**Frequently Asked Questions**

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**General Questions**

**Q:** **What does CalWORKs stand for?**
A: California Work Opportunities and Responsibility to Kids Program.

**Q:** **What is CalWORKs?**
A: CalWORKs is a statewide program which receives funding to assist TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) recipients transitioning off TANF to achieve long-term self-sufficiency through coordinated student services offered at community colleges

**Q:** **Who is eligible for CalWORKs?**
A: To be eligible for the CalWORKs program students must:

* Receive cash assistance in the form of TANF, for themselves, from one of the following counties; Tuolumne County of Social Services, Calaveras Health and Human Services Agency, Stanislaus Community Services Agency or Mariposa Human Services or Amador Social Services
* Enroll at Columbia College
* Maintain a minimum GPA of 2.0 (both cumulative and semester).

**Q:** **If my children are receiving CalWORKs, can I qualify?**
A: In order to be eligible for the CalWORKs program, a participant must be receiving cash assistance in form of TANF for themselves. Although you will not qualify for the campus program, you may be eligible for federal/state grants and other Columbia College Student Services.

**Q:** **What is the difference between the CalWORKs and CARE programs?**
A: Columbia College’s CARE (Cooperative Agencies Resources for Education) program is a supplemental component of EOPS (Extended Opportunity Programs & Services). The student or the child(ren) must be receiving TANF to be eligible for CARE as opposed to CalWORKs where the student must be a TANF recipient. To find out more information about [**CARE- click here.**](http://www.gocolumbia.edu/eops_care/care_services.php)

**Q:** **What services does Columbia College CalWORKs provide?**
A: CC CalWORKs program works in conjunction with local Departments of Social Services to provide the following direct student support services:

* Priority Registration
* Career and Academic Counseling
* Work-study
* Subsidized Childcare
* Job Placement
* Textbooks
* Tutoring
* Transportation Assistance (Bus Passes/mileage reimbursement)
* Financial Aid
* School Supplies

**Q:** How can I request to see a CalWORKs counselor?
A: An appointment can be made by calling **(209) 588-5130**.

**Q:** Can I get welfare and still go to college or get vocational training?
A: Yes. CalWORKs allows you to get education or vocational training that will help you get and maintain a job. Your education will count for Welfare to Work time.

**Q:** If I’m a CalWORKs participant can I get financial aid?
A: Yes, a CalWORKs participant may be eligible to receive financial aid. CalWORKs participants are referred to the CC Financial Aid Office where they can obtain a BOG (Board of Governor’s Fee Waiver) application and FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) information. [**Financial Aid – click here**](http://www.gocolumbia.edu/financial_aid/)**.**

**Q:** Can I still get TANF if I get financial aid?
A: Yes. Most federal grants, state grants, and work study are considered “excluded income,” which means your TANF should not be reduced or cut off because you get financial aid.

**Q:** How long can I receive CC CalWORKs services?
A: You can continue eligibility as long as you are receiving cash assistance (TANF) for yourself and you fulfill your responsibilities as a CalWORKs program participant.

**Q:** Do I have to use my college financial aid for childcare or other expenses that could be covered by CalWORKs?
A: No, CalWORKs supportive services cover only a small range of necessary items. It is appropriate for students to use financial aid for other important needs. As long as the use of financial aid is not specifically restricted to pay for something that CalWORKs supportive services will cover, a student may receive both.

**Q:** Can the county make me quit school?
A: No. However, they can follow up with the college program if attendance and participation is in question.

**Q**: Can the county give me a time limit to complete my course of study?
A: Students can continue their course of study until the completion of the program or until their time limit is reached. Your county caseworker will explain your time limits when you sign our Welfare to Work contract.

**CalWORKs Work-Study**

**Q:** What is CalWORKs work-study?
A: CalWORKs Program provides campus work-study opportunities. To utilize work-study services each semester please speak with college CalWORKs staff and:

* Must be enrolled in 6 or more units during Fall & Spring semester (3 or more units during summer term).
* Must maintain a minimum GPA of 2.0; both semester and cumulative.
* Students are limited to a maximum of 20 hours per week and may never work more than 8 hours per day during Fall & Spring semester (10 hours per day in Summer).
* Any hours worked over the 20 hours per week are unpaid volunteer hours.
* Students earn minimum wage ($15.00 per hour) and are paid on once a month on the 10th.

**Q:** How do I sign-up for CalWORKs work-study?
A: Contact the CC CalWORKs program to let them know you are interested in campus work-study.

**Q:** Am I guaranteed CalWORKs work-study if I participate in the campus program?
A: No. Students are offered work-study on a first-come, first-served basis while funding and positions are available.

