

SAN FRANCISCO HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION

M I N U T E S

November 20, 2025 Regular Meeting

The regular meeting of the Human Services Commission was held on Thursday, November 20, 2025 at 9:30a.m. in person in the Born auditorium at 170 Otis Street, San Francisco and remotely via Webex and telephone for disability accommodations.

MEMBERS PRESENT IN PERSON	SCOTT KAHN, President DR. JAMES MCCRAY, JR., Vice President SALLY COGHLAN MCDONALD PABLO BRAVO
MEMBERS ABSENT (EXCUSED)	DARSHAN SINGH
OTHERS PRESENT IN PERSON	Trent Rhorer, Executive Director, SFHSA Elizabeth LaBarre, Commission Secretary Dan Kaplan, Deputy Director – Finance & Administration Anna Pineda, Deputy Director – Economic Support & Self-Sufficiency (ESSS) Joan Miller, Deputy Director – Family & Children’s Services (FCS)
CALL MEETING TO ORDER	President Kahn called the meeting to order at 9:37a.m. He welcomed newly appointed Commissioner Pablo Bravo to the Human Services Commission.
ROLL CALL	Commission Secretary Elizabeth LaBarre took roll and noted the presence of Commissioners Kahn, McCray, Coghlan McDonald and Bravo in person in the Born auditorium. Commissioner Singh had an excused absence. There was a quorum.
AGENDA	President Kahn’s call for public comment related to the meeting’s agenda yielded no responses.  On motion of Commissioner Coghlan McDonald, seconded and unanimously carried, the Commission adopted the agenda as posted.
SEPTEMBER 25, 2025 REGULAR MEETING MINUTES	President Kahn’s call for public comment related to the September 25, 2025 regular meeting minutes yielded no responses.  On motion of Commissioner Bravo, seconded and unanimously carried, the Commission approved the adoption of the September 25, 2025 regular meeting minutes.
OCTOBER 23, 2025 REGULAR MEETING MINUTES	President Kahn’s call for public comment related to the October 23, 2025 regular meeting minutes yielded no responses.  On motion of Commissioner Coghlan McDonald, seconded and unanimously carried, the Commission approved the adoption of the October 23, 2025 regular meeting minutes.

EXECUTIVE  
DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Executive Director Rhorer provided updates on Human Services Agency ("SFHSA" or the "Agency") programs and federal, state and local policy and activities as they relate to the Agency.

FEDERAL

Trent and his team were incredibly busy during the federal government shutdown finding ways to mitigate the stress and harm CalFresh recipients experienced due to the unprecedented actions of the Trump Administration. Trent expressed how proud he is of the work the city did to shore up November benefits for CalFresh recipients in the wake of immense uncertainty & insecurity, noting it was one of the top five accomplishments of the Agency during his 25-year tenure. He provided a timeline of events: October 1 - the federal government shuts down due to Congress' failure to pass appropriations legislation for the 2026 fiscal year; on October 10, the USDA instructs states not to pay November SNAP (CalFresh) benefits, citing funding uncertainty; on October 18, the USDA rescinds its contingency plan from its website and internal memos suggest only partial benefits may be feasible for November; the USDA confirms on October 20 it will not tap into emergency SNAP funding to cover November SNAP/CalFresh benefits; in response, senators, mayors and attorneys general send letters urging the USDA to use contingency funds to pay full November benefits, followed by the filing of multistate lawsuits against the USDA by state attorneys general and advocacy groups to force payment of November SNAP benefits; meanwhile, in San Francisco, the Mayor's Office reaches out to SFHSA indicating that the Mayor is aware of the numbers—~112,000 San Franciscans affected—and would like ideas of what to do to try to compensate for \$20 million worth of November CalFresh benefits along with the lost business at local grocery stores who rely on EBT purchases for their revenue; within five days, Trent and his team (including Susie Smith, Rose Johns and Planning staff) design an emergency gift card program with differing tiers of support (up to \$18 million total), depending on how much the Mayor's Office could raise from philanthropy; two days later, Crankstart, an San Francisco-based family foundation, agreed to donate \$9 million if the City matched the contribution; the following day, on October 28, the Mayor introduces an ordinance to withdraw \$9.1 million from a general fund emergency set-aside that the Mayor and the Board established this fiscal year to address federal emergency response needs; the Board unanimously co-sponsored the ordinance; Trent contacts President Kahn to request emergency authority to enter into a \$9.1 million contract with the San Francisco Marin Food Bank to manage the gift card program through a financial technology company, GiveCard, which he approves; on October 31, a judge rules the USDA can use contingency funds and orders partial benefit issuance; on November 3, 82,000 letters are mailed to CalFresh recipients with information on how to redeem the grocery gift card as a virtual card or physical card in the mail; the cost to the Agency was \$5 per card; meanwhile, SFHSA's HR team created material in record time to teach to staff internally about the gift card program in anticipation of the onslaught of calls to the CalFresh line; within two days, over 20% of CalFresh recipients had redeemed their gift card; on November 6, court rulings mandate full benefit payments, but a U.S. Supreme Court stay on November 7 temporarily halts the order, leading to

confusion and inconsistent benefit distribution across states; the shutdown ends on November 12; on November 13, most states receive full SNAP funding for November.

