

CLAIM MADE IN CPI REPORT*

*“San Diego has barely edged up from dead last to **9th among the 10 largest California counties** in enrollment of eligible residents into CalFresh...”—Pg. 1*

*“...In 2014, San Diego County’s low enrollment rate meant **only 49.5% of eligible residents received food stamps**...”—Pg. 1*

*“...Comparing current population estimates of **families with children who are below the federal poverty level to the number of open CalWORKs cases**, San Diego County fails to provide this federal benefit to nearly half of poor families with dependent children...”—Pg.7*

*“...Based on research by the UC Berkeley Center for Labor Research and Education and the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, **an estimated 63,000 San Diego County residents who were eligible for Medi-Cal were projected to remain uninsured in 2014**...”—Pg.9*

*“...Currently, approximately **290,000 San Diegans are not receiving the CalFresh** benefits to which they are entitled ...”—Pg. 10*

Enrollment and Program Growth

COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO RESPONSE

The methodology CPI used to rate San Diego’s performance in enrolling eligible residents in CalFresh, Medi-Cal and CalWORKs is questionable. Their assessments are based upon CPI’s estimate of the population potentially eligible for these programs. This is based on flawed analysis and in many instances, outdated data:

- **Inaccurate claim:** CPI’s estimates of the population potentially eligible for CalFresh do not take into account the active military population; those on SSI, and non-citizens; and are therefore inaccurate.
- **Misleading claim:** CPI’s claim that “San Diego County ranks 9th out of the 10 largest California counties in food stamps participation” is based on outdated data—2013 California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA) rankings do not reflect food stamp participation in 2015.
- **Misleading claim:** CPI uses outdated enrollment data in calculating CalWORKs participation. As acknowledged in the CPI report, CalWORKs is a complex program with particularly stringent eligibility criteria (e.g., rules related to income, assets, and dependent children), and is designed to be a limited-term bridge to self-sufficiency. Furthermore, CalWORKs participation is closely linked to local employment opportunities; a lower local unemployment rate is associated with lower CalWORKs enrollment.
- **Misleading claim:** The CPI report again uses outdated data, including projections regarding Medi-Cal uptake for 2014 rather than firsthand enrollment data. The County’s Medi-Cal data shows an increase of 180,143 Medi-Cal recipients from December 2013 to December 2014. Many of these newly enrolled Medi-Cal recipients represent previously uninsured, eligible San Diegans.

*The term “CPI Report” refers to Center on Policy Initiatives and Partners for Progress San Diego Report, *The Economic Costs of San Diego County’s Ongoing Safety Net Failure*, October 2015

“The County should commit to meeting full enrollment of all those eligible for safety net programs by 2020. To achieve this goal, enrollment should increase from current levels by 10 percentage points annually...”—Pg. 12

“The County must provide training to all staff to allow them to adequately address policy and demographic changes that make eligibility determination more complex, particularly regarding immigrant communities and residents previously impacted by the criminal justice system.”—Pg. 13

The County is fully committed to reaching all those eligible for safety net programs. Based upon current 2015 data, San Diego County estimates that it has enrolled over 90% of eligible participants into CalFresh and Medi-Cal.

San Diego County has 1 in 4 citizens enrolled in Medi-Cal, 1 in 11 enrolled in CalFresh and 1 in 46 enrolled in CalWORKs.

In addition to outreach and enrollment efforts to connect with those eligible for safety net programs, San Diego County has implemented numerous programs (\$63 million in Fiscal Year 2014-15) to assist recipients to become more self-sufficient, including job coaching and placement, case management, Subsidized Employment, and Rapid Re-Housing and Family Stabilization.

County staff receives professional training and guidance to support them in their roles and address policy changes.

All Eligibility staff receive a comprehensive 13-week training, in addition to specialized ongoing training throughout the year, via classroom, computer and over-the-shoulder technical assistance. Training topics include programmatic technical training, customer service, trauma-informed service delivery, civil rights, cultural sensitivity, and leadership/management.

To keep current, staff also receive targeted training and guidance regarding changes brought about by the Affordable Care Act; changes to eligibility of drug felons for CalFresh; and working with customers in jails and on probation to enroll them in safety net programs.

*“For years, the County of San Diego has **increased its cash reserves** to boost its credit rating and to set aside funds for a “rainy day.” Even when the rainy day became a deluge with the Great Recession, the County did not use those funds to meet the challenge of providing residents with the much-needed safety net to weather the storm. In fact, since 2008, the County has increased its general fund reserves by 46% to \$1.7 billion, contributing to total reserves on hand of \$2.6 billion at the end of fiscal year 2014.”—Pg. 12*

*“The County needs to invest the resources required to ensure **adequate staffing levels as well as an appropriate mix of a linguistically and culturally diverse staff** and community partners to meet the demands of increased outreach and caseloads.”—Pg. 13*

The \$2.6 billion referred to in the CPI report infers that amount is available for spending on safety net programs. This amount referenced from our 2014 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report includes many funds that are restricted, committed or assigned for other purposes. For example, this amount includes funds restricted for public safety under Proposition 172, funds held for purposes of paying debt service, and funds to pay for established capital projects. It includes tobacco settlement payments only used for healthcare programs. It includes special revenue funds that account for amounts received for spending on a specific purpose, such as Air Pollution Control, Libraries, Asset Forfeiture Funds, Road Fund, Flood Control District, and many others. It also includes amounts that are either restricted by law or other covenant, and amounts already committed by board action or assigned for one-time expenditures included in subsequent year's budgets. The CPI report also fails to recognize \$2.4 billion in unfunded pension liabilities and pension stabilization funds required for financial market fluctuations and changes to the assumed rate of return determined independently by SDCERA.

The County has made major investments in staffing to meet demands of outreach and caseloads and supports a skilled, knowledgeable and diverse workforce. The County has 2,386 staff budgeted for our Family Resource Centers (FRC's) and Eligibility Administration. The County has added over 780 staff since Fiscal Year 2011-12 to address needs related to coverage expansion under the Affordable Care Act, the Healthy Families Transition, and the needs of our FRC's and ACCESS Call Center. Currently, 51% of County eligibility staff is bi-lingual.

Our community partners have also ramped up staffing to meet demand for safety net services: 2-1-1 San Diego now has 50 budgeted positions to support eligibility services.

Outreach and Community Partnerships

*“The County needs to increase its outreach efforts throughout the County to locate and inform eligible residents. One focus should be **identifying and increasing outreach to disproportionately underserved groups and neighborhoods.**”—Pg.12*

*“The County **should build on its existing network** of community organizations.”—Pg. 12*

Identifying and increasing outreach to disproportionately underserved populations is a top priority for the County. In fact, the County has implemented major efforts to reach the underserved and hard-to-reach. This includes partnerships targeted at enrolling those in County jails and on probation, and out stationing workers in food banks, hospitals and schools to reach the underserved.

Notably, federal policy prohibits the use of federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (CalFresh) funding for recruitment activities that would be “designed to persuade an individual to apply for SNAP.” Despite this limitation, the County engages in multiple outreach and enrollment efforts related to CalFresh, including partnerships with 2-1-1 San Diego where 2-1-1 staff assist residents with applications for benefits.

The County has a robust network of partnerships with grassroots and community organizations that continues to deepen and grow.