

# CalWORKs Welfare-to-Work *Participant Handbook*

CalWORKs (California Work Opportunity & Responsibility to Kids) Program



**County of Ventura**  
**Human Services Agency**  
Adult & Family Services Department



## **Our Mission**

We strengthen families, support self-sufficiency, and promote safety, health and well-being.

## **Our Vision**

All Human Services Agency program service areas operate and perform at the highest level to meet individual, family, and community needs by providing assistance, aid, protection, and help.



COUNTY OF VENTURA

[www.vchsa.org](http://www.vchsa.org)



## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
The Purpose of the Welfare-to-Work Employment Program.....	4
Who Must Participate.....	5
Welfare-to-Work 24-Month Time Clock.....	6
Hours of Participation.....	7
Who is Exempt from Participating?.....	8
Employment Services Activities .....	9
Job Search Activities Include .....	9
Assessment .....	10
Special Services.....	10
Welfare-to-Work Activities .....	11
Reappraisal.....	12
Satisfactory Participation .....	12
Supportive Services .....	12
Advance Payments.....	13
Childcare Payments.....	13
Alternative Payment Program .....	13
Your Welfare-to-Work Plan .....	14
Reasons for Not Participating .....	15
What Happens if you Do Not Participate?.....	16
What if you Disagree?.....	17
A Final Word.....	18



## **Introduction**

Welcome to the Community Services Department's Welfare-to-Work Employment Program!

In this Handbook you will learn how you and your Employment Specialist will work together to help you and your family achieve self-sufficiency through employment.

After you have read the Handbook, and if you still have questions, please feel free to discuss any questions or concerns with your Employment Specialist.



*We are here to support your success!*

## The Purpose of the Welfare-to-Work Employment Program

Our purpose is to help you prepare for work and find a job, or a better job. Finding a job will help you become self supporting, and your family will enjoy a better way of life. Finding a job, or a better job, means you will have more money for your family, serve as a positive role model for your children, increase your self-confidence, and build a stronger future for your family.

Welfare-to-Work was designed with you in mind. It is not just another government program. It is much more than that. Welfare-to-Work staff will be with you every step of the way, providing you with important supportive services such as childcare, transportation, and work or training-related expenses.



Welfare-to-Work can help you get the job that you need to be self-sufficient. If needed, you will learn skills that will help you get a job in today's work force.

Welfare-to-Work can also help you improve your chances of getting a job with private industries, businesses, or public employers in your area. We have connections throughout the County that can assist you on the road to success.



*Through Welfare-to-Work everyone wins.  
You gain a job and a future, and employers gain skilled,  
confident employees.*



## **Who Must Participate?**

### **Mandatory Participants**

If you are a California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) recipient, and you are not exempt, you must participate in Welfare-to-Work. You are considered a 'mandatory participant' in our program while you receive cash assistance for yourself.

Keep appointments made by your Employment Services worker. If you are a mandatory participant, you must:

- Sign a Welfare-to-Work Plan;
- Meet all program requirements, including the requirements in your Welfare-to-Work Plan;
- Not quit your job or lower your earnings;
- Provide proof of satisfactory progress in your assigned activity when your Employment Specialist asks you for it.



Remember, we are here to help you on the road to success!

An Employment Services worker will work with you to provide additional guidance while you navigate through various activities on the path to a better future.

### **We will decide if you must participate in Welfare-to-Work when:**

- You apply for aid;
- Your eligibility is re-determined;
- You have a change in your exemption status.

### **Volunteers**

Even if you are not required to participate in Welfare-to-Work, you can ask to take part in our program. You would be considered a 'volunteer.' Ask your worker for more information about how you can participate in our Welfare-to-Work program. We are here to help!

### **Waiver of Domestic Abuse**

If someone in your household is hurting or has hurt you in a way that makes you unable to participate in Welfare to Work activities, we need to know. We can give you, and the person who is hurting you, special services to stop the violence in your lives. These services can be part of all of your Welfare-to-Work activities. Getting these services can also stop your CalWORKs and Welfare-to-Work clocks, which could give you extra months of aid and services.

## Welfare-to-Work (WTW) 24-Month Time Clock

The 24-Month Time Clock became effective January 01, 2013. This Time Clock refers to a cumulative 24-month lifetime period where you may participate in any approved WTW activity, as long as it is consistent with your Assessment.

