

Guide to Disaster Assistance Services for Immigrant Californians

This guide provides information about the types of federal, state, and local disaster assistance services available in California. Although some of the resources are restricted to individuals or households with eligible immigration status, there are many services available to all Californians impacted by disasters.

Immigrant families

Shelters and housing assistance

Food and other basics

Health, public health, and counseling

Replacing documents, rebuilding property, and insurance

Employment and job services



FAMILIES WITH UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS

Am I eligible for any disaster assistance if I am undocumented?

Yes, even if you are undocumented, there are many resources and services that you can access.

I am undocumented but other members of my family are citizens or eligible immigrants. Can I apply for FEMA assistance for them?

If you do not meet the citizenship or immigration status criteria, your household may still apply for certain forms of Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) assistance, if: 1) another household member, including a minor child, meets the eligibility criteria during the registration process OR 2) the parent or guardian of a minor child living in the same household may apply for assistance on behalf of the minor child who is a U.S. citizen, non-citizen national, or qualified non-citizen under federal law. The minor child must be under age 18 as of the first day of the incident period or disaster declaration day, whichever comes first.

I am undocumented but other members of my family are citizens or eligible immigrants. Can I get CalFresh and CalWORKs for them?

Yes. Even though you cannot get assistance for yourself, you should be able to get CalFresh benefits and aid under the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program for your children if they are U.S. citizens or if they fall under one of the eligible non-citizen categories under the rules of these programs. Even if you or your family members can't get CalFresh, you can still get school lunch and breakfast, Disaster CalFresh, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), and go to community food banks and other food programs.

Who is an eligible immigrant?

An eligible immigrant includes, but is not limited to, anyone who falls into any of the below categories:

- Naturalized U.S. Citizens
- Legal permanent residents (green card holders);
- Asylees and refugees;
- Individuals who have been granted humanitarian parole for a period of one year or more;
- Individuals whose deportation has been withheld due to status as a political refugee;
- Cuban or Haitian entrants; or
- Victims of domestic violence who currently have a pending petition for relief.

The CalWORKs and CalFresh programs allow some additional immigrants to access benefits. For more information about these programs, please visit the [CalWORKs website](#), [the CalFresh website](#), or apply online at the [BenefitsCal website](#). You may also contact your local [county social services department](#).

I am undocumented. Will I be reported to the immigration authorities if I apply for CalFresh (food stamps) for my children?

No. If you are not seeking public assistance benefits for yourself, you do not need to give information about your immigration status. You should tell your eligibility worker that you

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are not trying to get benefits for yourself. Eligibility workers should not ask you any further questions about your immigration status once you tell them that you are not applying for yourself. Do not present false information or identification. You will need to give information about your income or any property you may have. Most households are not subject to the resource limit. The CalFresh program, and many other assistance programs, do not trigger public charge and are safe for people who are undocumented to use. For more information, please see the Public Charge Safe to Use List linked below.

I do not speak English well. What can I do?

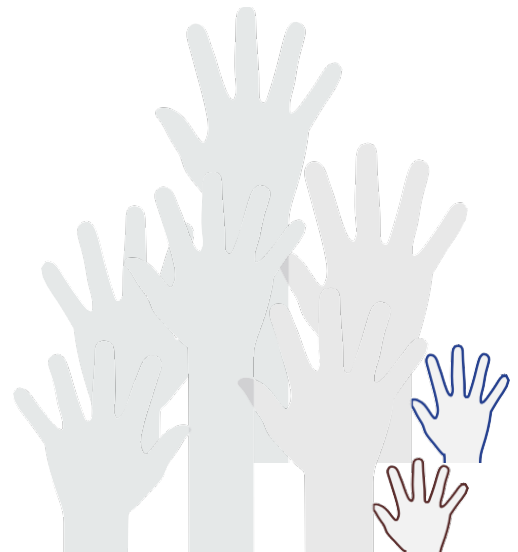
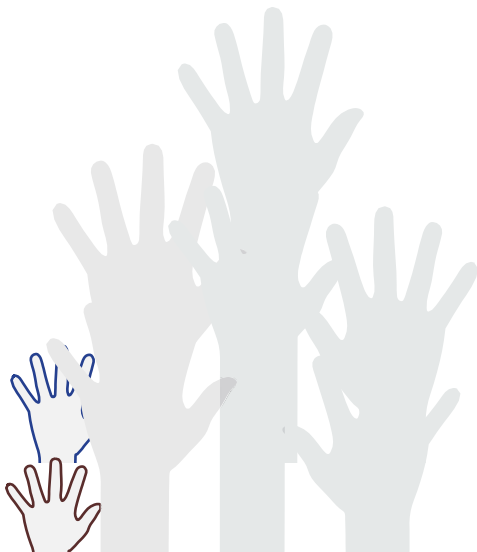
Free translation and interpreter services should be provided to you, including a worker who speaks your language. If a worker cannot speak your language, you should be provided an interpreter or the use of the “language line” interpreter services at no cost to you. Do not be afraid to ask for an interpreter.

