



# COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES COMMISSION FOR PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES

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**Executive Director**  
LA FRANCE TOLIVER  
**Commission Secretary**  
TINA PHAN

## MEETING MINUTES

**Thursday, September 21, 2023**

Location #1: Exposition Park District  
3833 S. Vermont Avenue, 3rd Floor, Conference Room B  
Los Angeles, CA 90037

Location #2: Home Office  
9433 Ives Street  
Bellflower, CA 90706

Please note this is a summary of the meeting not a “verbatim” transcription.

### 1.0 CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL / ESTABLISH A QUORUM

Adele Andrade-Stadler, Chairperson

Meeting was called to order at 10:16 a.m. The Chair opened the meeting stating the following, we acknowledge the First peoples upon whose land the County of Los Angeles now sits at public meetings is a first but meaningful step that we, as a County family, can take to build positive relationships and advance truth, healing, and transformation with the County’s local Tribes and American Indian and Alaska Native community.

Commissioner Sue ElHessen attended the meeting from an alternate location under the Brown Act Teleconferencing rules. A quorum was established at 10:18 a.m.

### Roll Call/Commissioners Present:

Adele Andrade-Stadler (Chair)	Veronica Lewis
Sue ElHessen, Ed.D. (Vice Chair)	Summer McBride
Yvonne Chan, Ed.D.	Booker Pearson
Michael Flood	Dynasty Taylor
Mihran Kalaydjian	Andrew Yam
Pollyanna Lee	

### Commissioners Excused / Unexcused:

Joe Brown (U)	Mary Galvan Rosas (E)
Sam Joo (E)	

### Commission Staff:

La France Toliver  
Tina Phan

### **Introduction of Guests**

Jackie Contreras, Ph.D., DPSS  
La Shonda Diggs, DPSS  
Roobina Gerami, DPSS

Diego Fajardo, DPSS,  
Julia Almanzan, County Counsel

### **2.0 REVIEW AND APPROVE MINUTES FROM JULY 20, 2023, MEETING**

Adele Andrade-Stadler, Chairperson

The Chair called for a motion to approve the July 20, 2023, minutes. Commissioner Yam approved, and Commissioner McBride seconded the motion. The Chair called for the vote by roll call and the minutes were approved by unanimous vote as follows:

Adele Andrade-Stadler (Chair) - Aye  
Sue ElHessen, Ed.D. (Vice Chair) - Aye  
Veronica Lewis - Aye  
Pollyanna Lee - Aye

Summer McBride - Aye  
Booker Pearson - Aye  
Dynasty Taylor - Aye  
Andrew Yam - Aye

### **3.0 PUBLIC COMMENT (Non-Agenda Items) / (Agenda Items)**

Adele Andrade-Stadler, Chairperson

Mega Karen Mistress spoke on Agenda Item 6 regarding CalFresh Eligibility for students and on non-Agenda items concerning their CalFresh case record and how the program should be helping all who need it. Mega Karen Mistress was given 3 minutes on each topic.

### **5.0 DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Jackie Contreras, Ph.D., Director

Dr. Contreras stated she has a growing appreciation for the commission and the work that is being done.

Dr. Contreras provided an update on the following topics:

Board proclamations in the month of September: Hispanic Heritage Month, National Preparedness Month, Childhood Cancer Awareness Month, Kinship Care Month, Senior Center Month, Patriot Day and National Day of Service and Remembrance, Citizenship Day, National Voter Registration Day, Rev. James Lawson, Jr. Day, and California Native American Day.

Fesia Davenport, Chief Executive Officer, announced the appointment of Dr. Carrie Miller, as the Branch Executive over the Policy Implementation and Alignment Branch, effective September 7. If you will recall, we were fortunate to have Dr. Miller present the Poverty Alleviation initiative at our May 2023 Commission meeting and I look forward to our ongoing collaboration in her new role, some federal and state updates.

