Y-LIFE

Young Leaders Igniting the Fight for Equity

Navigating Your Success: A Toolkit for Young People Returning to Their Community
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THANK YOU!

Thank you to all of the community members, community-based organizations, and individuals who believe in the power of youth-led work. Your time, energy, and partnership made this guide possible. We hope this guide aids your efforts to improve health, wealth, and life outcomes for yourself or for other systems-involved youth. We are grateful to all of you, in particular:

United Way Bay Area
Bay Area Legal Aid
The Morrison and Foerster Foundation
Project W.H.A.T.
CYC
ILSP
RYSE
Calli House
Family Justice Center
Anchal Bibra
Freedom Forward

We believe in the power of young people and look forward to sharing this guide with you!
INTRODUCTION

About the Authors: What is Y-LIFE?

Y-LIFE (Young Leaders Igniting the Fight for Equity) members have been affected by the juvenile justice, foster care, and/or mental health system ("systems-affected"), and range from ages 15 to 26. Y-LIFE works to integrate the voices of these systems-affected youth into the perspectives and policies of local decision-makers and youth-service providers. In addition to publishing resources such as this guide, Y-LIFE members provide advice and feedback to youth-service providers who want to integrate youth voice into their programs and policies. We hope that making the information in this guide more accessible will improve the re-entry process for other systems-affected youth.

Why was this guide created?

After spending time in a juvenile hall or a group home, it can be very difficult to return to school, home, and friends. Public benefits, mental health services, and/or entering foster care are critical to help a young person transition back into the community and everyday life. Unfortunately, through no fault of their own, many young people face difficulty accessing these services. The young leaders in Y-LIFE hope that this guide helps to address the barriers that you may face when applying for the programs and services that you need to succeed in life. Though this guide is focused on youth with past or current juvenile justice involvement, it can also be useful for youth who have not spent time in juvenile hall.

How was this guide created?

This toolkit ("guide") was created by young people for young people. Over the course of three months, attorneys at Bay Area Legal Aid ("BayLegal") taught Y-LIFE members about various legal rights to community-based programs and services. Then, Y-LIFE members partnered with attorneys at Bay Area Legal Aid ("BayLegal") to co-write the legal information in each chapter of this guide.

Who wrote this guide?

Anareli Bodella, 20. Anareli works as a member of the Freedom Forward youth advisory board, a mindfulness instructor, and a shift manager at Starbucks!

Heidy España, 18. Heidy is a high school student, expecting to graduate in May 2020!

Estefani Bodella, 16. Estefani is a high school student!

Julia Nkansah, 19. Julia is a college student and expects to earn her Bachelor of Arts in 2021!

Kaden Evans-Shaw, 16. Kaden is a high school student!
To decide what information to put into the guide, Y-LIFE surveyed 38 young people across the Bay Area and asked them about their experiences accessing community programs and services. Based on the survey responses, we decided that each chapter of the guide would contain information on your rights to certain programs and services and on what to do when an individual or other entity denies your legal right to those services. Each chapter of this guide contains information on why the service is important, your legal rights to that service, how to face barriers to accessing that service, and a success story from a young person\(^1\) who was able to access and use the service. Finally, the appendix contains contact information for the agencies that are in charge of food stamps, SSI, mental health services, and general assistance.

\(^1\) Names have been changed.
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Why is this important?

**Knowledge and Critical Thinking**
Education helps young people gain knowledge of the world around us and develop a perspective of looking at life. We also learn to think critically about the information we are given to help us make good decisions for ourselves.

**Achieving Dreams**
Education can give young people the confidence and tools they need to follow their dreams and be in control of their futures. This includes getting the career we want and being financially independent.

**Stability for System Involved Youth**
Youth who are in the foster care system, on probation, or who are homeless have to deal with many changes. School can be one stable place for them to keep friendships and build relationships with supportive adults.