I am undocumented. Will I be reported to the immigration authorities if I visit an emergency shelter?

No. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) have stated that they are not conducting immigration enforcement at disaster relief sites such as shelters or food banks. The Federal Government strongly encourages all persons to follow the guidance of local officials and seek help and shelter **regardless of their immigration status.**

Most shelters are managed by local communities, the American Red Cross, and other voluntary agencies. American Red Cross’ humanitarian mission is to feed, shelter, and provide other forms of support **without regard to race, religion, or citizenship status. The Red Cross will not ask people to show any form of identification to stay in their shelters.** To receive some Red Cross services, such as meeting with a caseworker to facilitate disaster recovery, they will need to verify a person’s pre-disaster address. For people who don’t have government-issued identification, the Red Cross can usually do this through alternative means, such as a copy of a utility bill.

Disaster assistance is always exempt from consideration under the public charge policy. Please see the Public Charge Safe to Use List in [English](#) and [Spanish](#) for more information.



SHELTERS AND HOUSING ASSISTANCE

EMERGENCY SHELTERS

For immediate evacuation center and emergency shelter information, please visit the [California Office of Emergency Services website](#).

TRANSITIONAL SHELTERING ASSISTANCE (TSA)

The TSA Program provides short-term lodging assistance for evacuees who are not able to return home for an extended or indeterminate period of time following a disaster. **You must be a citizen or an eligible immigrant to receive this assistance.**

FEMA may provide TSA to eligible disaster survivors who have a continuing need for shelter after the congregate shelters have closed because they are unable to return to their homes for an extended period of time. This initiative is intended to provide short-term lodging for eligible disaster survivors whose communities are either uninhabitable or inaccessible due to disaster-related damages. Under TSA, disaster survivors may be eligible to stay in hotel or motel lodging for a limited period of time and have the cost of the room and taxes covered by FEMA. However, FEMA does not cover the cost of incidental room charges or amenities, such as telephone, room service, or food.

For more information on the TSA program, please visit the [FEMA website](#). Individuals and households ineligible for TSA will be referred to local agencies or voluntary organizations for possible assistance.

INDIVIDUAL AND HOUSEHOLDS PROGRAMS (IHP)

The IHP is a joint Federal and State program. **You or someone who lives with you must be a U.S. citizen or “eligible immigrant” for your household to apply.** Under IHP, FEMA may provide awards in the form of rent, home repair or replacement, transportation repair or replacement, funeral expenses, personal property, medical, dental or other miscellaneous expenses. FEMA disaster assistance covers basic needs but does not normally compensate disaster victims for their entire loss. Each situation is unique and is handled on a case-by-case basis. Anyone who suffers damage in a Presidentially-declared disaster can [register online](#) for assistance or call the FEMA registration line, 1-800-621- 3362. For the deaf or hard of hearing, the number is 1-800-462-7585.

For general information or to make changes to an existing application, please call the FEMA disaster information Helpline at 1-800-621-3362 or TTY 1-800-462-7585.

