

BENEFITS PLANNING IN CALIFORNIA



Policy Recommendations

The California Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities (CCEPD) created a workgroup with other disability-related advisory bodies to address barriers to employment from various income and asset eligibility requirements related to cash, health, and long-term services and supports benefits.

The workgroup developed a report with the below policy recommendations, which are in line with current guiding principles and strategic priorities of the California Health and Human Services and Labor and Workforce Development Agencies. Recommendations are focused in four areas: 1) collaboration with the Social Security Administration, 2) development of a consistent benefits planning infrastructure in California, 3) changes to health care policy, and 4) changes to the long-term service and supports policy.

Social Security Administration

Better educate Californians on work incentives and strengthen collaboration between federal and state departments. These recommendations follow the California Health and Human Services Agency (CalHHS) guiding principles of seeing the whole person and cultivating a culture of innovation, leading to people with disabilities entering careers and living independently.

- Develop a more robust partnership with the Social Security Administration (SSA) and support efforts to streamline work incentive processes for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) beneficiaries, so overpayments do not occur.
- Create outreach strategies to educate people with disabilities on overpayments and work incentives.
- Develop a policy for state programs to increase general resources provided on benefits planning to create messaging that SSI and SSDI beneficiaries are employable.
- Increase collaboration and linkages between the Disability Determination Services, located at the California Department of Social Services, and California's disability-related programs.



Benefits Planning Infrastructure

Create a coherent and easily navigable benefits planning system for people with disabilities. This allows people with disabilities in any phase of life to access information and benefits planners. These recommendations assist in building a Healthy California for All by leveraging resources and developing consistent information for people with disabilities to competitive integrated employment and economic independence.

- Create integrated strategies to increase benefits planning services and develop “no wrong door” approaches to benefits planning.
- Develop 1) policies for cross-training of frontline staff within workforce and health and human services programs on work incentives. 2) policies to incorporate benefits planning into contracts and written agreements, 3) policies to incorporate how beneficiaries can manage benefits and employment into all human services programs, both disability and mainstream programs.
- Invest funds to ensure tools, such as the California Disability Benefits (DB) 101 platform, continue to be available to Californians with disabilities.
- Develop career advancement opportunities for benefits planners.
- Launch and sustain a marketing and outreach campaign about benefits planning to increase awareness of work incentives. This will lead to engaging individuals through childhood education, postsecondary transitions, career development, and retirement planning.

Health Care

Remove barriers for people with disabilities with long-term health conditions to develop their careers and advancement without fear of losing health care benefits. These policy recommendations will further strengthen the current priorities of building a Healthy California for All and integrating Health and Human Services by using Medi-Cal policies to strengthen economic opportunities for people with disabilities.

- Collaborate with disability-related stakeholders to improve the awareness of the 250% Working Disabled Program for people with disabilities.
- Eliminate the income eligibility requirement for California's 250% Working Disabled Program, helping people with disabilities obtain competitive integrated employment without losing access to health care and critical long-term support services.
- Data on disability should be incorporated into existing reports for the Medi-Cal programs.



Long-Term Services and Supports

Support efforts towards a “no wrong door system” and removes barriers for those who have long-term care needs to develop their careers. These policy recommendations will further strengthen the current strategic priorities of building a Healthy California for All and building an age-friendly state for all by innovation and leveraging programs throughout California.

- Develop a comprehensive and easily navigated long-term services and supports system for all Californians, including people with disabilities.
- Eliminate income eligibility levels to allow access to long-term services and supports to support employment.
- Data by disability type should be collected and incorporated into existing reports for the In-Home Supportive Services program.



C&EPD

CA COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT
OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES



For the full report and more
information on the CCEPD, please
visit www.dor.ca.gov/Home/CCEPD.