Your 24-Month Time Clock transfers with you if you transfer from one household to another.

Months on your time clock will begin the following month after you sign a Welfare-to-Work Plan.

You will be notified in writing when your clock starts, stops, is due to end, and has expired.

Two-parent families will each have their own 24-Month Time Clock. The rules for two-parent families vary, depending on the participation of one or both parents.

Speak to your Employment Specialist for more information.



Conditions that will prevent a month from ticking on your 24-Month clock:

- You meet Federal standards of hourly participation in approved activities
- You qualify for a WTW exemption
- We determine you have 'Good Cause' for temporarily not participating
- You have been granted a waiver from participation due to Domestic Violence
- You have received a WTW Sanction
- You are in Appraisal, and in the process of developing a WTW Plan
- You are participating in Job Search/Readiness that meets CalWORKs Federal Standards
- You are an 'excused' parent in a 2-parent family

**Note:** If the mandatory parent fails to meet participation requirements, the excused parent will become subject to WTW participation requirements and the 24-Month clock.

### 24-Month Time Clock Extenders

You may request a 24-Month Time Clock extension if you have exhausted your 24-Month Time Clock and you still have time remaining on your 48-month lifetime CalWORKs clock.

In order to request the extension, you must:

- Provide verification that you are likely to obtain employment within six months;
- Have encountered unique labor market barriers temporarily preventing employment, and need additional time to obtain a job.

Based on the information you provide, a decision will be made by the County on whether your request for extension has been granted, or not.

Please speak to your Employment Specialist for more information.

Your Employment Specialist will review your case and meet with you when your 24-Month Clock is due to expire.

If your 24-Month Time Clock is expired, and you do not qualify for an extension, you will be required to meet Federal hours of participation.

## Hours of Participation

If you are the adult in a one-parent CalWORKs case and you have a child under the age of 6, and you are not exempt, you must participate in your assigned Welfare-to-Work activity or activities for at least **20** hours per week.

If you are the adult in a one-parent CalWORKs case and you have no children under the age of 6, and you are not exempt, you must participate in your assigned Welfare-to-Work activity or activities for at least **30** hours per week.

If you are an adult in a two-parent CalWORKs case, and you are not exempt, you and/or the other parent in your assistance unit must participate in your assigned Welfare-to-Work activity for at least **35** hours per week.

**Note:** Both parents must participate until you meet the 35-hour requirement, at which time one of you can maintain the 35 hours a week, or you can both share the required hours between you.

*We encourage you to participate up to 40-hours a week whenever possible, in job related activities that will prepare you for work.*

## Core Hours

Once you have exhausted your 24-Month Time Clock, at least 20 hours of your weekly hours must be in 'core' employment-related activities. Your Employment Specialist will talk to you about the type of work activity that is best for you.

## Participating in More than One Activity at a Time

We may require you to participate in more than one activity at the same time, to bring you up to your required hours of participation. These activities are designed with you in mind as we prepare you for work and assist you with becoming job-ready. You and your Employment Specialist will work together to discuss your options and prepare you as you work towards your employment goals.



## Who is Exempt from Participating?

You are exempt and do not have to participate in Welfare-to-Work if:

- You are under 16 years old and not a custodial parent, or 60 years or older;
- You are 16, 17, or 18 years old and go to school (not college) full-time, unless you are in school as one of your Welfare-to-Work activities or you are a custodial parent;
- You have a disability that is expected to last at least 30 days and it would keep you from working or participating in a Welfare-to-Work activity, and you are either getting or trying to get the medical help you need. This exemption does not apply if you are a teen parent required to participate in the Cal-Learn program;
- You are pregnant and your doctor states that you cannot work or participate in Welfare-to-Work activities. This exemption does not apply if you are a teen parent required to participate in the Cal-Learn program;
- You are a non-parent relative caretaker of a child who is a dependent or ward of the court, or of a child at risk of placement in foster care and we decide that taking care of the child keeps you from working or participating in a Welfare-to-Work activity;
- You must stay at home to take care of someone in the household who is unable to care for himself or herself if it keeps you from working or participating in a Welfare-to-Work activity. This exemption does not apply if you are a teen parent required to participate in the Cal-Learn program;
- You are a parent or other relative caretaker of a child six (6) months old, or younger, and are personally providing care for the child, with the following restrictions:
  - » You may be exempt for this reason only one time during a period of continuous stay on aid under the CalWORKs program;
  - » If you received this exemption before and you give birth to, or adopt another child six months old or under, you may be exempt for 12 weeks.
  - » This exemption does not apply to the Cal-Learn client



We may ask for verification when you claim any of the above exemptions.