STATE SUPPLEMENTAL GRANT PROGRAM (SSGP)

[California’s SSGP](#), administered by CDSS’ Disaster Services Branch, may provide grant funds to assist people who have suffered damage in a disaster area declared by the President when the federal assistance to IHP is implemented. The SSGP is 100 percent State-funded. The



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grant may assist with any eligible items not already addressed by the IHP. However, individuals must have applied to FEMA and maximized the IHP award to be eligible for SSGP. **The same FEMA eligibility criteria of being a U.S. citizen or “eligible immigrant” apply.** State grants cover disaster-relief needs in the same categories as the IHP.

If you have reached the maximum IHP assistance, FEMA will automatically transmit your application to SSGP. There is no separate application process for SSGP. If you have questions about the SSGP, please call 1-800-759-6807 or TTY 1-800-952-8349. For additional information, please see the following SSGP fact sheet in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).

CALWORKS HOMELESS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

CalWORKs participants who experienced homelessness as a direct and primary result of a state or federally declared disaster are eligible for the CalWORKs Homeless Assistance temporary shelter and permanent housing assistance. **Refer to the information on page 2 of this document about CalWORKs eligibility based on immigration status.**

Temporary homeless assistance pays up to 16 nights at a hotel or motel every 12 months. To be eligible, a family must be eligible for, or appear to be eligible for, CalWORKs. If a family’s home is uninhabitable due to a disaster, families may be eligible for another set of 16 days based on the exception of uninhabitability. Additionally, when a family is experiencing homelessness as a direct and primary result of disaster, counties may waive the three-day limit to verify a families’ homelessness, as well as housing search requirements. Counties may also issue homeless assistance benefits in increments of more than one week, or all 16 days at once. Permanent housing assistance can pay for a last month’s rent and security deposits or up to two months of rent arrearages for eligible families.

A family applying for homeless assistance as a result of any state or federally declared disaster shall provide a sworn statement that the family is experiencing homelessness as a direct and primary result of a state or federally declared disaster. A family can only receive HA due to a disaster once per disaster. To apply for assistance, please contact your local [county social services department](#). For more information, please visit the [CalWORKs Homeless Assistance website](#).

ADDITIONAL HOUSING RESOURCES

The housing programs below are not specific to disaster response but can be helpful in the event eligible families or individuals are able to receive immediate service support during the time of a disaster. **With exception of the eligibility criteria for CalWORKs Homeless Assistance and Housing Support Program, an individual’s immigration status is not considered when determining eligibility for CDSS-funded housing programs.** For additional local housing resources, contact your local [Continuum of Care](#) or [county social services department](#). For additional information, you can email: housing@dss.ca.gov.



CALWORKS HOUSING SUPPORT PROGRAM (HSP)

The CalWORKs HSP fosters housing stability for families in receipt of CalWORKs at risk of or experiencing homelessness. HSP offers financial assistance and housing-related wraparound supportive services, including but not limited to rental assistance, housing navigation, case management, security deposits, utility payments, moving costs, interim shelter assistance, legal services, and credit repair. **Please refer to the information on page 2 above about CalWORKs eligibility based on immigration status.** For more information, please visit the [HSP website](#).

BRINGING FAMILIES HOME (BFH)

The BFH program helps reduce the number of families in the child welfare system experiencing or at risk of homelessness, increase family reunification, and prevent foster care placements. The BFH program serves families experiencing or at risk of homelessness involved with the child welfare system and is designed to offer housing supports to help families successfully reunify. The BFH program offers financial assistance and housing-related wraparound supportive services, including but not limited to rental assistance, housing navigation, case management, security deposits, utility payments, moving costs, interim shelter assistance, legal services, and credit repair. For more information, please visit the [BFH website](#).

HOUSING AND DISABILITY ADVOCACY PROGRAM (HDAP)

The HDAP assists individuals likely eligible for disability benefits who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness apply for disability and benefit programs, while also providing housing support. The HDAP requires that participating counties offer outreach, case management, benefits advocacy, and housing support to all participants. Housing-related financial assistance and wraparound supportive services provided by the HDAP include, but are not limited to, interim shelter assistance, rental assistance, housing navigation, case management, security deposits, utility payments, moving costs, legal services, and credit repair. For more information, please visit the [HDAP website](#).

