

Education Works!

College Opportunities under CalWORKs

Under CalWORKs, parents are required to do 32-35 hours/week of welfare-to-work activities to receive cash aid. *If you know your rights and responsibilities under CalWORKs, you can go to school and have education and training count as your welfare-to-work activity.*

Can I go to school under CalWORKs?

Yes! There are two ways education and training can be part of your welfare-to-work plan:

1) Become a Self-Initiated Participant (SIP). To be a SIP, you must meet four criteria:

- You must be enrolled in or accepted to an education or training program by the date of the appointment to sign your welfare-to-work plan.
- Your education or training program must lead to a credential or degree at an accredited educational institution. This includes GED and Vocational ESL programs, certificates, undergraduate degrees, and even a Master's teaching credential.
- Your education or training program must lead to employment. And,
- You must make "satisfactory progress" in your education or training program.

(See Welfare and Institutions Code §11325.23 or State Regulation MPP § 42-711.54).

2) Ask that education and training be part of your welfare-to-work plan. You might need to get an assessment before your worker will include education in your plan. An assessment is an evaluation of your education, work history, and skills to determine possible jobs or careers. A county welfare employee will conduct the assessment to identify barriers to employment and determine the services you will need to become employed. (See Welfare and Institutions Code 11325.4 or State Regulation MPP 42-711.554). *During your assessment, make sure to say that you need to go to school in order to get a good job and get off welfare.*

Things you need to know to get the right welfare-to-work plan for you...

- There are two types of work activities – core and non-core activities. Core activities are different types of work, such as employment, work-study, internships, apprenticeships, **AND the first 12 months of vocational education.** You must do at least 20 hours/week in core activities. Non-core activities are job skills training and education directly related to employment. You can do 12-15 hours/week in non-core activities.
- **Your first 12 months of school (not including 4-year or Master's teaching credential degrees) can count as core work activities** according to State Regulations MPP § 42-716.211. During this time, you are not *required* to work, but you still must meet your 32-35 hour/week work activities.
- **After 12 months of vocational education, school will count as non-core work activities up to 12 hours/week.** You must do 20 core hours along with your school program.
- **If you are in a Bachelors degree program or teaching credential program, your school time can only count as non-core work activities.** However, if you are in school more than 12 hours/week, *you can count these extra hours in school as part of your core work activities.* (See All-County Letter 07-03, p. 11).

Note: A SIP does NOT have to meet the core/non-core rules as long as they do 32-35 of work activities hours according to State Regulation MPP § 42-716.2.

How can I do 20 hours of work and go to school full time?

Be creative and find a good work activity that relates to your education, such as:

- Paid employment, including work-study. *Find a work-study job on or off campus and earn exempt income. Both CalWORKs and federal work-study income do not count against your cash grant, but you still need to report it.*
- Unpaid work experience. *Find an internship in your field of study and use what you learn in school to make you more employable when you finish school.*
- Paid on-the-job training, such as apprenticeships. *Earn income while you get trained.*
- Job search and job readiness, for a total of six-weeks. *Job readiness includes mental health, substance abuse treatment, or other rehabilitation activities but only for six-weeks.*
- Unpaid community service programs. *Volunteering at your child's school can also count!*

What if my worker tells me I can't go to school for more than 12 months?

Then, they are wrong! If education is included in your welfare-to-work plan, then you can go to school for the full 60-months you receive CalWORKs. There is no time limit on education and training activities under CalWORKs! As long as you are meeting your 20-hours/week of work activity, you can continue school as a non-core activity beyond 12 months. (See All County Letter 07-03, p.11).

Does homework and study time count as work activities?

Yes, under certain conditions! According to State Regulation MPP § 42-716.26, if you receive educational credit or units for study time hours, then those hours count as a work activity. Otherwise, non-credit study time is counted as a non-core activity at the county's option. Non-credit study time must be monitored or supervised. If you sign in and out when you study, then your study time is monitored.

What if I want to change my education plan?

First, ask your welfare worker to change your plan. You may need to do another assessment. If your worker will not change your plan, you can:

- **Appeal the county decision.** Ask for a state appeals hearing. If your caseworker pressured you to enroll in a program that was not your choice, or if your program is no longer a good fit for you, you may be able to get your plan changed. *If in doubt, always appeal! Contact LIFETIME at (888) 404-7726 for help.*
- **Continue your education anyway.** If you cannot change your work plan, you can take a sanction and not have to do welfare to work activities. You will lose **your** portion of your family's cash aid, but your children can still receive aid. *There is currently no time limit on children's aid.* You and your family will still get MediCal, but your food stamps may be reduced.

LIFETIME is a grassroots, membership organization created by mothers at University of California Berkeley who completed their college degrees while raising their families on welfare, and who are committed to helping other parents do the same. For more information or to get help, contact LIFETIME at (888) 404-7726, contact@geds-to-phds.org, or go to www.geds-to-phds.org.