Your Employment Services worker is available to review your situation with you at any time during your participation in our program, if you have questions regarding your participation.

## **Employment Services Activities**

There are many paths open to Welfare-to-Work participants. Your path may not involve every activity in the Welfare-to-Work program, however we will explore all options that fit your needs while you participate in the program.

Much depends on your job and education history. Remember: the purpose of Welfare-to-Work is to help you prepare for work and find a job so that you can support yourself and your family. We will assist you as you work to meet these goals. The activities that Welfare-to-Work offers are described below.

### **Appraisal**

When you start participating in Welfare-to-Work, you will go to Appraisal. During Appraisal, you and your Employment Specialist will review your work history and your education, your need for supportive services, and other important information to help the County decide what your Welfare-to-Work activity or activities should be.

### **Job Search**

Following Appraisal, most participants will be assigned up to four weeks of Job Search activities. However, the activities may be longer or shorter, depending on your needs.

### **Job Search Activities Include:**

- Job Club, where you will learn how to uncover the 'hidden' job market, discover what job skills you have, write a resume, and understand how to present yourself in an interview;
- Supervised Job Search, where you will have the help of an experienced employment counselor to find the job that will start you on the way to a career. You will have access to telephones, job orders, and referrals to employers;
- Unsupervised Job Search, where you will independently search for a job and report your progress to your Employment Specialist;
- Job Placement, where you will receive referrals to jobs;
- Job Development, where you will look for a job by working one on one with an experienced employment placement specialist;
- Employment Counseling, where an Employment Specialist will help you decide what your reasonable and realistic job goals should be, based on your skills and abilities;
- You will also have an opportunity to visit your local America's Job Center to access their job services, free of charge.





## Assessment

### You will be sent to Assessment if:

- You do not get an unsubsidized job during your participation in Job Search;
- We decide that sending you to Job Search as your first activity will not help you due to other circumstances affecting your ability to participate;
- We decide to shorten your time in Job Search because it is not likely to lead to you getting a job;
- The purpose of Assessment is to put together a reasonable Welfare-to-Work Plan to help you get a job.

### To do this, your Assessment/Employment Specialist will:

- Look at your abilities, interests, work history, and education;
- Assess your need for supportive services to get the most out of job and training services offered under CalWORKs;
- Estimate your chances of getting a job, given your skills, and the jobs available in your area;
- Evaluate any physical or mental challenges you may have that limit your ability to work or to participate in Welfare-to-Work activities;
- List the services available so that you can finish your Welfare-to-Work Plan.



**If you are in a Self-Initiated Program (SIP), your Welfare-to-Work plan may be set up based on your Appraisal. However, you may be sent for an Assessment if we need to send you to another activity at the same time so that you are participating in Welfare-to-Work activities for the number of hours that is required of you.**

## Special Services

During Appraisal, and at other times during your participation, we will work with you, providing services based on your individual needs. If we offer you screening or services for special circumstances such as learning styles, family stabilization, or referrals to other partners, we hope you will accept them. These services can help you on your road to success. These services address any challenges you might encounter while you participate in our program.

We also have transportation services to assist you while you work or are engaged in other Welfare to Work activities, as well as information on housing programs that could help you in emergency situations.

Special work or training programs such as Subsidized Employment, are sometimes offered as well.

**If you are interested in any of the County special programs, it is important that you discuss these services with your Employment Specialist for more information and details.**

## **Welfare-to-Work Activities**

### **Unsubsidized Employment**

This activity is a job in which only your employer pays your salary.

### **Subsidized Employment**

This activity is a job with a private, or public employer where the employer gets money to help pay your salary.

### **Work Experience**

This activity in a work setting will enable you to gain vital knowledge and work experience to help you get a paying job.

### **Community Service**

This activity is also in a work setting that will enable you to gain knowledge and the experience you need to help you get a paying job, while providing a service to others.

### **Work Study**

This activity is work in a college setting while you take college courses.

