

Social Services CalFresh Program Augmentation

February 13, 2024

County Board of Supervisors



Previous CalFresh Budgeting Methodology

CalFresh administrative budgeting methodology based on operating costs from over 20 years ago

- Due to recessionary policies adopted in early 2000s to reduce state costs, cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) have not been given
- State provided most caseload increases, however based on costs from the 2000s and only covered about 60% of current costs
- Funding methodology has resulted in inadequate staffing levels to meet community demand
- Community impact is long wait times and inaccurate benefit determinations

Impacts of Outdated Methodology

• **CalFresh Program Access Management Evaluation Findings**

- California Department of Social Services Annual Review resulted in a Program Improvement Response (PIR) in numerous program access areas

• **Longer Wait Times for Application Processing**

- Department not meeting mandates and in Corrective Action Plans (CAP) for expedited (3-day) and 30-day application processing

• **Longer Wait Times for Redeterminations (SAR7s and Renewals)**

- Can result in overpayments to clients that then need to be repaid, client complaints, and hearings
 - CalFresh hearing requests have increased 178% since 2019

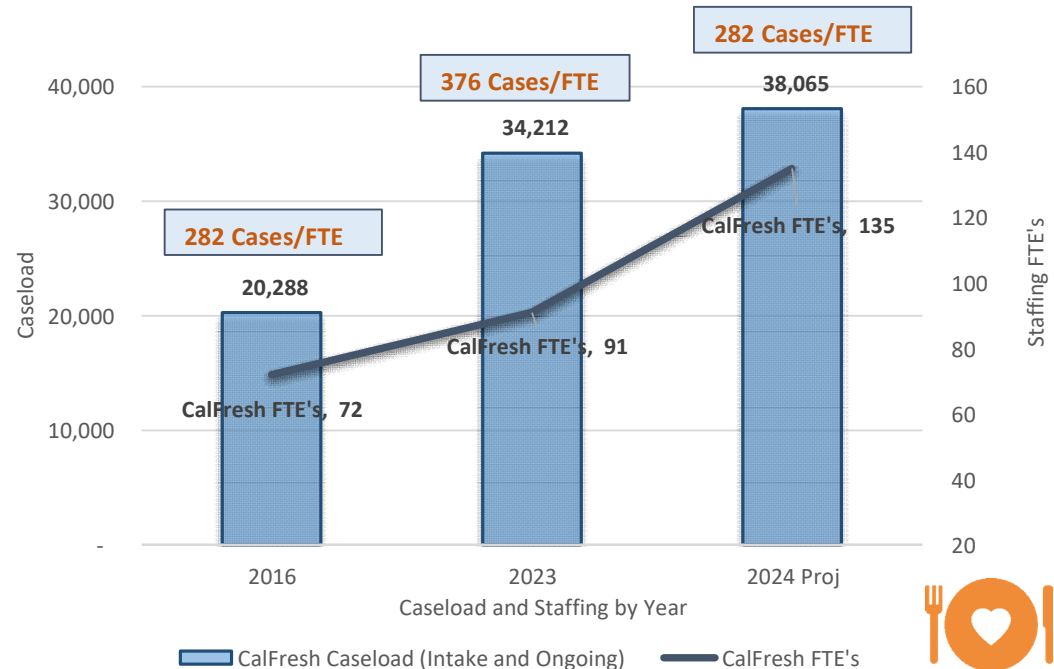
Impacts of Outdated CalFresh Budgeting Methodology

Staffing has not kept up with caseload growth since 2016.

- CalFresh caseload has increased by 69%
- CalFresh eligibility staffing has increased by 28%

Addition of 44 CalFresh Eligibility Workers would align staffing with workload.

CalFresh Monthly Caseload vs Staffing (2016, 2023, 2024 Projected)



New CalFresh Budgeting Methodology

AB 79 (Chapter 11, Statutes of 2019):

- Mandated that California Department of Social Services (CDSS) revise annual funding for County administration of CalFresh program
- Revised methodology put on hold due to COVID-19
- CDSS issued new allocation methodology on November 9, 2023
 - Funding Share: Federal, 50%; State, 35%; County, 15%
 - Maximum additional allocation of \$8.82M in federal and State funding over current year budget
 - \$1.03M in County match required should DSS spend full allocation

New CalFresh Budgeting Methodology

• **New allocation methodology modernizes staffing cost assumptions and funded activities:**

- Based on survey of 50 California counties
- Updated assumptions for annual eligibility worker costs to calculate cost per application or activity
- Expanded activities eligible for reimbursement, including work done on applications that are denied, quality control, fair hearings, and other administrative tasks associated with economic assistance workload

Request for Positions

Additional CalFresh funding supports 59 new funded positions

50 Line Staff:

- 44 Eligibility Worker (EW) I/II
- 3 Eligibility Supervisors
- 3 EW III (Lead Workers)

9 Support Staff:

- 2 Department Business Specialists
- 4 Administrative Office Professionals I/II
- 2 Computer System Specialists
- 1 Utility Worker

Request for Positions

Realignment growth and cost shifts can support 6 new funded positions in Adult and Children's Services

3 Line Staff:

- 1 Child Welfare Services Social Services Supervisor II
- 2 Adult Protective Services (APS) Social Services Workers

3 Support Staff:

- 1 APS Department Business Specialist
- 1 In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS)/APS Administrative Office Professional Sr.
- 1 IHSS Public Authority Administrative Office Professional I

Request for Unfunded Positions

21 new unfunded positions will enhance flexibility and efficiency:

- Maximize State and federal funding
 - State budget released in fall after County budget is adopted
 - Mid-year ongoing allocations may become available
 - Mid-year funding redistributions are common
- Create efficiencies during the recruitment and hiring process
- 13 unfunded positions for EW overhiring and training purposes to bring total unfunded EWs to 21 (1 EW training class)

Fiscal Impacts

Projected current year cost: \$1.43M

- \$1.25M offset by State and federal sources
- \$189K in General Fund Contribution (GFC) for County share
- Subject to approval of Budget Revision Request

FY 2024-25 Requested Budget: \$5.90M

- \$4.61M offset by State and federal sources
- \$1.29M in local funds and 2011 Realignment revenue for County share

Recommended Actions

- Adopt a resolution amending the Salary Resolution to allocate 86 positions to the Department of Social Services, effective February 19, 2024
- Approve Budget Revision Request No. 0009540 to increase appropriations of \$1,436,000 Social Services Fund for Salaries and Employee Benefits funded by unanticipated revenue from the State of California for the administration of the CalFresh Program
- Determine that the above actions are government fiscal activities or funding mechanisms which do not involve any commitment to any specific project which may result in potential physical impacts on the environment, and are therefore not a project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15378(b)(4) of the CEQA guidelines