Financial aid is provided in one of two ways:

- A majority of children attend licensed, center-based programs that meet higher quality standards and are subsidized directly by the State Department of Education.
- Some parents receive vouchers, which are used to pay for child care at licensed centers, family child care homes, or with family, friend, or neighbor.

Few Child Care Restorations in State Budget After Five Years of Deep Funding Cuts

The 2014-15 State budget maintains child care services at a severely diminished level compared to previous years. Since 2008, statewide **cuts have totaled more than \$1 billion**, resulting in the **loss of 111,095 subsidized spaces**, or a 33% drop.

Impact on Alameda County Families

Since fiscal year since 2008-2009, Alameda County has **lost 25% of center based/Title 5 funding and 47% of California Department of Education (CDE) voucher funding**.

In 2013-2014, an increase of \$36 million statewide for State Preschool part-day programs and other programs restored about 1% of the 900 County slots lost in 2012-2013 alone.

The **federal** sequester cut Alameda County's roughly \$40 million in Head Start contracts serving 4,000 children by 5.3%.

In 2012-2013 alone, 171 children in CalWORKs families lost their child care subsidy.



Parent Stories

"For me, a perfect world would be child care for my son close to work, and a nice full-day program for my daughter" Vincianna's Story, formerly homeless and foster youth, driving 200 miles daily to coordinate full-time work, preschool, and housing

"Even though I'm on dialysis, I can work. If we had day care, I could work in the morning and go to dialysis at night, and it would be so much easier for us. We want the kids to be in a teacher's presence, to learn new things, to be around other kids. The first five years are very important in a child's life and they haven't had what they need". Davionne's Story, 2 years on child care waiting list

"I am a single mother of a four year old but was able to finish my BA degree in four years thanks to subsidized child care. So many people are dependent upon child care to not only maintain a reasonable living situation, by working, and to ensure a future for their children" Sabrina, former teen mom, Fremont

Looking Forward

Senate and Assembly leaders are proposing a major expansion and restructuring of programs for 4 year olds by creating a Transitional Kindergarten program in public schools and reformulating programs for children 0-3. On the federal level, there are new investments through Early Head Start/Child Care partnerships and expanded opportunities for preschool-aged children. The federal sequestration settlement restored cuts to Head Start.

Children's Behavioral Health Programs



What Is Children's Behavioral Health?

The County's Health Care Services Agency delivers an array of behavioral health, mental health, and alcohol and drug programs to children and youth, ages 0-18, and transitional-age youth, ages 18-21.

Children's behavioral health services in Alameda County have doubled in the last 10 years due largely to the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT) Medi-Cal program. EPSDT is required in every state and is designed to improve the behavioral health of low-income children by financing mental health services.

The County and community-based contractors offer children, youth and their families access to services in community-based clinics, Head Start programs, school-based programs, health centers, youth hubs, juvenile justice settings, hospitals, and in the home. Services provided range from prevention and early intervention, to more serious mental health and substance use issues, to more intensive services like medication support, wrap around services, therapeutic behavioral services and crisis stabilization. Family engagement in the youth's treatment is a fundamental value that is supported by the addition of family partners on treatment teams whenever possible.

Funding to Programs and Services

EPSDT: Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment is the major source of funding for Children's Mental Health Services. The State has recently limited the EPSDT allocation under changes made to 2011 Realignment. Alameda County grew beyond its allocation to meet the demand for services for youth and families, anticipating that EPSDT reserves would fund the entitlement and allow reimbursement of County expenditures above the current funding levels.

MHSA-PEI: Prevention and Early Intervention Services under the Mental Health Services Act fund coordination, prevention, outreach, school climate and mental health consultation in schools and at youth resource centers, building collaboration and strengthening coordination of services at multiple levels.

Behavioral Health Educational Services: The provision of these services shifted from the County to the 18 school districts in Alameda County in 2010. Alameda County BHCS has agreements in place with the school districts to leverage Medi-Cal for eligible students and for the districts to reimburse the county for mental health services provided for non-eligible youth served. Alameda County is currently owed \$35 million by the State for these services dating back to 2005.

David's Story

David is six years old and has been receiving early childhood mental health services since the age of four. Participating in weekly child/parent psychotherapy has led to a marked improvement in David's emotional and behavioral concerns. Through treatment, Mom has improved her own mental health and has strengthened her parenting skills. She is also better able to attune to David's physical and emotional needs. David now excels in school and Mom independently found employment. New housing has moved the family out of the tense and violent home they were occupying with extended family. The success demonstrated by David's family resulted in Early Childhood staff inviting them to co-present at a national conference in Washington DC in 2013.