### **Self-Initiated Programs**

This activity is a training or education program you began on your own before Appraisal. Your Employment Specialist must approve your program before it is considered acceptable as a Welfare-to-Work activity.

### **Adult Basic Education**

This activity includes education that will help you improve your reading and math skills and, perhaps, get a GED or high school diploma.

### **Job Skills Training Directly Related to Employment**

This activity will help you gain job skills that prepare you for work.

### **Vocational Training**

This activity is short-term training designed to teach you a job that you can do for a private employer.

### **Job Search and Job Readiness Assistance**

This activity teaches you how to find work and gives you a chance to look for work with the help of employment counselors.

### **Education Directly Related to Employment**

This is a school activity in which you will learn job skills that will help you get or keep a job.

### **Adult Basic Education**

This is a short-term school activity to help you get a High School Diploma or GED.

### **Mental Heal, Substance Abuse, and Domestic Violence Services**

This activity provides you with counseling to get through the difficult times in your life and to help you get yourself on the road to finding work. These services are available at no cost to you.

**There are a variety of activities and options available to assist you with your goals. Speak to your Employment Specialist for more information. We are here to help!**



## **Reappraisal**

If you have finished the activities in your Welfare-to-Work Plan and you have not gotten a job, you may need to go to Reappraisal. In Reappraisal, we will decide if there were special circumstances that kept you from getting a job. If we decide that you did have special circumstances, you will be sent to another allowable activity. If we decide that you did not have special circumstances that kept you from getting a job, and you have exhausted your 24-Month Time Clock, you will have to participate in one of the following activities:

- Unsubsidized work
- Work experience
- Job Skills training directly related to employment
- Mental Health, Substance Abuse, and/or Domestic Violence services
- Subsidized Employment/Expanded Subsidized Employment

## **Satisfactory Participation**

### **Attendance**

When you sign your Welfare-to-Work Plan, you agree to go to your activity/ies and complete them. If you are unable to be there due to illness, etc. you must call both the activity provider and your Employment Specialist as soon as you know you will not be going in. If you are in training or education, you must attend according to the standards of the training or education provider. You may be expected to provide weekly or monthly proof of attendance.

## **Supportive Services**

We understand that you may need more than just training and job counseling to take part successfully in Welfare-to-Work. That is why we will help you arrange and/or pay for childcare, transportation, and work or training related expenses.

If other funding sources are not available to pay for all of your supportive services expenses, we will pay for the supportive services as described below.





## **Advance Payments**

If you qualify for Welfare-to-Work supportive services payments, and you need your supportive service payment before you begin your activity, you may qualify for an advance payment.

Supportive Services Payments include the following:

- Childcare costs, if the childcare is necessary for you to participate in Welfare-to-Work activities.

You can get Childcare for each child in your CalWORKs assistance unit. Also, you may get child care for a child who lives with you, but is not in your CalWORKs assistance unit, if not having childcare would keep you from participating in getting a job. You can choose the kind of childcare you want, such as childcare centers, relatives, friends, or neighbors.

The age limit for childcare is 0-12\* years of age. If a child has exceptional/special needs because of a physical or mental disability or is under court supervision, the age limit can be extended up to age 21\*.

**\*Note:** Various Childcare programs, depending on the funding source and the guidelines, will determine different age limits. Your family's need for childcare will be assessed by the Childcare Specialist at the time of the request.

## **Childcare Payments**

We cannot pay for childcare if you choose somebody in your CalWORKs assistance unit, the child's legal guardian, the parent, or somebody under 18 years old as the caregiver. Payments can be made to licensed childcare providers and, in some cases, to persons who don't need to be licensed. If your provider is not licensed, he or she must be fingerprinted and apply for Trustline registration, unless your provider is your child's aunt, uncle, or grandparent. The most we can pay is the rate based on what is normally charged for childcare in the area.

- Transportation costs, up to a certain amount, for travel to and from your Welfare-to-Work activity;
- Work or training related costs for books, tools, and special clothing you need as a part of your Welfare-to-Work activity.

If you need personal counseling to help you participate in Welfare-to-Work, and services are available, we will refer you to County Behavioral Health Services, who may refer you to those places in the community that may be able to help you.

