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# SSI: Improving the Transition for Foster Youth with Disabilities

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*Homeless Youth Capacity Building Project  
Annual Meeting  
July 22, 2010*

# What is SSI/SSP?

- Federal need-based program that provides cash aid to blind and disabled people who have limited income and assets. California adds a state supplement
- For individuals, grant ranges from \$517 to \$1,086 per month depending on:
  - Adult vs. minor
  - Aged or disabled vs. blind
  - Living arrangements



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# SSI Eligibility Criteria

- Little or no income
- Few or no resources
- Citizen or qualified non-citizen
- Disabled



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# SSI Disability Standard

- Adults (over age 18)
- Inability to engage in substantial gainful employment and
  - expected to last at least 12 months or result in death
- Children (under 18 or 22, if in school with an IEP)
  - Marked or severe functional limitation and
  - Expected to last at least 12 months or result in death



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# Why is it important to consider SSI for transition-age foster youth?

- Youth with disabilities fare poorly
- SSI is underutilized among foster youth
- SSI is not based on dependency status
- Linked to Medi-Cal
- Qualifies youth for affordable housing
- Social Security allows individuals to receive SSI while in school or attempting work



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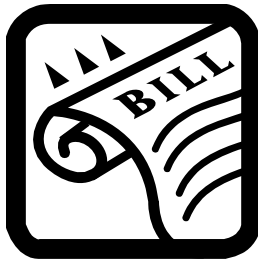
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# Historically, Youth Leaving Foster Care Were Rarely Connected to SSI

- Counties were uninformed about availability of SSI
  - The application process was burdensome and lengthy
  - Children who received federal foster funds were not eligible to apply
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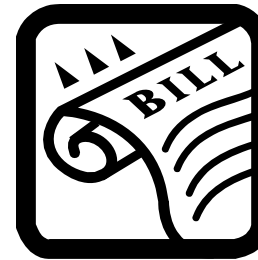
# Important legislation to connect foster youth to SSI prior to exiting care

AB 1633



- (1) development of best practice guidelines
- (2) counties manage benefits in youth's best interests
- (3) assist youth in receiving direct payment of finding payee
- (4) Inform youth of process of maintaining eligibility as adults

AB 1331



- (1) Screen every youth for SSI eligibility between age 16.5 and 17.5
- (2) Make an SSI application on behalf of likely eligible youth
- (3) When necessary, forego federal foster care benefits for one month



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# What to do if you think a youth qualifies for SSI

- If the youth is still in the dependency system, contact his/her social worker or attorney about starting the SSI application process
- If the youth is not in foster care, contact the SSA at (800) 772-1213 or visit your local SSA offices to begin an application.
  - Be aware that the application process can take 4 months to a year. Connecting youth to a good advocate is important!
  - Consider General Assistance, Food Stamps, CalWorks and other programs while SSI is pending.
- For more information about SSI, visit [www.SSA.gov](http://www.SSA.gov)

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# The Process for Applying for SSI

- Apply
    - Gather medical evidence and get recent medical evaluations
    - The more evidence and details you can submit the better!
    - If you can get an advocate to help package the application – even better!
  - Appeal adverse decisions – there are many stages of appeal
    - Reconsideration
    - Administrative hearing
  - Approvals increase at each stage of appeal!!
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# Connecting Youth With SSI to School or Work

- Social Security programs can help youth pursue education or work activities without losing their benefits
    - Student Earned Income Exclusion
    - Impairment Related Work Expenses
    - Plan for Achieving Self Support (PASS)
    - Ticket to Work
  - Youth must sign up for these programs and comply with reporting obligations
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# Other Important Considerations for Working With Youth With SSI

- Representative Payee:
    - Can the housing provider play this role and/or identify community partners who can?
    - If the youth is his own payee, it is important that they understand SSA requirements regarding income and assets, work and school.
  - Identify legal services programs in the community that can help youth to understand notices from the SSA and/or provide representation to challenge reductions in SSI, overpayments or denials
  - Permanent affordable housing: SSI may be a qualifying factor. Help youth get on waiting lists and manage apps to get in.
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# For More Information

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# Hunger Action Los Angeles

Frank Tamborello

July 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2010

The California Endowment

# SNAP = Food Stamps

- ▶ SNAP=Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.
- ▶ EBT Card.
- ▶ 40 Million Americans now receive benefits.



# Where can I get food?

- ▶ Most stores.
- ▶ Many farmers markets.
- ▶ Some restaurants for certain people.
- ▶ Shelters can accept as part of payment.



# Rules Affecting Homeless Persons

- ▶ You don't need to be a citizen to get food stamps.
- ▶ You may qualify for emergency food stamps (get them in one day).
- ▶ You may not have to go into a county office to receive benefits.
- ▶ Youth living alone can qualify for food stamps.

# Transitional Food Stamp Program for kids leaving foster care

- ▶ AB 719 passed and signed by the Governor.
- ▶ Emancipated youth will automatically get benefits.
- ▶ State is creating a pilot process.
- ▶ Must get waiver from USDA.

# What Can You Buy?

- ▶ Usually, just unprepared food.
- ▶ Seniors, disabled, and homeless can use EBT cards at some restaurants in Los Angeles, Santa Clara, and San Francisco County.
- ▶ No non-food items.



# Who's Left Out?

- ▶ Undocumented persons.
- ▶ SSI recipients in CA.
- ▶ Social Security and SSDI recipients **CAN** get food stamps—**UNLESS** they are also getting some SSI.
- ▶ People with drug felony convictions for sales/trafficking.

