

MARIE ALVARADO-GIL

4TH SENATE DISTRICT



SB 1396 (Alvarado-Gil): CalWORKs: Home Visiting Program

SUMMARY

SB 1396 proposes to extend the enrollment timeframe from a child under 24 months of age to a child under 36 months of age and extend the time that families can participate in the CalWORKs Home Visiting Program (HVP) until the child's fifth birthday. This extension will maximize the health and developmental benefits to families with young children, including those in underserved, rural, tribal, impoverished, and other vulnerable communities.

BACKGROUND

Voluntary evidence-based HVPs match trained professionals with expecting and new parents to help them with critical early development for their children. Voluntary, evidence-based home visiting is an umbrella term for certain program models to meet federally established criteria for effectiveness, replicability, and quality. This includes offering resources, mentoring, cultural community building, and other supports that utilize parent's strengths and build skills.

Research shows that participation in a HVP has immense benefits to the child(ren) and their families, such as better maternal and infant health, reduced emergency room visits, and increased safety practices. Long term, for children who participate to age five, research shows improved language and cognitive development, improved math and reading scores, reduced absenteeism, and decreased school suspensions. For every \$1 invested in

HVPs, communities receive a benefit of up to \$5.70 in savings in child welfare, K-12 education, and community safety.¹

Currently, there are two home visiting programs funded by the state: the California Home Visiting Program (CHVP) managed by the Department of Public Health (CDPH) and the CalWORKs HVP managed by the Department of Social Services (CDSS). The CHVP follows models that allow families to remain in the program through a HVP model's recommended duration. However, the CalWORKs HVP can only be offered to pregnant individuals and families with a child under 24 months of age. There are presently 41 of 58 counties administering CalWORKs HVP in Fiscal Year (FY) 2023-24.

PROBLEM

Because the CalWORKs HVP statute restricts funding for participation until the child reaches their second birthday, children and families participating in CalWORKs HVP miss out on critical developmental benefits from participating in the programs for full duration of their evidence-based program design. As a result, families that would otherwise like to remain involved in the CalWORKs HVP are forced out of the program due to the statutory time limit. Research shows disruption to participation in a home visiting program leads to families dropping out. Children Now's latest California Children's Report Card highlighted that of the 1,004,160 families who could benefit

¹ Home Visiting: Improving Outcomes for Children.

<https://www.ncsl.org/human-services/home-visitingimproving-outcomes-for-children>

from home visiting, only 1.3% of these families are being served.²

SOLUTION

SB 1396 proposes to extend the enrollment timeframe from a child under 24 months of age to a child under 36 months of age and extend the time that families can participate in the CalWORKs HVP until the child's fifth birthday. This would align the CalWORKs HVP with current practices that follow a model's fidelity and move in stride with the CHVP under CDPH. These changes will provide continuity of HVP services to participating CalWORKs families and help to maximize the health and developmental benefits of the program for those families. SB 1396 benefits all counties who opt in to the program, and counties estimate on an annual basis the number of children and families to be served based on resources available through the budget.

SUPPORT

Children Now (Co-Sponsor)
County Welfare Directors Association of California (CWDA) (Co-Sponsor)

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² 2024 California Children's Report Card.
<https://www.childrennow.org/portfolio-posts/2024-california-childrens-report-card/>