HOME SAFE

The Home Safe program supports the safety and housing stability of individuals involved in Adult Protective Services (APS) who are experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness due to elder or dependent adult abuse, neglect, self-neglect, or financial exploitation by providing housing-related assistance using evidence-based practices for homeless assistance and prevention. The Home Safe program offers a range of strategies to address and prevent homelessness and support ongoing housing stability for APS clients such as, but not limited to, housing-related intensive case management, housing-related financial assistance, interim shelter, deep cleaning to maintain safe housing, eviction prevention, and landlord mediation. For more information, please visit the [Home Safe website](#).

PROJECT ROOMKEY

Project Roomkey provides non-congregate shelter options, such as hotels or motels or self-contained trailers, for people experiencing homelessness in response to COVID-19. Project Roomkey also supports the transition to safe and stable housing. For more information, please visit the [Project Roomkey website](#).



FOOD AND OTHER BASICS

DISASTER CALFRESH [ALL CAN APPLY REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS]

Disaster CalFresh can help meet the temporary nutritional needs of disaster victims of modest incomes, **regardless of immigration status**, following a natural disaster such as a flood, fire, or earthquake. Disaster CalFresh provides a month's worth of food benefits on an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card, which can be used to purchase food at authorized grocery stores and farmers' markets. For more information, please visit the [Disaster CalFresh website](#).

CALFRESH

CalFresh provides ongoing food assistance to people with low-income through monthly benefits on an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card, which can be used to purchase food at authorized grocery stores and farmers' markets. To apply for benefits in your county, please call 1-877-847-3663 (FOOD) or apply online at the [BenefitsCal website](#). For more information, please visit the [CalFresh website](#).

FOOD BANKS [ALL CAN APPLY REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS]

Food Banks throughout California can provide relief to families affected by disasters by providing them with emergency free food assistance, **regardless of immigration status**. To locate a local food bank, please visit the [CDSS website](#).

WIC SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION PROGRAM [ALL CAN APPLY REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS]

The WIC program is available to pregnant women and young children **regardless of immigration status**. The WIC program helps low-to-moderate-income pregnant women, new mothers and their babies, and young children to eat well and stay healthy. WIC provides:

- Special checks to buy healthy foods such as milk, juice, eggs, cheese, fruits, vegetables, baby foods and whole grains;
- Information about nutrition and health; and
- Breastfeeding support and referrals to health care and community services.

For more information, call 1-888-942-9675 or visit the [WIC website](#).

CALWORKs

CalWORKs provides cash aid to eligible California families to help pay for housing, food, and other expenses. **If you are a “non-eligible immigrant” and not seeking CalWORKs benefits for yourself, you can still get assistance for your children if they are U.S. citizens or fall under one of the non-citizen categories eligible for CalWORKs.** For more information, please visit the [CalWORKs website](#) or apply online at the [BenefitsCal website](#). You can also contact your [local county social services department](#).



HEALTH, PUBLIC HEALTH, AND COUNSELING

IN-HOME SUPPORTIVE SERVICES (IHSS)

Existing recipients of IHSS may receive services from their provider, or from another enrolled provider, even if evacuated from their primary residence. Recipients and providers of IHSS with questions regarding services impacted by a disaster should contact your county IHSS worker. For a list of IHSS offices, please visit the [CDSS website](#).

CRISIS COUNSELING

Disaster Distress Helpline provides 24/7, 365-day-a-year crisis counseling and support to people experiencing emotional distress related to natural or human-caused disasters. Call 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746 to connect with a trained crisis counselor.

Also, please visit [CalHOPE](#) for free crisis counseling and other support services.

PUBLIC HEALTH INFORMATION

For information on public health concerns during a disaster you can contact 916-650-6416 or visit the [California Department of Public Health website](#).