Metrolink's ongoing program to provide discounts to low-income residents in Southern California has a new name. The Mobility-4-All program allows Metrolink passengers with California Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards to unlock 50% discounts on rides.

This fall, the L.A. County Department of Parks and Recreation is offering its Free Snack Program at 46 L.A. County Parks, from September 5, 2023, to May 24, 2024. Children aged 18 and younger are invited to receive a nutritious lunch and snack, Monday through Friday, between the hours of 3:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Snacks will be served at a designated enclosed area at each park location. For locations and holiday closures, you can learn more at <https://parks.lacounty.gov/snackprogram/>.

I am happy to announce that during the September APHSA 2023 ISM and PHSA Education Conference & Expo, Michael Sylvester, our Acting Chief Deputy, accepted the Jerry W. Friedman Excellence in Leadership award. This award recognizes an individual who has demonstrated a clear understanding of the fundamental role that information technology can play in efficient and effective operation in the field of health and human services. It honors innovative leadership that has promoted sound information technology solutions, policies, and practices. As you can imagine, we are very proud to have Mr. Sylvester as a part of our DPSS Family.

I am also happy to inform you that DPSS was recognized by the Quality and Productivity Commission with 8 Productivity and Quality Awards! This year, the commission received a total of 88 entries for award consideration and the selection process was very competitive. DPSS received awards for each of the following efforts: The first two are collaborations are with the Chief Executive Office and Public Health, as Leads. These are Claim Your Cash – Increase Tax-Credit Uptake and The Choi Story: Healthcare Navigation for Families. We were also recognized for Providing Services Through Telephonic Signatures, Claim Your Cash – Increase Tax-Credit Uptake, Innovation and Equity for the Hard of Hearing, Fostering Equity and Inclusion Through SOGIE, IHSS Provider Outreach Marketing Campaign, which was a DPSS collaboration with PASC (Personal Assistance Services Council) and COVID-19 Reporting System. PQA Awards Ceremony will be held in person on October 18.

On Saturday, September 30, DPSS employees and their families will come together in a fundraising event called FunMania, at the Whittier Narrows Park. It includes a series of fundraising activities and competitive sport events throughout the month of September culminating on September 30, with an opening ceremony, sports activities, and picnicking.

The funds raised will go into the year-end campaign pot. Overall and they will be distributed equally to seven Board approved fund distribution agencies, which are: the Asian Pacific Community Fund, Brotherhood Crusade, Community Health Charities, Earth Share California, United Latinx Fund, United Way, and Variety Children's Charity of Southern California.

**Follow up Item:** Commissioner Lewis asked for an update regarding the prevention committee. Dr. Contreras stated she will include this in her next update to the commission regarding DPSS' role with the prevention committee. Dr. Miller in her current role and all of those initiatives are going to be critical partners in that work, I can talk a little bit about that as well.

## **6.0 CONTINUED BUSINESS**

Dr. Contreras stated our CalFresh Section is presenting on today and at our next meeting. There's so much to discuss and we wanted to make sure that we provide you that information. La Shonda Diggs, Division Chief over CalFresh and GR is attending remotely. She does an incredible job leading this team and is incredibly innovative around the partnerships that we need to develop and managing all of the changes that happened. I'm going to ask La Shonda to say a few words and introduce her staff.

Ms. Diggs stated thank you for allowing us this morning to present on our CalFresh program. Most of you know CalFresh is nationally known as the SNAP program, and it is the country's most effective and anti-poverty program. It helps millions of low-income households get the access to healthy food they need and it's the first line defense against food insecurity.

In L.A. County, one in 10 residents are identified as being food insecure, and during the pandemic, it peaked at 34%. Most of our L.A. County households reported some type of food insecurity. Also, during the pandemic, we saw a huge increase in CalFresh applications. We provide benefits to over 1.6 million individuals and based on the state's estimate, there's still around 500,000 individuals in L.A. County that may be eligible for CalFresh. We are working very hard to target that population and make sure everyone is aware of CalFresh and connecting those families who need these benefits.