Looking Forward

Increased emphasis on access, accountability and outcomes are the focus of the Children's Mental Health System in alignment with the State and federal quality review and oversight efforts. Additionally, the Affordable Care Act mandates care coordination between behavioral health, substance use disorder programs and primary care. Children's Behavioral Health is working with providers to support Medi-Cal Retention and Re-Enrollment for continued access, to improve service utilization and to create data dashboards with partners to monitor client engagement and service delivery. Children's Behavioral Health also is implementing the Child Assessment and Needs Screening tool across the system to measure progress towards individual and system outcomes. Training and toolkits to improve care coordination are being developed as well.

Children and Family Services



Alameda County Children and Family Services

(CFS) provides services that include:

- Abuse and neglect investigations
- Family crisis and ongoing support services
- Reunification and family maintenance services
- Guardianships, adoptions, and foster care services

Funding

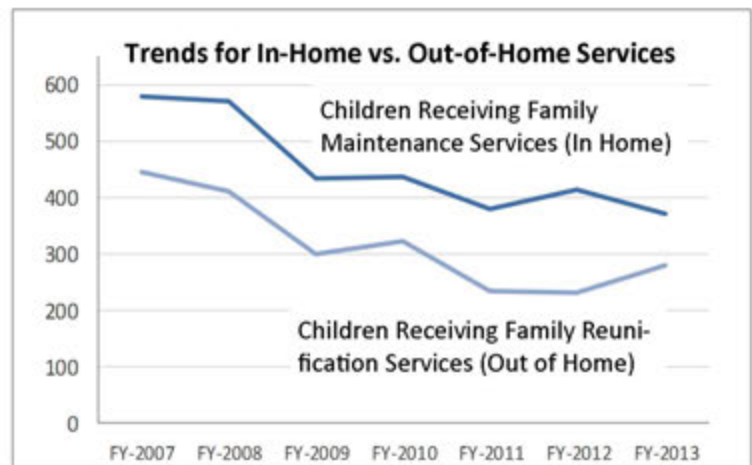
In 2006, California signed a **Title IV-E Flexible Spending Waiver** Agreement (Waiver) with the Federal government, guaranteeing a **stable, five-year funding amount regardless of numbers of families in the child welfare system or the number of children in foster care**. Now in its **seventh year**, the Waiver has provided **new opportunities** in Alameda County to use previously restricted funds more flexibly to **redesign and enhance** the system, which resulted in a significant **reduction in foster care placements** and a slight increase in family maintenance cases (reflective of efforts to serve youth in their homes).

Looking Forward

The original Waiver covered the period from July 2007 through June 2012. Two one-year extensions have been granted by the Federal government—for 2012-13 and 2013-14. Currently, Alameda County is negotiating an extension of the Waiver for an additional five years to continue efforts to improve outcomes for the County's children and families. Moving forward, CFS will continue to improve system capacity and service delivery through a variety of strategies, including: improving existing intervention and prevention services and access to services; implementing evidence-based trauma-informed practices; improving family engagement; building greater consistency of cross-department decision making related to placement; continued assessment of children/youth for less-restrictive levels of placement; and improved communication and coordination between CFS and juvenile Probation to better serve "cross over" youth who are connected to both systems.

Human Impacts in Alameda County

- Out-of-home placements have continued to decrease under the Waiver as **more emphasis is placed on family maintenance** and other permanent options, such as adoptions.
- Family Maintenance means more families are benefiting from intensive supportive services and **fewer children are removed** from their homes.
- Program interventions have emphasized reunification, guardianship, adoptions, and placement with relatives and non-related extended family members.



Non-Minor Dependent: Snapshot

2013-14 marked one full year of AB 12 / Extended Foster Care implementation, with CFS actively supporting over 400 youth who chose to remain in Foster Care as Non-Minor Dependents (NMDs). As one NMD shared, it wasn't a difficult decision to stay in foster care "...because they have resources and opportunities for me to take advantage of—to help me get ahead in life...I have help with housing, school, FAFSA (federal student aid applications), and my baby." She added that the extra time afforded by AB 12 had given her the opportunity to learn time management and how to budget her finances. "I learned how to be more independent."

Her case worker agrees and embraces her role as a strong adult ally who helps NMDs work through the many challenges (big and small) that occur when making the transition to adulthood. "It works best when I'm working as a partner—not telling the young person what to do, but guiding them and helping them learn how to do it for themselves as they get out into the world." The focus on supporting fledgling independence has many benefits. About to be 19, this NMD took pride in her progress so far. "I learned to make smart goals and take steps towards my goals."