HEALTH CARE AND COVERAGE (MEDI-CAL)

Medi-Cal is a public health insurance program that provides comprehensive medical, dental and vision care coverage to low-income individuals, including families with children, seniors, persons with disabilities, pregnant women and low-income people with specific diseases, such as tuberculosis, breast cancer, or HIV/AIDS. **You must be a citizen or an eligible immigrant to receive this assistance, but emergency services are available to everyone.** For information about eligibility or answers to any other questions, contact your county social services department. To find your local office, please visit the [Department of Health Care Services website](#).

SERVICES FOR SENIORS

The California Department of Aging contracts with and provides leadership and direction to Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) that coordinate a wide array of services to seniors and adults with disabilities. Locate an AAA in your area by calling 1-800-510-2020, TTY 1-800- 735-2929, or visit the [Department of Aging website](#).



REPLACING DOCUMENTS AND INSURANCE

DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES (DMV)

The DMV can respond to questions and provide the forms needed to assist individuals in replacing DMV documents, such as driver's licenses, identification cards, vehicle registration certificates, and certificates of title that were lost as a result of the disaster. For additional information, please visit the [DMV website](#).

The DMV provides interpreters, including American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters, at no cost. If you need an interpreter, please let DMV staff know and an appointment will be scheduled for when a foreign language or an ASL interpreter is available. Appointments may also be scheduled during regular business hours by calling 1-800-777-0133 and indicating foreign language assistance is needed. For the California Relay Telephone Service, call 1-800-735-2922 or TTY 1-800-735-2929.

Interpreters cannot be used to administer a commercial driver's license knowledge test.

BIRTH, DEATH, MARRIAGE, AND OTHER VITAL RECORDS

The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) is assisting people who have lost vital records as a result of a disaster. Birth, death, and marriage records should be [requested from the county recorder's office](#) in the county where the event occurred. You can call 916-445-2684, TTY 711, 1-800-735-2929, or visit the [CDPH website](#).

INSURANCE & REBUILDING INFORMATION

The California Department of Insurance provides assistance on insurance issues such as claim handling, additional living expenses, and underinsurance disputes. If you are having trouble with claim processing, or wish to have an underinsurance issue investigated, please contact the Consumer Hotline at 1-800-927-HELP (4357) or TTY 1-800-482-4833. For additional information, please visit the [Department of Insurance website](#).

CONTRACTORS STATE LICENSE BOARD (CSLB)

The CSLB verifies contractor licenses, investigates complaints, and provides information about hiring a licensed contractor. For information on hiring or filing a complaint regarding a contractor, disaster victims may call CSLB's Disaster Hotline Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. at 1-800-962-1125, or the 24-hour automated response system, 1-800-321-2752. Licenses can also be checked online at the [Department of Consumer Affairs website](#). For additional information, you can also view a video, "Rebuilding After a Natural Disaster" on the [CSLB website](#).

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (HCD):

The HCD can assist with manufactured housing questions including repairs, installations and/or registration, and titling. For information on obtaining construction permits for manufactured homes or parks, please contact the Riverside Area Office at 951-782-4420 or the Sacramento Area Office at 916-255-2501. For information concerning registration and titling, please call 1-800-952-8356, TTY 1-800-735-2929, or visit the [HCD website](#).



EMPLOYMENT AND JOB SERVICES

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

The Employment Development Department (EDD) and local partners at the America's Job Center of California (AJCC) offices throughout the state offer a wide variety of employment services, such as job search assistance, job referrals, and training programs. Job seekers and employers can connect with thousands of available job opportunities and qualified candidates through [CalJOBSSM](#), California's online labor exchange system.

To find the nearest AJCC office, please visit the [office locator page](#).

UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS

Workers who lose their jobs through no fault of their own, such as in a disaster, or have had their hours reduced, may be eligible for unemployment benefits to help replace some lost income. Eligibility for unemployment benefits requires that individuals have work authorization, are unemployed or working less than full time, be able to work, be seeking work, and be willing to accept a suitable job.

The quickest and easiest way to apply is through [UI online](#) or by phone from 8 a.m. - 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on [state holidays](#).