Ms. Gerami and Mr. Fajardo will talk more in depth about our CalFresh program, some of the collaborations we have, our challenges, and upcoming policy releases, so you can get a better understanding of how DPSS is aiding in the fight to reduce food and security.

Presentation: CalFresh Program Overview – Part 1  
Roobina Gerami, Program Director

The information below is a summary of Ms. Gerami's presentation:

### Program Overview

CalFresh, also known as "Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)", is a federal program that promotes and safeguard the health and well-being of low-income individuals and households by increasing their food purchasing power and raising their levels of nutrition. When a household receives CalFresh benefits, it frees up income for them to spend on other necessary items, like clothing and transportation, which increases the amount of sales tax revenue to County and State budgets.

As of August 2023, there were 990,808 households and 1,611,286 individuals receiving CalFresh in L. A. County. These households include newborns to 17 years are 32.8% of the population; 18 to 65 years old are 50% of the population; and over 65 years old is 17.2% of the population.

Ethnicity demographics include: 42.5% of the populations are Hispanic or Latino; 16.6% are African Americans; 16.1% are white; and 24.8% fall under other, which can be a mix of ethnicities or other ethnicities. The citizenship demographic includes U.S. Citizens 91%, Documented Permanent Residents 8%, and Qualified Non-Citizens/Others make up less than 1%.

#### Who is eligible for CalFresh benefits?

Individuals or households with low or no income, who are documented residents, and meet the program requirements. U.S. Citizens, Documented Permanent Residents, and qualified non-citizens. Note: Individuals can apply for CalFresh even if there are household members who are not documented residents. All persons in the household do not have to be related or have children to be eligible for CalFresh benefits. Effective June 1, 2019, Supplemental Security Income (SSI)/State Supplemental Payment (SSP) recipients are potentially eligible to receive CalFresh benefits.

#### CalFresh Expedited Services Benefits

Applicants may be eligible to receive expedited services (ES) benefits within 3 days, or even as early as the same day after the application is received. They must meet one of the following requirements: their combined gross monthly income and liquid resources are less than their monthly rent or mortgage and utility costs; their households (HH) has less than \$150 in gross monthly income and liquid resources of \$100 or less; or they or someone in their HH are migrant or seasonal farmworkers who are destitute, and their cash resources are \$100 or less. Note: On average, we currently approve 19,553 HH per month for ES.

#### Application Submission Options

There are multiple ways to apply for CalFresh. Customers can apply online through BenefitsCal, which is a portal where Californians can get and manage benefits online. Customers can also apply through [GetCalFresh.org](https://www.getcalfresh.org), which offers a more streamlined online application. As of August 2023, 49,446 (69%) of applications were submitted online. Customers can apply for CalFresh by calling our Customer Services Center at 1(866) 613-3777. They can visit or mail their application to any local DPSS District Office. If they wish to fax their application, they may do so at (310) 215-8220.

#### What can be purchased with CalFresh?

CalFresh can be used to purchase eligible food items like fruits, vegetables, beans, meats, dairy products, grains, nuts, and other fresh items. Note: Benefits cannot be used to purchase alcohol, tobacco, vitamins, medicine, non-food and household items, etc.

#### The Restaurant Meal Program (RMP)

Allows homeless, elderly (age 60 and above) and/or disabled households and their spouse to use their CalFresh benefits to purchase hot, prepared food from participating restaurants. Currently, CalFresh program has 2,144 participating restaurants in RMP.

**Follow up Item:** Commissioner Lewis requested to know the average number of days it takes to from application to approval. Ms. Gerami stated that range can fall between 3 to 30 days. I don't have this in with me, but I can find out.

**Follow up Item:** Commission McBride requested to get a breakout of the age range with the CalFresh demographics. She felt it was a large spread between 18 – 65 years of age.

**Follow up Item:** Commissioner Flood requested specifically to learn about expedited case processing. The previous director had an initiative to push as many applicants into the expedited route.

