



CDSS

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STATE OF CALIFORNIA—HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
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EDMUND G. BROWN JR.
GOVERNOR

November 18, 2015

Fresno County Human Services System
Mr. Delfino Neira, Director, Department of Social Services
2135 Fresno Street, Suite 100
Fresno, CA 93721

Dear Mr. Neira:

I would like to invite you, or your designee, to attend a special briefing on new Employment and Training (E&T) models to be held at the December 11th board meeting of the California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley. The Partnership board is interested in sharing information about the model that you are implementing in Fresno. We are also inviting Supervisor Debbie Poochigian, Chair of the Fresno County Board of Supervisors, or her designee, to attend. The subject of the briefing is "Creating Pathways to Self-reliance for CalFresh Recipients". It will be led by Pete Weber, a member of the Partnership's Advisory Council and founder of the Fresno Bridge Academy - a program at Reading and Beyond, along with Phyllis Grupe, Board Chair of the Community Partnership for Families of San Joaquin, and Luis Santana, MSW, Executive Director of Reading and Beyond.

The purpose of the December 11 briefing is to offer all counties in the San Joaquin Valley the opportunity to consider emulating the CalFresh E&T approach taken in Fresno in the 3 years since inception of the program in 2012, with adaptations to address the needs and conditions of each county. Officials from the California Department of Social Services and from the USDA Food and Nutrition Program will attend the meeting to help address questions and explain the technical assistance that may be made available to participating counties.

You are welcome to attend the entire board meeting, which will run from 10 am to 3 pm, or you may wish to just attend the **special briefing, scheduled from 11 am to 1 pm (lunch will be provided). The meeting will be held at California State University, Stanislaus, 1 University Circle, Conference Room MSR 130 in Turlock, California.**

Please RSVP to Jim Suennen, Associate Secretary at California Health and Human Services Agency, (Jim.Suennen@chhs.ca.gov or 916-651-8056).

Sincerely,

Will Lightbourne, Director
California Department of Social Services

Cc: Supervisor Debbie Poochigian, Chair, Fresno County Board of Supervisors

FRESNO BRIDGE ACADEMY – A Program of Reading and Beyond

SUMMARY

The last recession hit California hard and was particularly impactful on the San Joaquin Valley. That impact has been compounded by the current drought. The effect has been growth of poverty rates in the San Joaquin Valley. More San Joaquin Valley families than in the past are receiving assistance from CalFresh (formerly known as food stamps) to purchase the food they need, due to these deep and persistent economic challenges. In 2013, 787,000 families in the San Joaquin Valley were on food stamps, an increase of more than 105,000 from 2010 levels. Fresno County has developed an outcomes-based model to achieve this goal that we think merits attention throughout the State, in particular in the San Joaquin Valley. In 2012, the Fresno County Department of Social Services contracted with a Fresno non-profit, Reading and Beyond, to implement a program called The Fresno Bridge Academy (FBA). The program is aimed primarily at food stamp recipients and funded principally through the E&T (Employment and Training) program of the USDA Food and Nutrition Services Agency. Most of the FBA program is 100% funded by USDA. Some of it is 50/50 funded, with the match secured by Reading and Beyond, not by Fresno County.

The Fresno Bridge Academy is a very innovative program, unlike any other in the country. It is neighborhood-based, enrolls the complete family, and provides wrap-around services -- including job training and job placement assistance, life skills training for all adults in the family, and mentorship for children. The program has proven to be very cost effective because it builds on what already exists, creating a family-centered network of services providers. It has been extraordinarily successful. To date, more than 80% of enrolled families have seen a substantial increase in income and over 30% have achieved self-reliance within 18 months of enrollment. Taxpayers also benefit because results to date show a \$5.50 return to taxpayers for every dollar expended (in the form of reduced outlays for food stamps and income taxes generated from people who were previously tax consumers). These results are measured through a Return on Investment Calculator developed for Fresno County by a consulting firm, the only such ROI calculator in the country for measuring impacts of an E&T program.

The effectiveness of the FBA model was recently recognized by the USDA, which selected the Fresno Bridge Academy as one of ten pilots nationwide that will help inform national public policy on how to help food stamp recipients transition to self-reliance. The \$12.3 million grant will enable expansion of the FBA from three to nine sites. Some of the experimental interventions allowed under these pilot programs will not be available to other E&T programs until they have been evaluated for broader application by the USDA. However, it will be instructive for other Valley counties to be kept abreast of the experiences and results of the pilot.

For more information please contact: Nikki Newsome, FBA Program Manager.