

July 9, 2024

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS LETTER

The purpose of this All County Welfare Directors Letter is to provide County Welfare Departments guidance on the Cell-Ed Welcome Start Program, an online learning program serving eligible Afghan and Ukrainian newcomers, and the corresponding countable activity hours for those enrolled in employment programs through California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs), CalFresh Employment and Training (E&T), and Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA).



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DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
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GAVIN NEWSOM
GOVERNOR

July 9, 2024

ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS LETTER

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS
ALL CALWORKS PROGRAM SPECIALISTS
ALL CALFRESH PROGRAM SPECIALISTS
ALL COUNTY CASH ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR
IMMIGRANTS MANAGERS
ALL CONSORTIA PROJECT MANAGERS
ALL COUNTY REFUGEE COORDINATORS
ALL REFUGEE CASH ASSISTANCE CONTACTS

FROM: KATHY YANG, DEPUTY DIRECTOR
OFFICE OF EQUITY

SUBJECT: CELL-ED WELCOME START ONLINE LEARNING PROGRAM
FOR CALIFORNIA WORK OPPORTUNITY AND
RESPONSIBILITY TO KIDS (CALWORKS), CALFRESH
EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING (E&T), AND REFUGEE CASH
ASSISTANCE (RCA) ELIGIBLE AFGHAN AND UKRAINIAN
EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PARTICIPANTS

REFERENCE: [AFGHANISTAN SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2022 \(ASA\)](#), [ADDITIONAL UKRAINE SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2022 \(AUSAA\)](#), [45 CODE OF FEDERAL REGULATIONS \(CFR\) 261.60\(E\)](#), [ACF Q&A DOCUMENT FOR COUNTING AND VERIFYING HOURS OF WORK PARTICIPATION](#), OFFICE OF REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT (ORR) [POLICY LETTER \(PL\) 22-01](#), ORR [PL 22-03](#), ORR [PL 22-13](#), ORR [PL 22-15](#), MANUAL OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES (MPP) [SECTION 69-207.121](#), [MPP SECTION 42-716.61](#), [MPP SECTION 42-711.8](#), ALL COUNTY INFORMATION NOTICE (ACIN) [I-55-20](#), ALL COUNTY LETTER (ACL) [15-64](#), ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS LETTER (ACWDL) DATED

[DECEMBER 14, 2022, ACWDL DATED JULY 6, 2022, AND
ACWDL DATED JUNE 28, 2024](#)

The purpose of this letter is to provide County Welfare Departments (CWDs) guidance on the use of the Cell-Ed Welcome Start Program, an online learning activities program serving eligible Afghan and Ukrainian newcomers, and county approved, allowable activity time. Activity hours are countable for individuals assigned to the Welcome Start Program for CalWORKs, CalFresh E&T, and RCA.

Background

The United States Congress authorized specific Afghan and Ukrainian populations to receive mainstream public benefits, resettlement assistance, and other benefits available to refugees through the passage of the [Afghanistan Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2022 \(ASA\)](#), [Additional Ukraine Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2022 \(AUSAA\)](#), and other supporting and extending legislation. The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) subsequently released [Policy Letter \(PL\) 22-01](#) and [PL 22-13](#) outlining Afghan and Ukrainian eligibility criteria, in addition to [PL 22-03](#) and [PL 22-15](#) providing details on the specific refugee support services funded under the new ASA and AUSAA appropriations.

The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Refugee Programs Bureau (RPB) released policy guidance regarding Afghan and Ukrainian ORR eligible populations in [All County Welfare Directors Letter \(ACWDL\) dated December 14, 2022](#) and [ACWDL dated July 6, 2022](#), along with the updated guidance provided in [ACWDL date June 28, 2024](#). Additionally, the RPB has been collaborating with CWDs and non-profit agencies to create targeted programs for these populations to assist them in achieving economic self-sufficiency as quickly as possible after arrival.

Cell-Ed Welcome Start Program

The RPB has executed an agreement with Cell-Ed, Inc. to create the Welcome Start Program which provides services through mobile e-learning and live coaching to ORR eligible Afghan and Ukrainian populations. The program provides targeted employability, digital literacy, and other services in addition to live coaching to aid participants in navigating and utilizing available resources and educational content. The services are provided in an easy-to-access manner that helps to eliminate barriers such as lack of digital access or know-how through a simple phone call and/or use of an Application (App) or website. The Cell-Ed Welcome Start Program also provides

partner outreach, coordination, and support to employment services programs to encourage engagement and program uptake.

The program includes the following components:

- Unlimited online access to educational programming covering general employability skills and specific job skill certifications.
- A mobile application that includes a data dashboard to track user engagement, progress, and completion with dynamic reporting.
- 11 units of introduction to enhanced English language instruction, including coaching and support.
- 37 units of Cell-Ed content relevant to employability translated into languages spoken by Afghan and Ukrainian newcomers, including Dari, Pashto, Ukrainian, and Russian.
- Live Coaching and Support in Dari, Pashto, Ukrainian, and Russian.