What are your rights?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suspension and expulsion</th>
<th>Generally, your school can only suspend you for up to 5 days at a time and 20 days in a school year. You can only be expelled for certain behaviors, and the school district must give you written notice of your right to a hearing. You also have the right to bring an advocate or attorney.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Credit calculation</td>
<td>You have a right to full and partial credits. Each time you transfer schools, the receiving school is responsible for ensuring you get credit for the time you spent in class, even if it was not a whole semester.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State standard diploma</td>
<td>If you changed schools after your second year of high school and were either homeless, in foster care, or probation involved, you may be entitled to a state standard diploma which only requires 130 credits, instead of about 240-260.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBTQ students</td>
<td>LGBTQ students have the right to: be treated equally, be addressed by the name and pronouns that correspond with their gender identity, and use the facilities that match their gender identity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with disabilities or suspected disabilities</td>
<td>If you have a disabling condition (including ADHD, anxiety, and depression) that impacts your learning, you are entitled to receive supports to help access your education. Once someone submits a written request, your school must assess you for what supports you need.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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*2 For more information: [www.myschoolmyrights.com](http://www.myschoolmyrights.com) | [www.mylifemyrights.org](http://www.mylifemyrights.org)*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pregnant and parenting students</th>
<th>You have the right to stay in your same school and participate in all school activities while you are pregnant and after childbirth. You also have a right to change schools and enroll in independent study, GED program, or other program based on your choice.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Financial aid for college</td>
<td>Youth in need can access grant, financial aid, scholarships, and work study. For example, the California College Promise covers enrollment fees for low income students, and the Chafee Grant provides up to $5,000 to former foster youth age 21 or younger. Read more at <a href="http://www.cacollegepathways.org">www.cacollegepathways.org</a>.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### What are some common barriers to accessing Education?

We surveyed 38 youth in the Bay Area about their experiences with education. 9 of those 38 young people (24%) were in Special Education. Here are some of the most common barriers they experienced to accessing education:

- Teachers did not know about a student's individualized education plan (IEP) or their accommodations.
- Education plans would not get transferred from one school to the next.
- Probation officers would disrupt students during the school day.
- Not having enough financial and academic support in college.

### What should you say/do if . . .

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I can't graduate on time</th>
<th>If you were homeless, in foster care, or probation involved, ask your school for a meeting to see if you qualify for the state standard diploma. You can also ask for a Student Support Team meeting or for credit recovery options, like APEX or other online learning courses.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If you think you have a disability</td>
<td>Ask a parent or your education rights holder to write a request to your school for an assessment. Within 15 days, the school must provide an assessment plan and in 60 days hold an Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting to see if you qualify for an IEP. If you don't qualify for an IEP, you may still qualify for a Section 504 Plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If your school district is trying to expel you</td>
<td>Ask for a written notice from the school that explains why the district wants to expel you. Ask for copies of all of the evidence the district plans to use against you. This must be in yours or your parents' primary languages, too. Call local nonprofits to see if they can provide you with an attorney. You can also ask to postpone the hearing up to 30 days.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you think you are missing credits</td>
<td>Tell your current school where you think you previously earned credits and ask them to request records and calculate credits from those schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you have trouble getting meals, transportation, or enrolling in school</td>
<td>Contact the Homeless or Foster Youth Liaison for your school district (they also serve probation youth). They have a duty to help you enroll in school and get the necessary supports so that you can fully access your education.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Kevin's Story

Kevin was going to Mountain Day High School for the beginning of 10th grade. He was doing well until some boys started to harass him. He brought a pocket knife to school for protection and took it out when a few of the boys approached him to fight. A teacher saw him and called police. He did not get expelled, but spent the rest of his 10th grade year in juvenile hall.

When he got released from the hall, he tried to enroll back in Mountain Day High School, but the school told him he must go to a continuation school, which Kevin did not want to attend. The school district said he would have to start in 10th grade again because he didn't take his final exams and earned zero credits for the 10th grade year.

Kevin and his aunt, who is his education rights holder, remembered that Kevin has a right to immediate re-enrollment and can't be denied re-enrollment to a school based on the fact that he was in juvenile hall before. They called and met with the Foster Youth Liaison in his school district. Kevin's aunt explained that Kevin went to juvenile hall in November to June and that he attended class every day when he was in the hall.

The Foster Youth Liaison then requested all of his records from the school in juvenile hall and looked at all of his grades and progress reports for the months he was at Mountain Day in August to November. She calculated partial credits for him which totaled to a full 10th grade year and helped him enroll in 11th grade classes at Mountain Day. Kevin is now in his 12th grade year at Mountain Day and is on track to graduate.
What is Extended Foster Care?
Extended foster care (also known as AB 12) is a voluntary program for foster youth ages 18 to 21 who want more support as they transition to adulthood.

Why is this important?

