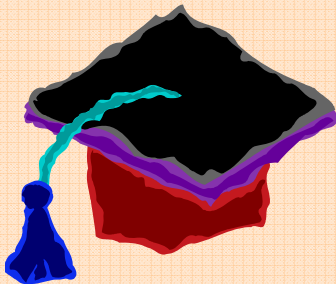


# San Diego County Health & Human Services Agency Cal-Learn Program

## Program Overview

Cal-Learn is a statewide program for pregnant and parenting teens receiving CalWORKs cash aid and is primarily funded through the Federal TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) CalWORKs state grant. Senate Bill (SB) 35, Chapter 69, Statutes of 1993, and SB 1078, Chapter 1252, Statutes of 1993, established the Cal-Learn Program to address the unique educational, vocational, training, health, and other social service needs of dependent pregnant teens and teenage parents to help them achieve self-sufficiency. In general, all pregnant and parenting teens, under the age of 19, who live in the same household as their child, do not have a high school diploma or equivalent and receive CalWORKs cash aid are mandated to participate in the Cal-Learn Program.



The County of San Diego has administered the Cal-Learn Program since 1995. The Program's primary goal is to help pregnant and parenting teens attain self-sufficiency by encouraging these teens to stay in or return to school, and earn a high school diploma or its equivalent. Long-term welfare dependency has been linked to both teenage pregnancy and failure to graduate from high school. The Cal-Learn Program focuses on breaking the cycle through helping participant teens maximize their educational potential. Supportive services and intensive case management are key components of the program and are available to help support school attendance and employment. Supportive Services and case management are provided by a private sector agency under contract with San Diego Unified School District and the County.

### ***The goals of the Cal-Learn Program are to:***

- Reduce the rate of long-term family welfare dependency by helping pregnant and parenting teens earn a high school diploma or its equivalent;
- Transition to secondary education; and
- Obtain job training and employment along with full-time school attendance.

Cal-Learn case management and services touch many facets of the teen participant's life including: reduction of the incidence of repeat unplanned pregnancy, fostering positive parenting skills and encouraging teens to engage in activities or intervention that leads to healthy relationships and healthy lifestyles, with high school completion as the focus of the program. In order to achieve education related goals, the program provides financial incentives and penalties based on academic progress. A Cal-Learn teen's school progress is formally reviewed four times per year.



# Cal-Learn Incentives

## **Sanctions**

Monetary sanctions are applied when the teen is not attending school full-time, fails to turn in a progress report timely or if the teen is making less than adequate progress. Each sanction reduces the Assistance Unit's grant by \$50 per month for two consecutive months. The San Diego Unified School District Cal-Learn case manager recommends sanctions based on their review of attendance and progress for all Cal-Learn teens. This review occurs four times per year on a schedule set up by the teen and the case manager to coincide with the receipt of regular report cards or other student progress reports. The sanctions are reviewed by county staff and imposed by the family's County CalWORKs eligibility worker.

## **Incentive Bonuses**

The Cal-Learn Program mandates financial incentives for the educational achievement of teen participants. Through financial incentives, the program is designed to influence a participants' behavior by offering positive bonuses along with the sanctions that adversely affect participants, in order to motivate performance and achievement that will support the objectives of the program. Bonus payments of \$100 are paid for satisfactory school progress meaning an average grade of "C" or better. A bonus of \$500 upon graduation is paid directly to the participating teen. After county staff review recommended bonus payments from contracted case managers and the verification of the achievement, bonus checks are issued to the teen participant.

# Cal-Learn FAQs

## **What is Cal-Learn?**

Cal-Learn is a mandatory program for teen parents in California who receive CalWORKs/ TANF, and who have not graduated from high school. The main goals of Cal-Learn are to help teens graduate from high school, become independent and maintain a healthy family.

## **Who can participate?**

Any teen under 19 who is pregnant or parenting, receives CalWORKs and lives in the same home with his/her child. This includes both teen mothers and fathers. If a teen is already participating in Cal-Learn at age 19, she/he may elect to continue in the program until age 20.

## **How does Cal-Learn work?**

When a teen is identified as being eligible for Cal-Learn, she/he is contacted by a case management agency to set up a group or individual orientation. Once that orientation has been completed, a case manager will help the teen enroll in school, and begin tracking her school progress. School progress reports are due every three months. That case manager will also help the teen develop a plan for educational, nutritional, health and family planning goals. Cal-Learn has a system of bonuses or sanctions, applied up to four times per year. If a teen is doing well in school, she/he may be eligible for a \$100 bonus. If she/he is not doing well or is not in school, she/he may be eligible for a \$100 financial sanction. When a teen completes high school or its equivalent, she/he may be eligible for a \$500 bonus.

## **What supportive services are offered?**

Cal-Learn provides intensive case management services, as well as helping teens with transportation, childcare and ancillary expenses (such as paying for books or a GED test fee).

## **Why have bonuses and sanctions?**

Studies have shown that teens succeed best in a program that provides intensive case management which include bonuses and/or sanctions.

## **How can clients apply?**

A Cal-Learn referral should be made if a client is receiving CalWORKs and meets the other eligibility requirements above. If a client might be eligible for CalWORKs cash aid, he/she may also be eligible for Food Stamps and medical coverage for him/herself and child. To apply for CalWORKs, go to the local Family Resource Center in your area. To find out which one is closest to you in San Diego, call the Public Assistance Information Line at (866) 262-9881.

