



**A VOICE FOR CHOICE
ADVOCACY**

**LETTER REQUESTING AMENDMENTS TO AB992 (Arambula)
CalWORKs: Baby Wellness and Family Support Home Visiting Program**

April 18, 2017

Dear Assembly Member Arambula and Ms. Bartholow (Western Center on Law and Poverty),

A Voice for Choice Advocacy requests amendments to be made to AB992 prior to it moving to the Assembly floor. Our concern is that home visiting tied to various services, such as CalWORKs, may make participants feel coerced to agreeing to home visits to get their CalWORKs services, even if they are optional programs. AB992's language describes the home visiting as optional, however, there's no requirement written in the bill to disclose that home visits are optional. We are also concerned, as precedence has been set that it may start as optional, but will be made mandatory soon after. Additionally, the CalWORKs program is mainly for those with low income levels and many of these have low education levels as well. People in these situations do not know that they can say no or that things are optional. So no doubt many would just comply with what is asked of them, because they know not to question.

Therefore, A Voice for Choice Advocacy would request the following amendments be made to AB992:

Article 3.7. Baby Wellness and Family Support Home Visiting Program.

11337. (b) The state shall allocate funds to counties for the purpose of administering the CalWORKs Baby Wellness and Family Support Home Visiting Program, to provide voluntary home visiting services to any CalWORKs assistance units with a pregnant recipient or a child 24 months of age or younger. Participation in this program shall not be considered a condition of CalWORKs eligibility [and this will be explained in person and in the opt-in agreement initialed by the parent and the caseworker explaining the program](#). Assistance units receiving home visiting services need not be eligible for or required to participate in the welfare-to-work program established pursuant to Article 3.2 (commencing with Section 11320). Participation in a home visiting program shall not affect a family's eligibility for any other CalWORKs benefits, supports, or services, including, but not limited to, welfare-to-work exemptions pursuant to subdivision (b) of Section 11320.3, good cause for not participating pursuant to subdivision (f) of Section 11320.3, participating in housing support services pursuant to Article 3.3 (commencing with Section 11330), or participating in family stabilization pursuant to Section 11325.24.

11337. (c) Home visiting participation is a voluntary program to provide needed services and constructive interventions for CalWORKs families with a child 24 months of age or younger. Participation in the home visiting program requires a written opt-in agreement initialed by the parent in the assistance unit, and will include a clear statement that any and all services can be declined or terminated at any time, without penalty or adverse impact to the parent or other family members, including children, for this or any other programs, including programs suggested by the home visiting personnel. The declining of home visiting services would also not be a cause for suspicion of child neglect or abuse. The opt-in agreement document will be developed for use in all initial contacts with the parent in the assistance unit being educated about or enrolling in home visiting services. A parent in the assistance unit shall not be sanctioned in connection with his or her participation or nonparticipation in this program. A parent may decline or terminate home visiting services offered pursuant to this section at any time with no adverse effect on his or her CalWORKs case.

11337. (d) (3) Home visiting services shall require visits to be scheduled ahead of time at a mutually agreed upon date and time between the assistance unit and caseworker, and thereby not include mandatory, random, or unannounced visits. ~~or~~ Visits must be conducted by any personnel that ~~do not~~ meet the qualifications consistent with paragraph (2).

Another concern A Voice for Choice Advocacy has is that many home visit programs are used more to collect data for the state, than to actually help the parents who allow strangers into their home at a particularly vulnerable time of their lives. We would like to ensure that the home visit programs tied CalWORKs are truly for the benefit of the assistance unit and not the state's data collection process, and therefore would welcome any amendments that support this.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

C. E. von Dorn Hildebrand

Christina Hildebrand
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Giving issues a voice, A Voice for Choice Advocacy advocates for people's rights to be fully informed about the composition, quality, and short- and long-term health effects of all products that go into people's bodies, such as food, water, air, pharmaceuticals and cosmetics.