- Extended foster care offers many types of housing options, such as transitional housing and financial support if you want to live independently.
- There are long-term benefits. For example, if you turn 18 in foster care, you can qualify for transitional housing up to age 24 or 25, and free Medi-Cal health insurance up to age 26.
- If you are in extended foster care, a social worker will work with you to develop your life goals and meet the eligibility requirements for extended foster care.
- You can exit and re-enter extended foster care as many times as you want to until your 21st birthday.

You have the right...

- To stay in extended foster care from your 18th birthday until your 21st birthday, as long as you turned 18 in foster care.³

✓ To access an array of housing options, including transitional housing.4

✓ To remain in extended foster care even if you receive Social Security benefits. Receiving SSI meets the AB 12 disability exception.5

✓ To have a social worker who helps you make a new independent living plan to show the judge at each sixth month review hearing.6 Your social worker should meet with you at least once a month.

✓ To receive an “infant supplement” if you have a child of your own.7

✓ To a “termination hearing” before your social worker stops your AB 12 payments or disqualifies you from extended foster care. This is an opportunity to explain to the judge why you should still be in the program.8

✓ To access important documents upon exiting AB 12, including your social security card, a birth certificate, a health and education summary, written information about your foster care case, a driver’s license/ID, a 90-day transition plan, a Medi-Cal card, and referrals for housing.9

✓ To a lawyer throughout your foster care case.10

What is a common barrier to accessing foster care?

Delays!

- Your social worker may want more evidence to prove that you are going to school or working. This can lead to delays.

- If you have a disability, you will need to provide verification (with help from your social worker) to show that you cannot go to school and work. This can take a long time.

What should you say or do...

If you’re already out of foster care and want to get back into extended foster care

If you are under 21 years old, you can file a JV-466 form at the nearest juvenile courthouse. Even if you live in another county, that county should send your petition to the court where you exited foster care. The court has three weeks to hear your request. You can ask ILSP or your social worker or probation officer or attorney to help you complete the forms.

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4 Welf. & Inst. Code 11400(w); 11402; All-County Letter No. 11-77.
5 All-County Letter No. 11-61.
6 Welf. & Inst. Code 11400(y).
7 Welf. & Inst. Code 11465(a); All-County Letter No. 17-93.
8 Welf. & Inst. Code 391, 452.
9 Welf. & Inst. Code 391(e).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If you're participating in extended foster care and want help with housing or other supports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ask your social worker or probation officer to help you apply for housing or to approve the place where you currently live so that you can get financial support. Your social worker/probation officer is supposed to meet with you every month—use those meetings to ask for what you need!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If you have a hard time reaching your social worker</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You can ask your attorney to ask the social worker to respond to you. You can also contact your social worker’s supervisor!</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If your AB 12 benefits get cut off</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contact our social worker or probation officer and your attorney to find out why your benefits were cut off. If you disagree with the reason why they were cut off, you can appeal and ask an administrative law judge to order the county to pay your benefits back to you. Be sure to appeal within 90 days of your benefits getting cut off. You can request a hearing here: <a href="http://www.cdss.ca.gov/Hearing-Requests">http://www.cdss.ca.gov/Hearing-Requests</a>.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If the court schedules a termination hearing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work with your attorney to make the best case possible that you should stay in extended foster care, like providing proof that you are in school, working, participating in programs to help you build skills, or are trying to work but have a medical condition that makes it hard to work. You can also provide proof of any time you tried to meet with your social worker and they didn’t help you.</td>
</tr>
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**Nicolas’s Story**

Nicolas turned 18 in a group home. Nicolas went to live with his mom for a while but their relationship fell apart and he became homeless. While staying at a shelter, he learned that he was eligible for extended foster care. An attorney helped him file a petition to re-enter foster care. Nicolas got a letter from his therapist stating that he had a disability that prevented him from going to school or working, and the court allowed him to re-enter foster care. Nicolas’s social worker helped him apply for transitional housing. The waitlist was long, so Nicolas told his social worker that he would stay with a cousin in the meantime. The social worker approved the home as a supervised independent living placement (SILP) so that Nicolas could receive funding and pay rent to his cousin. Nicolas eventually was placed in a transitional housing program with mental health services, and stayed there until his 21st birthday.
Why is this important?

✓ Dealing with mental health concerns can make it hard to figure out what to do if you are feeling anxious, depressed, or afraid, but are not sure how to express that. This can make it difficult to have a positive relationship with parents, caregivers, and even yourself.