## **Alternative Payment Program**

Once your situation becomes steady or you leave aid, we may transfer your childcare subsidies to the local Alternative Payment Program. However, your childcare provider does not have to change once you go to work or transition off aid. If you need help with your childcare costs after you have been off aid for two years, you may be eligible, depending on your income amount, to continue to get help.

The Alternative Payment Program will use a sliding fee scale to decide how much of your childcare costs you will pay and how much will be paid for you. The program will pay your caregiver directly.

See your Childcare Specialist for more information on having your childcare paid.

## Your Welfare-to-Work Plan

Your Welfare-to-Work Plan is important. It tells you how we will work together so that you can compete for, and find a job. The plan will make sure that you receive the agreed-upon services and training for as long as you are taking part in Welfare-to-Work and receiving cash aid for yourself.

Your plan tells you what you must do, and what we must do, to make Welfare-to-Work work for you.

Your Employment Specialist will help you review each of the following parts of your Welfare-to-Work Plan:

- The *Welfare-to-Work Plan – Rights and Responsibilities (WTW 1)* tells you about Welfare-to-Work, our responsibilities, and your rights and responsibilities as a participant. This agreement applies as long as you are in Welfare-to-Work.
- The *Welfare-to-Work Participant Handbook*. Please keep this handbook as your program guide and ask your Employment Specialist to answer any additional questions you may have regarding handbook content.
- The *Welfare-to-Work Plan – Activity Assignment (WTW 2)* tells you about the activities you agreed to do as part of your Welfare-to-Work Plan. You will sign a new activity assignment each time you begin a new Welfare-to-Work activity.

Read all parts of the Welfare-to-Work Plan, including this *Welfare-to-Work Participant Handbook*, carefully. If you have any questions, be sure to ask your Employment Specialist. Both you and your Employment Specialist will sign each agreement.

You must continue to participate in Welfare-to-Work, moving from one activity to another, until you get a job and become self-sufficient. Your Employment Services worker will be available to you to provide guidance as you take advantage of these services.



## Reasons for Not Participating

We recognize that you may have a good reason for not signing your Welfare-to-Work Plan, for not taking part in one of the Welfare-to-Work activities that you agreed to in your activity assignment, for not accepting a job offer or job referral, for quitting a job, or for reducing your earnings. Some of the reasons are related to you personally, and some may be related to the assignment.

### Some Reasons Related to You:

- You need transportation or work or training related to expenses paid to participate, and these have not been provided;
- You are the victim of domestic violence and participating would be harmful to you or your family;
- Licensed or exempt childcare is not reasonably available during your training, employment, or travel time for:
  - » A child 10 years old or younger;
  - » A child who is in foster care or is an SSI recipient, but who is not included in the assistance unit;
  - » Any substantial or compelling reason as determined by the County.

### Some Reasons Related to Activity Assignment or Job:

- Discrimination at the job or training because of age, sex, race, color, religion, national or ethnic origin, physical or mental disability, political affiliation, marital status or sexual orientation;
- Travel to work or training from your home is more than two hours round trip by car, bus or other transportation, or more than two miles round trip if you have to walk because other transportation is not available.

**Note:** The limit on travel and mileage does not include transportation time or mileage to take family members to and from school or to and from other care providers.

- Any substantial or compelling reason as determined by the County.

**Note:** *If you do not take a job or participate in an assigned activity because of this reason, you will have to participate in Community Service.*

## **What Happens if you Do Not Participate?**

As you know, participation in Welfare-to-Work is mandatory for all able-bodied CalWORKs applicants and recipients. Exemptions are listed in the section titled, 'Who is Exempt?'

If for any reason, you do not do what Welfare-to-Work requires, the following steps will be taken:

### **Cause Determination**

If you do not meet Welfare-to-Work requirements, you have the right to explain why. The County will decide if it is a good reason. (See the section titled, 'Reasons for Not Participating')

If you have a good reason for not doing what Welfare-to-Work requires, your Employment Specialist may try to help you so that you can meet Welfare-to-Work requirements. If changes cannot be made so that you are able to meet the Welfare-to-Work requirements, and it was determined you had 'good cause', you will not be required to participate in Welfare-to-Work temporarily.

