

Outreach Enhancements through Systematic Local Governmental Partnerships

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As part of an effort to enhance the outreach for CARE, ESA and other low-income rate payer programs, we are exploring the possibility of utilities conducting *additional* outreach through local government agencies that means test their respective clients or enrollees as eligible for these programs as part of their normal operations.

Background

Many utilities already have some or all of their low-income rate payer program applications include an option to check a box indicating enrollment in the CalWORKS, CalFresh, MediCal, free or reduced price school meal and other government assistance programs. If an applicant is already enrolled in one or more of these listed programs, they automatically qualify for the low-income rate payer program in which they are applying.

The additional outreach mechanism for consideration is to bring this practice of leveraging government assistance programs that already means test their enrollees as eligible for low-income rate payer programs full circle. This would be done by having the local government entities (social service agencies, school districts, etc.) that administer the aforementioned government assistance programs simultaneously conduct outreach for the low-income rate payer programs. In practice, this would setup a standard operating procedure on the part of the participating agencies so that at the point in time in which a person or family is enrolled into CalWORKS, MediCal, CalFresh and/or other assistance programs, that person or family would additionally be educated on low-income rate payer programs and provided the opportunity to enroll.

If feasible, this strategy could ensure valuable low-income rate payer assistance programs reach some of the most vulnerable Californians. There are 12.2 million Californians enrolled in Medi-Cal, 3.6 million children enrolled in the Free or Reduced Price Meal program, 530,000 people receiving CalWORKS benefits, and more than 2 million CalFresh households. Acknowledging there is overlap in these populations and also other people who qualify for low-income rate payer programs not receiving the referenced forms of government assistance, enacting this strategy would nevertheless ensure these Californians are all educated and provided the opportunity for enrollment. **If enacted, this outreach method would provide up to 18.3 million instances of outreach, education and/or potential enrollment for low-income rate payer programs.**

It is important to note that this additional outreach mechanism is not meant to replace or refine any ongoing outreach efforts on the part of utilities or their partnering agencies. The intent is to determine the feasibility of setting up systems within welfare agencies and other local government entities that will ensure those receiving other forms of governmental assistance have the opportunity to be educated and enroll in low-income rate payer programs.