Ms. Diggs responded our processing rate increased dramatically. Households that are eligible for expedited services are getting them within the three days. In terms of the 30-day processing, we have processed 98% of all CalFresh by the 30th day. But we will go back and take a look at those numbers and share with you.

Commissioner Flood stated it will be great to have an average and thresholds; like how many are done from day 1 to day 3, 4 to 7 and so on.

**Follow up Item:** Commissioner Kalaydjian suggested outreach to the Superintendent of the LAUSD, because they have several programs and I think this would be beneficial for them to learn about direct certification.

### Student Eligibility

CalFresh regulations define a student as a person who is 18 through 49 years of age, mentally and physically fit for employment and enrolled at least half-time (as defined by the public or private institution of higher education). As of July 2023, 70,415 students are receiving CalFresh aid.

To be eligible for CalFresh, students must meet one of the following criteria:

- Be a California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) recipient.
- Be a General Relief (GR) recipient.
- Be employed and paid at least 80 hours per month or self-employed and paid federal minimum wage for at least 80 hours per month.
- Be approved/accepted for state or federally financed work-study for the current school term.
- Exert parental control over a dependent household member under age 6 or between ages 6 and 12, and adequate childcare is unavailable.
- Be enrolled full-time and be a single parent with the responsibility for the care of a dependent child under age 12.

### AB 1326 Mandate

DPSS has long identified the need to bridge the gap between college students and their nutritional needs and has made every effort to connect them to CalFresh benefits. Below are the strategies DPSS engages through partnerships with colleges and universities: assist college staff with becoming CalFresh Application Assisters by providing CalFresh Program overview training and facilitating access to the BenefitsCal Application Assister dashboard; participate in campus outreach events by taking CalFresh applications from students on-site; meet virtually with the colleges Basic Needs Staff to provide and equip them with CalFresh Program information and resources for students, including a CalFresh Toolkit and enroll campus food vendors in the Restaurant Meals Program.

AB 1326 requires all counties to designate at least one employee as a staff liaison to serve as a point of contact for academic counselors and other relevant professional staff at colleges and universities in L.A. County. The bill also requires colleges and universities to provide information on programs and services offered by counties that may be available to students. There are 28 identified colleges and universities within the L.A. County borders. Some of the efforts to engage with the colleges and universities include but are not limited to: providing informational material, coordinating mobile outreach efforts, BenefitsCal Application Assister training, and providing application status support.

### Transitional Aged Youth (TAY) Overview

A partnership was developed to outreach and engage Transitional-Age Youth (TAY) population who are currently underserved by facilitating the process of connecting them with county services and programs. TAY program provides services to at-risk individuals between 18 - 21 years of age who are in transition from state custody or foster care environments and are potentially eligible for CalFresh benefits if they meet the eligibility criteria.

Income earned as part of the youth's Independent Living Program (ILP) is excluded from CalFresh eligibility, as this employment enables the youth to gain needed work skills, and the responsibilities of maintaining employment for the future. Foster Care Payment paid directly to the Non-Minor Dependent (NMD)/TAY is considered unearned income for CalFresh benefits determination.

**Follow up Item:** Commission Lewis requested a list of the 28 colleges and where they are located.

### Outreach and Collaborations

DPSS partners with many organizations to increase CalFresh participation among marginalized communities.

Food Assistance Awareness Campaign: This project provides outreach to LGBTQ+, Seniors, and Asian American Pacific Islander communities. DPSS was awarded \$500,000 in ARPA funds and partnered with 25 CBOs to conduct direct outreach efforts to these populations and provides them with application assistance.

### Partnership with Compton College

DPSS has partnered with Compton College and executed a data-sharing agreement to identify students who are receiving CalFresh or potentially eligible for CalFresh. Compton College uses this data to initiate targeted CalFresh outreach to students who are potentially eligible but not receiving CalFresh.