✓ There are services to help and support you in dealing with any emotional or mental health concerns that you have, while you pursue your dreams. There might be some barriers along the way, but this resource is here to help!

Which mental health services are available?

Pathways to Wellbeing services ("Katie A. services")
- Long-term behavioral support
- Provides:
  - An ICC coordinator (someone to schedule 1 big meeting that you and your attorney, probation officer, caregivers, etc. attend) to plan and help achieve your goals and
  - IHBS (intensive home-based services where a therapist meets with you in your home or placement)

Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST)
- Focuses on helping youth, ages 11 to 19, who may also be at risk of being removed from their homes

Therapeutic Behavioral Services (TBS)
- Short-term behavioral support
- Can be added to any other mental health service that you're receiving!
- Helps youth avoid being placed in a higher level of care, such as a residential treatment facility, or make a successful return home after living in a group home or residential treatment facility.

Functional Family Therapy (FFT)
- Focuses on improving your relationship with your caregiver, not providing you with individual services.
What are some common barriers to accessing this resource?

We asked 37 young people living in the Bay Area about their experiences trying to get mental health services.

- 71% had to wait for over a month before they received specialty mental health services
- 15% had to wait for over two months before they received mental health services

Remember...

You are eligible to receive most specialty mental health services if you:
- Have full-scope Medi-Cal,
- Are 21 years old or younger,
- And meet the medical necessity criteria (you have been diagnosed by a clinician with concerns such as ADHD, depression, PTSD, anxiety, etc.)

TBS and MST services also provide you with one-on-one support and a caseworker who can meet with you at your home, school, or in the community.

Katie A. services are the only mental health services that also provide scheduling and coordination.

You can receive both TBS and Katie A. services!

* A grievance is a complaint that you can send to the County to tell them that they’ve failed to provide certain services to you. The County has 60 days to respond to a grievance. Usually, the County will respond to a grievance by providing the services that were either delayed or denied.

**“Joining” means that a representative from the County will come to your next court hearing and explain to the judge why you have waited over a month for services. This will help your probation officer, attorney, and the judge understand why you may still be struggling with your mental health concerns.
Joe’s Story

Joe had ADHD and anxiety. Sometimes, when situations became overwhelming, the only way that Joe could feel peace was to run away or leave. Eventually, Joe ran away from home and was living on the streets. While living on the streets, he was arrested for selling laptops and taken into custody at juvenile hall. Joe was released after 8 months. Afterwards, he tried to get Katie A. Services because he knew that he needed someone to meet with him at his home and to help make sure that he could meet with meetings with his probation officer, caregiver, teacher, and public defender all at the same time. Unfortunately, after 1 month of asking for services Joe still hadn't received them. He ended up violating his probation and was taken into custody.

After talking to another young person, Joe learned about something called a grievance. Joe learned that he could file a grievance against the County, which would allow him to write about his attempts to get mental health services and how long he had waited to get services. He also learned that the County had to respond to the grievance within 30 days. The next time he met with his public defender, Joe asked her for help with filing a grievance. The public defender connected Joe to a legal aid attorney who helped Joe to file a grievance requesting that he receive services as soon as possible. Two weeks after Joe filed the grievance, The County agreed to start services within 2 weeks of Joe's release from juvenile hall. Joe is currently receiving services at his placement, learning ways to handle his ADHD and anxiety, and is working to find a job.
Why is this important?

✓ SSI (Supplemental Security Income) is a federal program that pays money to people who are low income and disabled.

✓ You CAN work and get SSI. You have to report your income on a monthly basis to SSI. Your SSI rate will be adjusted based on your income.\(^\text{11}\)

What should you know about the application process?

SSI is a paper application.

- Unfortunately, applications are only in English; however, you can go to any local office to complete the application with a worker who will use a translation service to assist you. You can find your local Social Security office at https://secure.ssa.gov/ICON/main.jsp.

You must have documentation of your medical conditions.

- This can include records from therapists and doctors, and school and education records.

Always be on top of your mail.

- Social Security sends all information related to your case in the mail.

The SSI process can be long and very frustrating.