# Who is in a household?

- ✓ Can be one or more person sharing food.
- ✓ Who **MUST** be in same household.
- ✓ Who can be considered separate.
- ✓ Ineligible people in the household do not have their income considered.



# Successes

- ✓ NO asset limit for families with kids.
  - ✓ Used to be \$2000 for singles.
  - ✓ Used to be \$3000 for seniors.
- ✓ No asset limit for anyone (except in CASH programs)
- ✓ Cars don't count
- ✓ Face to face waiver.



# Income Limits

- ✓ Income Limits---Can be work or other sources of income.
- ✓ Gross and net income.
- ✓ No gross income limit for seniors.
- ✓ Calculating net from gross.



# Monthly Income Limits

▶ # of people in household	Gross income limit	Net income limit
▶ 1	\$1,174	\$ 903
2	1,579	1,215
3	1,984	1,526
4	2,389	1,838
5	2,794	2,150
6	3,200	2,461
7	3,605	2,773
Each additional :	+406	+312

## “NET” MEANS “GROSS” MINUS:

- A 20 percent deduction from earned income
- A standard deduction of \$141 for household of 1 to 3 : \$153 for 4: higher for some larger
- Deductions for child care, if you work;
- Medical expenses for elderly or disabled
- Legally owed child support payments;
- Certain other shelter and utility costs

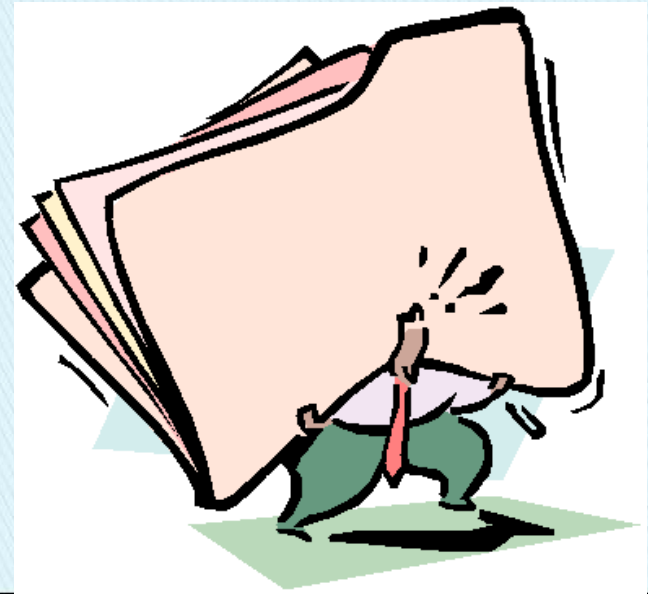
# Monthly Benefit Amounts

# of people in household	Maximum monthly benefit
◦ 1	\$ 200
◦ 2	\$ 367
◦ 3	\$ 526
◦ 4	\$ 668
◦ 5	\$ 793
◦ 6	\$ 952
◦ 7	\$ 1,052
◦ 8	\$ 1,202
Each additional person...	\$ 150



# What documents do you need?

- ✓ ID
- ✓ Social Security card or number.
- ✓ Proof of income.
- ✓ Bank statements.
- ✓ Rent receipt (Including any time you pay for shelter).
- ✓ Utility bills.



# Where to Apply

- ▶ County DPSS or DSS office.
- ▶ Outreach programs in some counties.
- ▶ Apply without immediate fingerprinting or face to face interview.

[http://www.ladpss.org/new\\_portal/dpss\\_foodstamps.cfm](http://www.ladpss.org/new_portal/dpss_foodstamps.cfm)



# Online Applications

- ▶ [www.c4yourself.com](http://www.c4yourself.com) lets you apply for benefits online!
- ▶ San Bernardino, Riverside, San Francisco County (Plus other “C4” counties).
- ▶ One e-app (a few LAUSD schools and some local family resource centers).



# Requirements

- ✓ QR 7—A quarterly report on changes in income, address or household.
- ✓ Workfare—May or may not be require depending on county and unemployment rate.
- ✓ Sanctions—Benefits can be cut off if obligations are not met.



# Immigrant Rules

- ✓ Right to a translator.
- ✓ LPR, Refugee, Asylee, VAWA categories may qualify.
- ✓ Undocumented cannot qualify.
- ✓ “Sponsor Deeming” may prevent some immigrants from getting benefits.
- ✓ “Public Charge” is not a concern in SNAP.

# Free and Low Cost Food

- ▶ Food pantries. <http://www.lafoodbank.org/>
- ▶ Quickest way to find food pantry in your area (211 and Healthy City).
- ▶ [www.healthycity.org](http://www.healthycity.org)
- ▶ Community gardens.



# Free and Low Cost Food

- ▶ For Youth: School breakfast and lunch.
- ▶ Summer lunch.



# Helping Homeless Youth

- ▶ Many homeless youth will need help getting documents.
- ▶ Help with transportation.
- ▶ Help with ongoing communication with food stamp office.
- ▶ Does your county have an Outreach program?

# Encouraging Good Nutrition

- ✓ Fast food restaurants.
- ✓ Convenience stores (ready to eat food).
  - ✓ A lot of fat, salt, refined carbohydrates.
- ✓ Encourage shelters and meal programs to offer healthier food.
- ✓ Link programs with gardens and farmers' markets to obtain healthy surplus food.



# Questions

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