



PRESS ADVISORY

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Alameda County Implements Economic Resiliency Program to Address COVID-19 Public Health Crisis

Alameda County Responsibility to Community Health (ARCH) is Intended to Help Curb Spread of Virus by Facilitating Self-Isolation

Oakland, CA – The Alameda County Social Services Agency (ACSSA), in partnership with the County’s Health Care Services (HCSA), and Auditor-Controller Agencies, launched an economic resiliency program on August 24, 2020 to address the COVID-19 public health crisis. The Alameda County Responsibility to Community Health or ARCH, formerly referred to as the Pilot Stipend Program, is aimed at curbing the spread of the COVID-19 virus in Alameda County by providing financial assistance to self-isolating County residents who have tested positive for COVID-19. The pilot program funding and development was unanimously approved by the Alameda County Board of Supervisors on August 4, 2020.

“Our communities told us they were having to make the difficult decision between isolating and losing two weeks’ worth of needed pay if they tested positive for COVID-19. No one should ever have to make this choice,” said Alameda County Supervisor Wilma Chan. “This program will allow COVID-19 positive individuals in our hardest-hit neighborhoods to maintain financial stability while keeping their communities safe from further spread.”

The Alameda County Social Services Agency in conjunction with the Health Care Services, Auditor-Controller Agencies and designated community health clinic partners, implemented the ARCH program to immediately begin providing services to eligible County residents. The ARCH will distribute approximately \$10 million in economic assistance to an estimated 7,500 County residents who might otherwise, because of economic instability, continue working after testing positive for COVID-19.

“The pilot is meant to provide funds to support individuals and families that need to isolate now for the health and safety of themselves and the community,” said Alameda County Administrator Susan Muranishi. “The County understands that sheltering in place while diagnosed with COVID-19 should not be a privilege to only those who can afford it.”

The ARCH program targets COVID-19 positive residents living in designated high-risk neighborhoods that include: South Hayward, Ashland/Cherryland, East Oakland, West Oakland, and Fruitvale/San Antonio.

“As a County we strongly believe that no one should have to choose between doing what is right for their health and their community and feeding themselves or their families,” explained Lori Cox, Director of the Alameda County Social Services Agency. “These extraordinary times require extraordinary measures and effort. Everyone working on the ARCH program has brought an unmatched level of dedication and energy to bring this program to fruition.”

It is believed that many eligible County residents may be essential workers not able to work remotely, thereby placing them at greater risk of contracting COVID-19. Vulnerable residents testing positive for COVID-19 will be connected to the program through HCSA's community medical provider network of Community-Based Case Investigation/Contact Tracing services.

"This program will help us reduce the spread of COVID-19 by providing financial assistance to residents who test positive and do not have the means to safely isolate," said Colleen Chawla, Director of the Alameda County Health Care Services Agency. "This includes essential workforce who are unable to work remotely and hourly workers who cannot afford a loss in wages."

Participating health clinics, along with the Alameda County Public Health Department, will be focused on health care: COVID-19 testing, results, and referrals only. Health clinics will not have a role in the stipend distribution process.

"Many essential workers face an impossible choice when they contract COVID-19: lose weeks of income or go against a critical public health mandate," said Noha Aboelata, MD Chief Executive Officer, Roots Community Health Center. "We are grateful to Alameda County's leadership for effectively eliminating the barrier of income loss, protecting these workers, their families, and the community at large."

The ARCH program will provide a one-time stipend of \$1,250.00 in the form of a VISA cash card through a partnership with First United Services Credit Union. The County clearly identifies that an applicant's immigration status will not impact their program eligibility. Other key program components state that applicants cannot currently be in receipt of Unemployment Insurance Benefits or paid sick leave.

"Alameda County is doing the right thing by providing assistance to low income residents who have COVID-19 so they can stay home from work and prevent the spread of this disease," commented Ralph Silber, Executive Director of the Alameda Health Consortium. "This program will help our community health centers support our communities which are hardest hit by the pandemic."

A partial list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) will be available on the County's website at www.acgov.org and the ACSSA website at www.alamedasocialservices.org. The public is encouraged to check frequently for FAQ updates.

For the most up to date Alameda County COVID-19 data visit the Alameda County Public Health Department at <http://www.acphd.org/>

