



CASE STUDY

Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services

Expanding access to benefits in the nation's largest county with help from The Work Number®



CHALLENGE

Significant increases to social service benefits applications and renewal requests - driven largely by heightened need amid the COVID pandemic - made it more difficult than ever for benefits agencies to verify an applicant's income.



APPROACH

The Los Angeles County (L.A. County) Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) leadership realized that by resolving more cases at the point of first contact with an applicant or existing customer, they could provide their services more quickly and effectively.



LEADERSHIP & READINESS

With help from The Work Number, L.A. County DPSS enabled caseworkers to fulfill more determinations at the point of first contact while minimizing the need for requesting additional information or documentation from the customers themselves.

Challenge

L.A. County DPSS serves one in every three residents in the county – the largest in the United States – providing assistance to 3.7 million individuals each year. The gravity of the public health crisis' impact on residents and L.A. County was made clear early on, as CalFresh – its food stamps program – applications increased by 80 percent in one month alone.

Faced with significant increases to social service benefits applications and renewal requests, verifying an applicants' income became more difficult than ever at the onset of the pandemic. L.A. continued to improve its processes to make benefits even more accessible.



Approach

Rather than shying away from the challenge, L.A. County DPSS saw in the crisis an opportunity to innovate and improve its processes to better serve beneficiaries – through the pandemic and beyond. L.A. County DPSS aims to be a helping hand during difficult times for the individuals and families it serves, providing services to support beneficiaries and empower them to restore stability and self-sufficiency.

Knowing that resolving cases at the point of first contact could enable L.A. County DPSS to continue providing their services on a timely basis despite the influx of applications – and more quickly help individuals achieve financial stability – it set out to do just that. First, DPSS worked to establish additional points of contact for applicants by expanding its intake call center and implementing renewal contact lines for most programs, in addition to its web portal. Through the call centers, caseworkers could provide guidance to applicants in real-time, including help to complete the paperwork required for income verifications, without requiring an in-person visit.

Even under “normal” circumstances, hand-delivering paystubs or uploading information to a web portal can be a challenge for many customers. L.A. County DPSS knew that part of the solution was to improve its income and employment verifications process. While L.A. County DPSS had already been using The Work Number to verify income and employment when applicants were unable to provide documentation for such information; the pandemic exacerbated the need for real-time verifications to enable quicker benefit eligibility determinations.

With the help of Equifax Workforce Solutions, L.A. County DPSS invested time into fully training employees on The Work Number service, enabling them to fully utilize the database to achieve benefits determinations at the point of first contact.

"The Work Number is an important component of verifying the income. We made sure that our people knew it was available and provided training.

We expanded the number of caseworkers that were using it because that was one of the critical components of the first contact resolution. Having a reliable, accurate source of information that helps us move to being able to provide a disposition at the first point of contact is helpful."

– Antonia Jimenez, Director of L.A. County Department of Public Social Services (DPSS)

Result

Since implementing intake call centers and expanding access to The Work Number for caseworkers, L.A. County DPSS has realized 45-50% same day approvals for new applicants and 70-80% same day eligibility determinations for renewals.

But L.A. County didn't stop there. In looking to solve for the challenges brought to light by the pandemic, L.A. County DPSS laid the groundwork for process improvement at its organization, constantly working to find new ways to provide quicker relief to those in need.

theworknumber.com

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