English and Spanish: 1-800-300-5616

Armenian: 1-855-528-1518

Cantonese: 1-800-547-3506

Korean: 1-844-660-0877

Mandarin: 1-866-303-0706

Tagalog: 1-866-395-1513

Vietnamese: 1-800-547-2058

California Relay Service (711): Provide the UI number (1-800-300-5616) to the operator

TTY: 1-800-815-9387

For more information on unemployment benefits, please visit the [EDD website](#).

DISASTER UNEMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE (DUA)

DUA is a federal program that provides financial assistance and employment services to unemployed and self-employed people that cannot work because of a disaster or emergency in California and don't qualify for regular unemployment benefits.

When authorized by the President of the United States, DUA may be available to any unemployed worker or self-employed person who lived, worked, or was scheduled to work in the disaster area at the time of the disaster; and due to the disaster. This includes people who:

- No longer have a job or a place to work.
- Cannot reach their place of work.
- Cannot work due to damage to their place of work.
- Cannot work because of an injury caused by the disaster.

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For more information on the program and additional disaster-related services visit the [EDD website](#). A DUA fact sheet is available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).

DISABILITY INSURANCE BENEFITS

Workers who are unable to work due to a non-work-related illness, injury that could be linked to a disaster, or pregnancy could be eligible for disability insurance benefits to help replace some lost income. Citizenship and immigration status do not affect eligibility. You must be employed or actively looking for work at the time your disability begins and have a doctor complete the medical portion of your application. The quickest and easiest way to apply is [SDI Online](#).

You can get a paper *Claim for Disability Insurance Benefits* (DE 2501) form and file a claim by mail from one of these options:

- Visit: <https://forms.edd.ca.gov/forms>, enter “DE 2501”, and order the form to have it mailed to you.
- Get the form from your licensed health professional or employer.
- Visit an [SDI Office](#).
- Call 1-800-480-3287 and select *disability insurance information* (option 3) to request a paper form by mail.

For more information about disability insurance, please visit [the EDD website](#) or call:

English: 1-800-480-3287

Spanish: 1-866-658-8846

TTY: 1-800-563-2441

PAID FAMILY LEAVE (PFL) BENEFITS:

Workers who need to take time off work to care for a family member injured in a disaster may be eligible for PFL benefits to replace some lost income. The program also applies to workers who need to care for a seriously ill family member. Family members include a child, parent, parent-in-law, grandparent, grandchild, sibling, or registered domestic partner. The quickest and easiest way to apply is online at [SDI Online](#).

You can get a paper *Claim for PFL Benefits* (DE 2501F) form and file a claim by mail from one of these options:

- Visit forms.edd.ca.gov/forms, enter “DE 2501F”, and order the form to have it mailed to you.
- Get the form from your licensed health professional or employer.
- Visit an [SDI Office](#).
- Call 1-877-238-4373 to request a paper form be mailed to you. California Relay Service (711): provide the PFL number to the operator (1-877-238-4373).

For more information, please visit [California Paid Family Leave](#) or call:

English: 1-877-238-4373

Spanish: 1-877-379-3819

Cantonese: 1-866-692-5595

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Vietnamese: 1-866-692-5596

Armenian: 1-866-627-1567

Punjabi: 1-866-627-1568

Tagalog: 1-866-627-1569

California Relay Service (711): provide the PFL number to the operator (1-877-238-4373).

TTY: 1-800-445-1312.

Paid Family Leave representatives are available 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on [state holidays](#).

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

If you have questions about your eligibility based on your immigration status or need legal help to navigate the disaster relief application process, you may be eligible for free legal services. To learn more, please contact the organizations below:

CALIFORNIA STATE BAR

[Legal services for disaster relief](#)

LEGAL SERVICES FOR IMMIGRATION STATUS

[Legal assistance with immigration status issues](#)

Our Mission

The California Department of Social Services serves, aides and protects needy and vulnerable children and adults in ways that strengthen and preserve families, encourage personal responsibility, and foster independence.



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California Health and Human Services Agency
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