Since inception on December 2021, 453 students have been approved for CalFresh. This project has proven to be very successful and has received federal level recognition. In addition, due to its success, it will be presented at the Strengthening Student Success Conference in San Francisco on October 11, 2023. At this conference, we will have the opportunity to share with all colleges in attendance about AB 1326.

### Application Assisters Program

DPSS partners with over 200 agencies that assist their community with submitting college applications through the BenefitsCal website. We train agency staff and provides them with toolkits, digital media, and informational factsheets about the CalFresh Program. As of June 2023, applications received by DPSS Application Assisters accounted for 53.9% or 21,711 of the total 40,270 BenefitsCal applications received.

### Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) Partnership

DPSS provides virtual educational webinars to bring awareness to families about available public assistance programs, and basic eligibility information to promote program participation and informs them of all other available food resources.

### Medi-Cal Outreach District

We have a team that supports our external partners during outreach events by taking CalFresh and Medi-Cal applications on-site and answering public assistance program questions.

**Follow up Items:** (1) Commissioner Yam is interested in connecting a few agencies with the CalFresh Program. (2) Chairperson Andrade Stadler stated it would be helpful for commissioners to see where the 25 CBOs are on a map and identify where the gaps are.

**Follow up Item:** Commissioner Chan stated she would like to connect LACOE Community School Initiative that received 4.1 billion for the marginalized communities with DPSS. She would like to explore an outreach plan between the two. DPSS can be placed on the LACOE website as a resource for those who are in need.

Commissioner Lewis stated there is a significant number of related efforts with outreach at the county, city, and other municipalities, to move those from encampments to temporary housing situations, hotels, or even permanent housing as a part of their outreach plan. Can you talk speak a little about your strategy related to ensuring that those moved primarily into temporary housing are part of your outreach plan?



Ms. Diggs responded we are very involved with Inside Safe and Pathway Home. Our Medi-Cal Outreach District goes out to all these sites, and we take applications for GR, Medi-Cal, and CalFresh. There have been some CalWORKs applications and we have worked with the HOPICS team. Probably in the next month or so, in addition to application assistance, we'll be assisting the residents there with the renewal processes so their benefits will not be discontinued. That has been our primary contribution to those efforts.

Prior to Inside Safe and Pathway Home, we worked very closely with LAHSA. We called them the mainstream services. We go out to several providers sites; take applications there, make sure the application gets approved, and ensure all other supportive services connections are made. We also have a partnership and MOU with LAHSA; assisting their providers, and helping our clients get connected to housing if they need copies of their ID or Social Security card. We have a data agreement where we pull those documents, and we send to LAHSA providers for housing placements. We have a lot of data on these efforts going back 10 years.

Commissioner Lewis stated DHS is leading the effort to engage the people. They are currently in the process of doing it and encouraged the department to engage with them.

**Follow up Item:** Ms. Diggs stated she believed the CalWORKs program is engaged with DHS, but she will report back on the extent of the engagement and how we are working with other skid row agencies.

Chairperson Andrade Stadler stated we are approaching 12 noon. There is a CalFresh Part 2 next month. We will pick up where we left off in this presentation. If you have additional questions from today's meeting, please send them to Ms. Toliver.

Commissioner Kalaydjian suggested that the department outreach to Neighborhood Councils. They have board meetings once a month. They have government representatives from the state and county that make presentations. You can ask the President of each council to make a presentation. That will open your engagement more to the community and bring more awareness.

## **7.0 CHAIR'S REPORT**

We are approaching our Annual Holiday Gala / Adopt-a-Family program. We will send out a survey of whether you want to have a luncheon and bring presents for the families we adopt, or do we want to donate and not have a luncheon like we've done during and after the pandemic. We adopt a family per supervisorial district, so be on the lookout for that survey.

The Chair announced the 2022 US Census has released its survey data in September.

## **8.0 ADJOURNMENT**

Meeting was adjourned at 12:00 p.m.