- The SSI process sometimes takes up to 3 years (yikes!) It is super common to get denied at the first stage but don’t be discouraged! You can and SHOULD appeal this decision. It’s also very common to get denied at the second stage, called Reconsideration, but don’t get discouraged here either! You can and SHOULD appeal! This third stage is an informal hearing with an administrative law judge where you get a better chance of telling your story. If you get to this stage, you should get a representative to help you.

If you’re a minor, you will be reevaluated for eligibility when you turn 18.

- When you turn 18, there is always a review called an age-18 redetermination, where you are re-evaluated for SSI benefits under the adult standard.

\(^{11}\) To learn more, read: https://www.ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-10095.pdf
What can you do to maintain eligibility for SSI?

For people with disabilities
- You must be totally or partially blind OR have a medical condition (physical or mental health) that keeps you from working and is expected to last at least one year or result in death.

For people who have a low income
- You must have a low income AND have less than $2,000 in resources.

For people who have a disabled, retired, or deceased parent
You may be eligible for Disabled Child Benefits “DAC” benefits if your parents worked & are now disabled, retired, or deceased.

Marisela’s Story

Marisela often struggled in school. As she watched other students focus on the teacher and turn in homework on a weekly basis, she wondered why she couldn't do the same. She struggled with distracting thoughts and emotions. No one seemed to understand how hard it was to overcome the negative thoughts that took up most of her day. No one understood how hard it was for her to remain focused and complete daily tasks. At 17, Marisela dropped out of school. But 2 years later, she struggled to find jobs and was often fired or quit within 3 months. Marisela’s self-esteem was low and she was always worried about how she would pay her bills. One of her friends told her about something called SSI that was for people who had mental or physical concerns that made it really difficult to work. Marisela was nervous because she didn’t want to be labeled or feel stigma about not being able to work. She looked up SSI on Google and learned that she could still work part-time if she wanted. After much thought, Marisela realized that the money she would receive from SSI would help her to work when she was able to focus, and keep her from worrying about how she would pay her rent. Working with a legal aid attorney, Marisela applied for SSI and was approved. Today, she lives in an apartment, works when she is able to, and has much higher self-esteem!
What is General Assistance/General Relief?

General Assistance/General Relief ("GA/GR") is a public benefit program that gives monthly cash aid to people who do not have an income and do not have any other way of supporting themselves.

Why is GA/GR important?

When you do not have any other source of income, GA gives you cash to help you pay for things like food and transportation.

What should you know about GA/GR?

You *may* be required to work.

- You may be required to do work-related activities or prove that you're looking for a job.

The monthly cash amount differs depending on your county and whether you're homeless.

- Some counties give you as little as $77 and some give you over $400 a month. In some counties, if you are homeless you will receive less money (like in San Francisco).

The amount of time you can receive GA/GR differs depending on the county and whether you have a condition that prevents you from working.

- Some counties give you cash aid for 3 months and some counties do not have a time limit. Some counties will extend the amount of time you can receive cash aid if you have a medical or mental health condition that prevents you from working.

What are your rights? You have the right to:

- Submit an application for GA. The county cannot refuse to take your application.
- Receive a written notice if your GA application was denied, telling you that you were denied and the reason you were denied.
- Appeal your denial and ask for a hearing.
- Receive services in your language

*If you have a medical or mental health condition that makes it difficult to work, consider applying for Social Security benefits (SSI).*
Common barriers when accessing this resource:

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td>If you are under 18 years old, the county may tell you that you cannot apply for GA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language</strong></td>
<td>If you do not speak English, not receiving services in your language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Long wait times</strong></td>
<td>The county social services office where you apply for GA is usually busy, and you might have to wait for 2-3 hours.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What should you say?

**Your application for GA is denied.**

- Ask for a hearing immediately.

**You submit your GA application and the county eligibility worker verbally tells you that your application is denied.**

- Ask that the eligibility worker to give you a written denial notice. If they refuse to give you something in writing, ask to speak to their supervisor.

**You do not speak English and you cannot understand what the county worker is saying or what a notice says.**

- Ask the county worker for an interpreter and/or for the notice to be in your language.

**The county worker does not allow you to apply for GA, does not give you a written notice, does not allow you to ask for a hearing, does not return your calls, or you have any other complaint.**

- Ask to speak to a supervisor.

**Damien's Story:**

Damien is 19 years old. He lost his job and could not pay his rent. He went to a shelter and one of the shelter staff suggested he apply for GA. The application process took about a month, but when he received GA he could pay his phone bill and pay for the transportation he needed to go to his job interviews!
Why is CalFresh important?