Who Is Eligible?

This program utilizes targeted funding for ORR eligible Afghan and Ukrainian populations as outlined in ORR [PL 22-01](#) and [PL 22-13](#):

Categories of Eligible Afghan Newcomers

- A. Citizens or nationals of Afghanistan paroled into the United States between July 31, 2021 and September 30, 2023. This group includes unaccompanied minors. Unaccompanied Afghan Minors under the age of 18 are eligible to apply for ORR's Unaccompanied Refugee Minor (URM) program, under which they are eligible to receive URM services to the same extent as refugees in the URM program.
- B. A spouse or child of any individual described above in A, who is paroled into the United States after September 30, 2023.
- C. A parent or legal guardian of any individual described above in A, who is determined to be an unaccompanied child, who is paroled into the United States after September 30, 2023.

In addition to the above-listed populations, the following Afghan populations are also eligible for traditional ORR benefits and services as well as ASA-funded benefits and services:

- D. Citizens and nationals of Afghanistan for whom refugee and entrant assistance activities are authorized (e.g., Special Immigrant Visa holders, Special

Immigrants with Conditional Permanent Resident status, SI/SQ parolees, refugees, asylees), whose eligibility date is on or after July 31, 2021.

Categories of Eligible Ukrainian Newcomers

- A. Citizens or nationals of Ukraine who the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has paroled into the United States between February 24, 2022, and September 30, 2024, due to urgent humanitarian reasons or for significant public benefit, known as Ukrainian Humanitarian Parolees (UHPs).
- B. Non-Ukrainian individuals who last habitually resided in Ukraine, who DHS has paroled into the United States between February 24, 2022, and September 30, 2024, due to urgent humanitarian reasons or for significant public benefit.
- C. A spouse or child of an individual described above in A or B, who is paroled into the United States after September 30, 2023.
- D. A parent, legal guardian, or primary caregiver of an unaccompanied refugee minor or an unaccompanied child described above in A or B, who is paroled into the United States after September 30, 2023.

In addition to the above-listed populations, the following Ukrainian populations are also eligible for traditional ORR benefits and services as well as AUSAA-funded benefits and services:

- E. Citizens and nationals of Ukraine for whom refugee and entrant assistance activities are authorized (e.g., refugees and asylees), whose eligibility date is on or after February 24, 2022.

Updated Date of eligibility for Eligible Ukrainian parolees

For eligible Ukrainian parolees who entered the United States with parole between **February 24, 2022 — Sept 30, 2023**, their date of eligibility is **May 21, 2022**, or their date of parole, whichever is later.

For eligible Ukrainian parolees who enter the United States with parole between **October 1, 2023 — Sept 30, 2024**, their date of eligibility is **April 24, 2024**, or their date of parole, whichever is later.

Employment Services Requirements

Eligible Afghans and Ukrainians can utilize Welcome Start Program online learning as an option to meet employment services requirements for CalWORKs, CalFresh E&T,

and RCA. The services of the Welcome Start Program are identical to the Cell-Ed distance learning program as outlined by [ACIN I-55-20](#), in which CWDs were asked to utilize Cell-Ed courses for CalWORKs Welfare to Work (WTW), Refugee Support Services (RSS), and CalFresh E&T activities.

As mentioned in ACIN I-55-20, Welcome Start Program courses may count as the following CalWORKs WTW and RSS activities, as well as CalFresh E&T activities under Supervised Job Search, Education and Vocational Training:

- Adult Basic Education
- Job Search (Supervised Job Search under CalFresh E&T) and Job Readiness
- Job Skills Training
- Soft Skill Development
- Education Directly Related to Employment
- Vocational Education and Training
- Secondary Education
- English as a Second Language (ESL)

CalWORKs Welfare to Work

Per [MPP Section 42-716.61](#), an individual assigned to participate in the aforementioned activities may also be assigned supervised or unsupervised homework time as part of their WTW and/or Family Self-Sufficiency Plan (FSSP). [45 CFR 261.60\(e\)](#) states that actual hours spent in supervised homework time and up to one hour of unsupervised homework time for each hour of class time may be assigned as participation.

For unsupervised homework time, [ACL 15-64 regarding CDSS TANF Work Verification Plan \(WVP\)](#) states the only documentation required to verify homework time hours of participation is a statement from the educational program indicating the amount of homework time required. However, as referenced in the [ACF Q&A Document for Counting and Verifying Hours of Work Participation](#), if a county chooses to verify hours of education through a combination of daily supervision by the case manager and the client displaying satisfactory progress, then the case manager may be the individual supervising homework time. All hours of homework time required or advised by the educational program may then be counted without additional documentation and without the one-hour per hour of class time limitations as noted in [MPP Section 42-716.611](#) for unsupervised homework time.

As such, all Welcome Start Program coursework homework time hours are considered supervised homework time hours and can be documented by the case manager. The

total homework time assigned must not exceed the hours required or advised by the education program as referenced in the WVP.

