



# COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

For the meeting of: 10/18/2022

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File #: 22-1394

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**To:** Board of Supervisors

**From:** DHHS: Administration

**Agenda Section:** Consent

**SUBJECT:**

Resolution Adopting a Recruitment and Retention Incentive Program for Eligibility Specialist Trainee/I/II/III, Eligibility Specialist Supervisor, Integrated Caseworker I/II/III, Supervising Integrated Caseworker, Employment and Training Worker I/II/III and Employment and Training Worker Supervisor

**RECOMMENDATION(S):**

That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Adopt the attached resolution adopting a recruitment and retention incentive program for fiscal years 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 for Eligibility Specialist Trainee/I/II/III (class 1731), Eligibility Specialist Supervisor (class 1729), Integrated Caseworker I/II/III (class 0719 and 0720), Supervising Integrated Caseworker (class 0721), Employment and Training Worker I/II/III (class 0722 and 0723) and Employment and Training Worker Supervisor (class 0724) (Attachment 1).

**SOURCE OF FUNDING:**

Social Services Fund (1160-511)

**DISCUSSION:**

Staffing levels continue to be a major issue in the Department of Health and Human Services' (DHHS) ability to appropriately serve community members, staff and partners. Currently, DHHS has 181 allocations and 68 vacancies in the Eligibility Specialist series, 21 allocations with three vacancies in the Integrated Caseworker series, and 27 allocations with nine vacancies in the Employment and Training Worker series. This represents a total of 229 allocations and 80 vacancies.

The impacts of the staffing shortages in the above-referenced classifications can have drastic impacts on community members, staff and partners. For example, if a member of the community applied for the CalFresh Program and did not meet certain criteria, their interview would be scheduled out 8 weeks. This means if an individual or family applied for the CalFresh Program after Oct. 3, 2022 they are not going to be seen for an intake interview before the Thanksgiving holiday.

In August 2022, the Health and Nutrition Services (HNS) division needed to complete approximately

667 interviews for recertifications and 1,699 interviews for applications. HNS staff only had the capacity to complete 1,697 interviews. Therefore, 669 interviews had the potential to go unprocessed in August 2022. Ultimately, some of these interviews were unnecessary, and other staff were able to process extra interviews between their normal duties, but not all of the interviews were completed.

In September 2022, HNS had 1,180 pending CalFresh intake applications with 417 of those being past due. For comparison, in January 2022 HNS had 587 intake applications with 173 being past due. Looking forward, HNS will have approximately 900 CalFresh recertification interviews each month and are also projecting receiving over 1,600 CalFresh intake applications each month.

The above statistics only apply to the HNS division. As of Oct. 6, 2022 the Social Services Branch as a whole had 1,400 pending CalFresh applications with 1,034 of those being past due, and 1,617 pending Medi-Cal applications with 1,034 of those being past due.

DHHS has been unable to process at least 90% of CalFresh applications within the required 30-day timeframe since the fourth quarter of 2021, and as a result is under a corrective action plan with the California Department of Social Services.

The impacts of the staffing shortages in the above-referenced classifications can have extreme impacts on staff. DHHS staff care deeply for their community and helping others, and when they see the desperation in a fellow community member's eye when they say they cannot help them for weeks or months it not only impacts the client, it also impacts the staff. This impact has resulted in higher unplanned absences and reduced workforce wellness and morale.

The impacts of the staffing shortages in the above-referenced classifications also have impacts on community partners. When DHHS programs are unable to meet the needs of community members, those needs do not simply go away. These eligibility programs are critical to the holistic functioning of DHHS and the County of Humboldt as a whole. This also puts additional strain on local non-profits and other County departments' budgets and staff.

Despite these challenges some staff have stayed and kept working for DHHS and others have joined the team, but these numbers are few. Despite DHHS leaders and staff utilizing many varied avenues to attract and retain talent in the eligibility programs short staffing issues remain, and the fear is that without incentives vacancy rates will continue to increase and the ability to serve the community will continue to decrease.

As a means to stimulate recruitment and retention of the above-referenced classifications, DHHS is proposing a recruitment and retention incentive program. The incentive program would provide a one-time recruitment and retention incentive of \$500 and/or \$1,000 to be paid as follows:

<i>Current staff in classifications listed above at time of adoption of this resolution:</i>	<i>\$1,000 if holding permanent status in current qualifying classifications OR held permanent status in a qualifying classification in the previous 6 months</i>
<i>Current staff in classifications listed above at the time of adoption of this resolution:</i>	<i>\$1,000 upon successful completion of probationary period</i>
<i>New hires in classifications listed above with a start date after adoption of this resolution and before June 30, 2024:</i>	<i>\$500 upon hire and \$1,000 upon successful completion of probationary period and attaining permanent status in qualifying classifications</i>

Staff hired in the qualifying classification prior to the end of fiscal year 2023-2024 who will not attain permanent status prior to the end of fiscal year 2023-2024 will be eligible once permanent status is obtained if remaining in qualifying classification.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:**

The maximum cost to implement the recruitment and retention program for fiscal year 2022-2023 and fiscal year 2023-2024 is \$500,000. The anticipated cost for fiscal year 2022-2023 is estimated to be less than \$175,000 to incentivize currently eligible staff and potential new hires who will pass probationary period before June 30, 2023. There are sufficient funds available in Fund 1160, Budget Unit 511 Social Services for fiscal year 2022-2023 as staffing vacancies have created salary savings. The expense related to the recruitment and retention program for fiscal year 2023-2024 will be included in the proposed budget. For fiscal year 2024-2025 evaluation of remaining candidates will occur and will be budgeted accordingly.

Adoption of the attached resolution will not impact the Humboldt County General Fund as the expenses will be claimed through local, state and federal funds that support eligibility activities for CalWORKs, CalFresh and Medi-Cal.

**STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK:**

The recommended action supports the Board of Supervisors' Strategic Framework by managing resources to ensure sustainability of services.

**OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:**

None

**ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The Board may choose not to adopt the attached resolution adopting a recruitment and retention incentive program for eligibility program staff and candidates. However, this alternative is not recommended, as the Eligibility Specialist Series is facing critical recruitment and retention levels that if unaddressed would continue to hinder DHHS' ability to meet the needs of the community.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Resolution Adopting a Recruitment and Recruitment and Retention Incentive Program for

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Eligibility Staff and Candidates for Fiscal Years 2022-2023 through 2023-2024

PREVIOUS ACTION/REFERRAL:

Board Order No.: N/A

Meeting of: N/A

File No.: N/A