✓ If you cannot afford to pay for food and have little to no income, food stamps (“CalFresh” benefits) can help you meet your food needs.

What should you know about CalFresh?¹²

You can buy any type of food, except hot food that is meant to be eaten immediately.

If you are under 22 years old and live with your parents, you must apply for CalFresh as part of their household, even if you do not buy or cook food with them.

You can receive CalFresh forever (as long as you’re eligible!)

If you are under 18 years old and you live with someone who had parental control over you and they are not your parent, you must apply for CalFresh as part of their household.

The amount of money you receive will depend on your income, the number of people you live with and prepare food with, your housing costs, and if you are homeless.

• For a one person household, you can receive as little as $15 or as much as $192 per month.

What are your rights? You have the right to:

✧ Submit an application for CalFresh. The county cannot refuse to take your application.

✧ Receive emergency food stamps within 3 calendar days of your application (if you have less than $150 in income and less than $100 in cash).¹³

✧ Apply for CalFresh on your own (if you are under 18 years old and you live alone or are homeless).¹⁴

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¹³ 7 CFR § 273.2(i)(1)(i); MPP § 63-301.51.
Provide any document that reasonably establishes your identity (State ID, School ID, ID for health benefits or social services, birth certificate, etc.).

- The county cannot require you to have specific documents.\textsuperscript{15}

Receive a written notice if your CalFresh application was denied, telling you that you were denied and the reason you were denied.

Appeal your denial and ask for a hearing.

Receive services in your language.\textsuperscript{16}

What are some common barriers to accessing CalFresh?

We surveyed young people across the Bay Area on the most common barriers that they experienced when accessing CalFresh. Youth reported the problems listed below as the most common barriers to accessing CalFresh.

- Issues with the eligibility worker
- Long wait times
  - The county social services office where you apply for CalFresh is usually busy, and you might have to wait for 2-3 hours.

What should you say?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IF THIS HAPPENS...</th>
<th>YOU SHOULD...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You submit your CalFresh application and the county eligibility worker verbally tells you that your application is denied</td>
<td>Ask the eligibility worker to give you a written denial notice. If they refuse to give you something in writing, ask to speak to their supervisor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You are homeless or newly arrived to the area and do not have a permanent address</td>
<td>Tell the eligibility worker that someone can vouch for your residency (either by phone or in person), or provide other documents that demonstrate your residency.\textsuperscript{17}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your application for CalFresh is denied</td>
<td>Ask for a hearing immediately</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{15} 7 CFR § 273.1 (f)(vii).
\textsuperscript{16} 7 CFR § 272.4(b)(3)(ii).
\textsuperscript{17} 7 CFR 273.2(f)(1)(vi); 7 CFR 273.2(f)(4)(ii).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>You are a college student</strong></th>
<th>Tell the eligibility worker that you are still eligible for CalFresh (if you are working at least 20 hours per week, have a child, or are receiving CalWORKs).¹⁸</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>You cannot understand what the county worker is saying or what a notice says</strong></td>
<td>Ask the county worker for an interpreter and/or for the notice to be in your language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If the county worker does not give you a written notice, does not allow you to ask for a hearing, does not return your calls, or you have any other complaint</td>
<td>Ask to speak to a supervisor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Shayla's Story:**

Shayla was 17 years old when she had to leave her home, because she did not feel safe there. She went to a shelter for youth and they helped her apply for CalFresh. When she first applied her eligibility worker told her that she was not eligible because she was only 17 years old. With the help of the shelter staff, she was able to explain to the county that she was eligible. The CalFresh benefit allowed her to supplement the food she got at the shelter and to buy food when she was out during the day.

¹⁸ ACL 12-37; ACL 17-97; ACIN I-66-16; MPP § 63-406.212.
TRAFFIC TICKETS

Why is this important?¹⁹

63% of people living in the United States don’t have enough money saved to pay for a $500 emergency, including an unexpected traffic citation.

Lacking the ability to pay nearly $500 for running a stop sign can result in a spiral of consequences that include: loss of driver’s license, job loss, wage garnishment, arrest, incarceration, and loss of vehicle to towing and impoundment.

People of color and people who are poor and/or homeless are the most affected by traffic fines because they are more likely to be stopped by cops.

What does an ability-to-pay determination form look like?

