



AB 2448 – New Opportunities for Education through CalWORKs

Summary:

AB 2448 allows CalWORKs participants to obtain a high school equivalency degree prior start of the 24-month time clock. CalWORKs students would need to maintain satisfactory progress towards their high school degree in order to participate.

Background:

Under current law, the Welfare-to-Work 24-month time clock limits adult eligibility for CalWORKs benefits to 24 months, unless they are meeting federal work participation requirements or meet criteria to have their time clocks extended. The 24-month restriction makes it particularly difficult for participants working towards a high school diploma or its equivalent because their 24-month clock “ticks” while they pursue their education, resulting in a shortened time frame for them to subsequently work, participate in career technical education or participate in other training activities once they finish their diploma.

Graduation from high school is correlated with a significantly higher likelihood of employment and earning potential, and the demand for workers with additional education or training is growing. By 2018, 60% of jobs in California will require education beyond high school.

The societal and economic costs of high-school dropouts for California are enormous. Dropouts are far more likely to experience reduced job and income opportunities, chronic unemployment, incarceration, or require government assistance in comparison to their peers with high school diplomas. The statistics are striking:

- In 2009, the average annual income for a high school dropout was \$19,540, compared to \$27,380 for a high school graduate;
- While the national unemployment rate in 2012 was 8.3 percent, it was 13.1 percent for those without a high school diploma;

- In 2007, male dropouts were 6.3 times more likely to be incarcerated than high school graduates. In comparison to those with a college degree, they were 63 times more likely to be incarcerated; and,
- If the dropouts from the Class of 2009 had graduated, the nation’s economy would benefit from nearly \$335 billion in additional income over their lifetimes.

The Public Policy Institute of California estimates that between 49-59% of the CalWORKs adult population has not completed high school. For those CalWORKs participants that lack a high school diploma, their ability to obtain and retain quality jobs with greater earning potential is severely limited.

AB 2448: Supporting High School Equivalency

Specifically, AB 2448 allows CalWORKs participants without a high school diploma to pursue an equivalency degree as a pre-assessment activity that does not trigger the 24-month time clock. With adequate time to obtain a diploma, the participant’s 24-month clock can subsequently be used for additional training, education, and work activities that can lead to better employment options and economic stability for these families and a greater chance to escape poverty.

Support:

County Welfare Directors Association of California (Sponsor)

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