**Q:** Does paid work-study count toward my WTW participation hours?
A: Yes. The county must count work-study toward either the WTW participation hours. If your County case manager has informed you that work study doesn’t count, please inform the CC CalWORKs staff immediately.

**Q:** Will the money I earn from paid Work Study count against my cash aid or food stamps?
A: No, as long as the money you earn is from CalWORKs Work Study funds or Federal Work Study funds, it does not count against your cash aid or food stamps.

**SIP (Self-Initiated Program)**

**Q:** What is a Self-Initiated Program?
A: If you are already in school or other job training before you start a CalWORKs welfare-to-work program, you are in a Self-Initiated-Program (SIP). If you are in a SIP you have a right to continue going to school. If your SIP is "approved," it will help you to meet your welfare-to-work requirements for CalWORKs.

**Q:** If I am in a SIP, do I also have to work?
A: It depends on your circumstances. All SIPs have to fulfill the WTW participation requirement hours, which includes class lecture and lab, on-campus supervised study labs, internship programs, work study, work or other welfare-to-work activities. If these activities don’t add up to your total required participation hours, you will have to participate in additional activities. A part-time job would qualify. If you don’t have a job, the County can assign you to other welfare-to-work activities, such as, job search or additional education or training. But the county must count all your school, lab, supervised study lab and internship hours before deciding how many other hours you can be assigned to additional activities. The additional activities cannot interfere with your SIP.

**Q:** What is an "approvable" SIP?
A: An "approvable" SIP meets the following: 1. You will earn a degree or certificate, 2. You are making "satisfactory progress" in the program, 3. Your program leads to employment.

**Q:** What is “satisfactory progress?”
A: In general, satisfactory progress means that you are completing and receiving passing grades in your classes and making progress toward your degree or certificate. As a CalWORKs participant, you must maintain a minimum GPA of 2.0; both semester and cumulative to be in good academic standing.

**Q:** If my SIP is approved, how long can I stay in it?
A: Your SIP can count toward your required CalWORKs hours until you complete your SIP or up until you reach your 60-month time limit on CalWORKs.

**State Hearings, Sanctions & CalWORKs Regulations**

**Q:** How do I request a State Hearing?
A: You have the right to request a hearing if you disagree with any decision made by the County. You have only 90 days to request a hearing. The 90 days starts the day after the County gave or mailed you a Notice of Action. In order to request a Hearing, you can use the Hearing form located on the back of correspondence from the County, or you can contact the State at (800) 743-8525 or you can [To Request a Hearing Online](https://www.cdss.ca.gov/hearing-requests). If you request a Hearing prior to being sanctioned, your aid and supportive services (child care, transportation, etc.) will not be cut while you are waiting for a decision.

**Q:**  Will I lose all of my family’s aid if I get sanctioned?
A: No. Only the parent’s portion of the CalWORKs cash aid grant is cut if the parent does not comply with the required welfare-to-work activity hours. In addition, you will also lose other CalWORKs supportive services, which includes child care, bus pass or mileage reimbursement and books. Everyone in the family should still receive Medi-Cal and Food Stamps.

**Q:** How does the sanction process work?
A: There are several steps in the sanction process. Before a sanction can be imposed, the county must follow all the steps discussed below correctly. The county must send you a Notice of Action, informing you that you failed to participate in your assigned activity. The letter will give you an appointment time to meet with your County Case Manager, in order to discuss why you did not comply.

 If you ignore the letter, your aid will be reduced on the date mentioned in the letter, unless you ask for a State Hearing before the date the reduction is to happen.
 If you decide to be sanctioned, at any time during your sanction, you can contact your County Case Manager and inform them that you want to comply so the sanction can be lifted.

**Q:** How can I learn more about my Hearings and Appeals?
A: If you have applied for, have received, or are currently receiving benefits/services from the Department of Social Services AND you have a complaint, you can visit the [California State Department of Social Services](https://www.cdss.ca.gov)to learn about the process.

**Q:** How can I learn more about my rights as a CalWORKs Participant?
A: If you are applying for, receiving, or have received public assistance in California, you have specific rights. [“Your Rights Under California Welfare Programs”.](https://www.cdss.ca.gov/Portals/9/Additional-Resources/Forms-and-Brochures/2020/M-P/PUB13.pdf) This brochure describes your rights and explains what to do if you have a complaint.

**Q:** How can I learn more about the CalWORKs regulations?
A: Important information about SIPs, Vocational Training Referrals (core/non-core hour requirements), and learning disabilities are in [All County Letters (ACL’s)](https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/letters-and-notices)posted on the California State Department of Social Services website.

ACL’s can be located at the California State Department of Social Services website under [“All County Letters (ACL’s):](https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/letters-regulations/letters-and-notices/all-county-letters)