### **Compliance**

If you do not meet Welfare-to-Work requirements, we will send you a notice. You will have 20 calendar days, after the date of the notice, to meet with or call your Employment Specialist to give a good reason for not doing what is required, or to agree to sign a compliance plan to do what is required to do, if you do not have a good reason. If you meet the requirements of the plan, no penalties will be applied to you.

### **Financial Sanctions**

If you are a mandatory participant (see the section titled, 'Who Must Participate?'), your family's cash aid will be lowered if you fail or refuse to meet Welfare-to-Work requirements without a good reason and do not resolve the problem by signing and completing a compliance plan.

### **Financial Penalties**

Your family's cash aid will be lowered if anybody who must participate does not meet Welfare to Work requirements. This financial sanction will happen only if the person does not have a good reason, or they fail to sign or complete a compliance plan. The person who gets a financial sanction will not receive cash aid until they come back, agree to participate and meet program requirements.

If your family is a two-parent family getting cash aid because of unemployment, there are special rules for financial sanctions. Both parents in a two-parent family who are receiving cash aid must participate in Welfare-to-Work until one, or both parents meet the required number of hours per week.

If one parent becomes sanctioned the other parent who did not cause the sanction must be willing to participate in Welfare-to-Work in order to continue receiving their part of the cash assistance unless they are exempt, or have good cause for not participating.

A sanction can be stopped (cured) at any time, if you do what the Welfare-to-Work program requires of you. Speak to your Employment Specialist for more information.

### **Penalties for Volunteers**

Individuals who are exempt from participation (see the section titled, 'Who is Exempt?') may choose to volunteer to participate in Welfare-to-Work. If you volunteer for the Welfare-to-Work program, but fail to meet Welfare-to-Work requirements without a good reason, you may not be allowed to participate in Welfare-to-Work for a period of time.

## What if you Disagree?

### State Hearing

If you disagree with any county decision regarding a Welfare-to-Work penalty (see the section titled, 'Reasons for Not Participating'), your status (standing) in Welfare-to-Work, your Welfare-to-Work activity, or your Welfare-to-Work supportive services, you can ask for a State Hearing.

Your Employment Specialist will help you file for a State Hearing if you want one. You can request a rehearing if you do not agree with the state hearing decision.

- If you file for a State Hearing before the penalties start, penalties will not be applied while the hearing is being decided;
- If you file for a State Hearing for any other County action, different rules apply.

The Welfare-to-Work hearing rights form on the back of the Notice of Action you receive explains those rules.



## A Final Word

We wrote this handbook to show you how the Welfare-to-Work employment program can work for you so that you can get the most out of this program.

This handbook should answer many of the questions you have about your rights and responsibilities, your Welfare-to-Work Plan, what activities are available to you, and what you can do if you disagree with any action taken.

If you still have questions, please be sure to ask your Employment Specialist. Our CalWORKs Welfare-to-Work staff is here to help you and your family become self-sufficient.

Remember - The goal of Welfare-to-Work is to help you prepare for work and find a job so you can support yourself and your family.

**You can do it!**  
**We can help.**

*“The best way to predict your future is to create it”*

– Unknown

**Notes:**

**My Employment Specialist is:**

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# America's **JobCenter** of California<sup>SM</sup>

## Locations

### **America's Job Center – Oxnard**

2901 N. Ventura Road, 3rd Floor, Oxnard (805) 204-5100  
Resource Room (805) 204-5171

### **America's Job Center Affiliate – East County**

2900 N. Madera Road, Simi Valley (805) 955-2282

### **Ventura Community Service Center – Resource Room**

4651 Telephone Road, #200, Ventura (805) 654-3434

### **Santa Clara Valley Community Service Center – Resource Room**

725 E. Main Street, #100, Santa Paula (805) 933-8315

### **Fillmore Community Service Center – Resource Room**

828 Ventura Street, Suite 200, Fillmore (805) 524-8666

### **Moorpark Community Service Center – Resource Room**

(Ruben Castro Human Services Center)

612B Spring Road, Suite 301, Moorpark (805) 523-5444


### **Thousand Oaks Community Service Center – Resource Room**

80 E. Hillcrest Drive, Suite 200, Thousand Oaks (805) 449-7320

**(888) 472-4463**

**[www.vchsa.org](http://www.vchsa.org)**

TTY (800) 735-2922 or 711

For information 24 hours/day, 7 days/week  
about community resources near you:  **211**  
Help Starts Here