CalFresh E&T

Welcome Start Program offers allowable CalFresh E&T activities under the Education and Supervised Job Search components. These activities are not stand alone but may be offered to supplement other services that together meet the requirements of the CalFresh E&T program. The following list includes the components and corresponding activities that Welcome Start Program may offer to CalFresh E&T participants:

- Education
 - Basic/Foundation Skills Instruction
 - English Language Acquisition
 - Work Readiness Training
- Supervised Job Search
 - Job Search Training
 - Mock Interviews
 - Resume Development

CalFresh E&T participants assigned to Welcome Start Program are eligible to receive supportive services as detailed in [ACL No. 20-125](#). Ancillary expenses for CalFresh E&T participants may include mobile phones and/or internet service to connect to Cell-Ed.

The CWDs administering CalFresh E&T must include Welcome Start Program services in their CalFresh E&T Annual Plans. Questions on how to complete or amend the CalFresh E&T Annual Plan are to be directed to the CalFresh E&T team at CalFreshEandT@dss.ca.gov.

RCA Employment Services

Pursuant to [Manual of Policies and Procedures \(MPP\) Section 69-207.121](#), RCA recipients must participate in CWD-approved employment directed education/training within 30 days of receiving RCA benefits. The Welcome Start Program can be used to satisfy this requirement, and CWDs are encouraged to utilize this program for eligible Afghan and Ukrainian recipients of RCA as an approved employment services program.

Counting Homework Time Hours on Cell-Ed

Through the Welcome Start Program remote learning model, hours of participation will reflect not only the time spent in Welcome Start Program courses but may also include the time an individual dedicates to reinforce learned content outside of each course. These activities can include independent practice as well as the recommended activity suggestions provided at the end of each course. The Welcome Start Program recommends that for every hour spent on the application, three additional hours are credited for homework time or content reinforcement, based on research from program experts. This would equate to a one to three ratio of time on Cell-Ed to homework time, which may be applied to any amount of time spent on the Welcome Start Program.

Example

- Participant A spends **30 minutes** on Cell-Ed working on Unit X.
- Participant A will receive **90 minutes** of projected homework time or content reinforcement on Unit X (30 minutes x 3 = 90 minutes).
- The total amount of participation will be **120 minutes** or **2 hours** [30 minutes on Cell-Ed + (30 minutes x 3) of homework time or content reinforcement = 120 minutes or 2 hours].

This recommendation is dependent on a client demonstrating 'satisfactory progress' as defined by the educational provider ([MPP Section 42-711.8](#)). The Welcome Start Program defines satisfactory progress to be learners who progress through the Welcome Start Program units and courses while thoughtfully answering the questions and prompts. Progress is captured by recording every answer submitted, time on platform, as well as pre- and post-assessments in each unit and course. The Welcome Start Program indicators of satisfactory progress are as follows:

- Learners actively answer questions on the application to complete units and courses.
- Learners enter timely and correct responses to prompts and questions.
- Learners are consistently moving forward through units and courses.

Client Identification

ORR eligible populations will be identified by CWD providers or Case Managers. The CWD case manager will contact Cell-Ed and enroll the clients in the Welcome Start Program services. Cell-Ed Inc. will train CWD Case Managers, staff, and providers on:

- How to navigate the Welcome Start Program
- Partner Toolkit and Materials

- Learner platform
- How to get clients onboarded

Through the toolkit, Cell-Ed Inc. will provide different materials to providers as needed to support clients with Welcome Start Program services. Cell-Ed Inc. offers client flyers and posters to be sent to staff as requested via the toolkit. All Welcome Start Program courses are online. Welcome Start clients can access the Cell-Ed App on any mobile device or computer via call-in/text, WhatsApp, Smartphone Apps, or web browser.

Enrollment and Registration

Counties can register with Cell-Ed by signing up through the Cell-Ed website or sending an email to california@cell-ed.com. Once registered, counties will have access to the online toolkit, which will provide more information on Welcome Start Program content, recordings of training webinars, FAQs, how to onboard county staff and Community Based Organizations, and resources to onboard clients or share the client's information with Cell-Ed to complete onboarding. Currently, there is no limit on the number of county staff that can register. County registrations and access permissions to Program will be at the discretion of the county and their needs. For data sharing purposes, Cell-Ed will need to enter into county level data sharing agreements with CWDs in order to access and share personal data.

For more information on Cell-Ed's Welcome Start Program, adding custom courses to the program, or offering Cell-Ed to clients, please visit the [Cell-Ed website](#) or contact Cell-Ed at california@cell-ed.com or at (213) 325-3311.

If you have any questions or need additional guidance regarding the information in this letter, contact the CalWORKs Engagement Bureau at CalWORKsEngagementPolicy@dss.ca.gov or (916) 654-2137, CalFresh Employment & Training at CalFreshEandT@ca.gov, or the Refugee Programs Bureau at (916) 654-4356 or RPB@dss.ca.gov.