This is Alameda County’s ability-to-pay determination form:

What can you do if you owe money on a traffic citation?

1) Pay it off as soon as possible.

- After a few weeks to 2 months of not hearing from you, most counties will send traffic debt to a debt collection agency. Once your traffic fine has been sent to a debt collection agency, you are in danger of the traffic debt showing up on your credit report, which can affect your ability to lease a car or rent an apartment.

2) Attend Homeless Court.

- You must have been homeless at the time that you acquired your tickets or be currently homeless.
- Unfortunately, you can’t refer yourself. You must find a community-based organization to refer you. The community-based organization will have to write a “letter of advocacy” for you to refer you and they can only do this after you have been receiving their services for three months.
- You can only go to homeless court once in your lifetime, per county.

3) Submit an “Ability to Pay Determination” form.

- **What should you say on the form?**
  1) I have no income, I live with relatives/shelter/group home and have no income to pay this ticket
  2) Paying this ticket would prevent me from paying my rent and utility bills
  3) I am not working and do not have enough money to pay this traffic fine

**Where do you submit the form?**
You can file (give) the form to a clerk at the courthouse in your county. When you turn in the form, bring two copies of the form so that you can turn in one copy to the clerk, who will submit the form to the judge, and a keep a second stamped copy for yourself. The results of an ability to pay determination vary with each county; but usually, you'll end up with a smaller fine, or a small fine and some amount of community service.
RECORD SEALING

What is record “sealing?”

✓ “Sealing” means making it inaccessible to the public (excluding some government agencies, e.g. the military).
✓ The Probation Department has 60 days to comply with a judge’s order to seal a record.

Why is record sealing important?

✓ Having a juvenile record can make it difficult to get hired for a job.
✓ Having a juvenile record can create obstacles for someone applying for housing.
✓ Record sealing helps to decrease the emotional stress caused by unemployment and a lack of housing.

How do you get your records sealed?

☒ Attend a record sealing clinic where an attorney will help you complete records sealing paperwork.
☒ Complete the records sealing paperwork on your own and submit it to a court
☒ Contact your public defender and ask them to ask a judge to seal your record.

How do I know whether I’m eligible to have my records sealed?

Eligibility varies by county. The charts below list some ways to find out whether you’re eligible to have your records sealed. To find out whether you are eligible to have your records sealed, you can: 1) contact your local public defender’s office to find out your county’s eligibility rules or 2) Google “record sealing” & the name of your county.

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20 The formal term is expungement.
23 The Impact of Limited Housing Opportunities on Formerly Incarcerated People in the Context of Addiction Recovery; NCBI https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5507072/.
Typically, you ARE eligible to seal your records if:

- You are 18 or older OR at least five years have passed since your last arrest, discharge from probation, closure of case, or citation to appear;
- You have not been convicted in adult criminal court of a felony or a misdemeanor involving "moral turpitude" (including fraud, theft, sex, drug-related offenses, and offenses involving great bodily injury) since your last arrest or discharge from probation;
- The court is satisfied that you have been rehabilitated;
- Your case started and ended in juvenile court; and
- You do not have an open civil suit regarding the case on your juvenile record.

Typically, you are NOT eligible to seal your records if:

- The juvenile court found that you committed a serious and violent offense when you were 14 or older;
- You were transferred to and convicted in adult criminal court; or
- You do not meet the above requirements.
APPENDIX

SSI

• You can find your local Social Security office at https://secure.ssa.gov/ICON/main.jsp.

Extended Foster Care

• You can find your local Foster Care office at https://www.cdss.ca.gov/County-Offices

Food Stamps ("CalFresh")

• You can find your local CalFresh office at https://calfresh.dss.ca.gov/food/officelocator/
• For more information, you can call your county's CalFresh line
  • Alameda County - 888-999-4772
  • Contra Costa County - 877-505-4630
  • San Francisco County - 855-355-5757

General Assistance/General Relief

• You can find your local General Assistance office by calling your county's CalFresh/General Assistance line.
  • Alameda County - (888) 999-4772 (Toll Free) OR (510) 383-8523
  • Contra Costa County - 877-505-4630 (Toll Free) OR (925) 608-5980 (East) OR (925) 602-9379 (Central) OR (510) 412-3000 (West)
  • San Francisco County - (855) 355-5757 (Toll Free) OR (415) 558-4700