As of Tuesday (November 18), 65% of CalFresh recipients had redeemed their gift cards accessing over \$11.6 million in food support dollars.

The success of the CalFresh Emergency Grocery Gift Card Program was in part due to massive outreach and a community engagement campaign which included texts, trainings that reached 500 members of various community based organizations, in-person card activation support at CBOs, flyers translated in multiple languages, and internet and social media updates including messaging to convince recipients the offer is not fraudulent! One of the Mayor's Instagram videos about the gift cards received over 1 million views. While there were a few challenges (e.g., two printers went down) and a lot of overtime and long days and nights, pulling off a new program from scratch this massive and in such a short amount of time is truly remarkable. Trent thanked a long list of partners including his staff with the Planning, Contracts, Communications, IT, Citywide Food Access team, ESSS, DAS, Fiscal and HR programs who worked day and night to make it happen, along with the Treasurer's Office for providing technical support and connecting SFHSA to GiveCard, the financial technology partner who provided the gift card and pulled many all-nighters to get this up and running so quickly, the Mayor's Office, Crankstart, and SF Marin Food Bank and so many others. Trent reiterated how proud he was that the city acted quickly to address the federal uncertainty and to provide the additional food support to San Francisco's CalFresh recipients during the holiday season. This was an example of how the Agency can partner with other City departments to act fast during emergencies. Additionally, it provided some lessons for future activations which staff are documenting.

With 35% of the gift cards not yet redeemed as of today, SFHSA and the vendor, who has been fantastic, have identified who hasn't redeemed the gift cards yet and what neighborhoods they are in—disproportionately in the Southeast part of the city as well as in the Mission—and engaging CBOs in those communities to get the word out and get that activation rate as close to 100% as possible.

## STATE

The counties, through the County Welfare Directors Association (CWDA), has begun to develop its state legislative and budget agenda for 2026. Much of it is going to be centered around mitigation strategies in response to HR-1, which impacts CalFresh and Medi-Cal eligibility significantly. The workload for SFBN staff will increase in order to ensure that as many benefits recipients as possible retain their benefits despite the new requirements through HR-1. CWDA conducted a survey of all 58 counties to get a picture of the workload impacts and the costs associated with HR-1 response in order to work with the governor's office, Department of Finance and the legislature to get funding in the budget for next fiscal year. Most of the HR-1-related changes don't start until 2027. However, as a result of the state

budget that was passed in July, starting on January 1, most undocumented residents of California age 19 and older will no longer be eligible for Medi-Cal. Undocumented individuals who already receive Medi-Cal do not lose their benefits; those who may have lost their benefits and don't reapply within a certain period of time will not be eligible either. Trent reiterated that these changes were from the state budget, not federal/HR-1. The Agency is working on communications targeting this community with the following messaging: (i) apply for Medi-Cal now either through the website, via phone or in person, (ii) for current recipients of Medi-Cal, reminders about the importance of maintaining benefits by checking the mail, looking for notices then submitting the necessary paperwork in order to stay on Medi-Cal, and (iii) if recipients lose eligibility and do not reapply within a specified amount of time, coverage will be totally lost. Another Medi-Cal change caused by the state budget situation is the reinstitution of the asset test.

#### LOCAL

Trent and his team, in partnership with the Department of Public Health (DPH), were scheduled to host a media roundtable after the commission meeting to present the changes to CalFresh and Medi-Cal due to HR-1 along with the state's changes to undocumented eligibility occurring January 1, 2026. The Mayor plans to kick off the meeting.

#### AGENCY

SFHSA's communications team has been really busy, not only with the grocery gift card implementation and the media roundtable but also planning & advertising a Benefits 101 webinar, the first of which was last Thursday. The Benefits 101 webinar is in partnership with the City's Office of Civic Engagement and Immigrant Affairs (OCEIA) and the Immigrant Legal Resource Center (ILRC). The Agency has hosted benefits 101 webinars in the past and they have proven to be incredibly helpful for our community partners. The webinar covers the range of benefits that SFHSA offers, the many and often complicated rules (through no fault of the Agency) as defined by the federal and state governments, required documents and eligibility criteria so the attendees can better assist their clients in the community. The webinar is now posted on [www.sfhsa.org](http://www.sfhsa.org).

#### CalWORKs

Counties and the state have moved away from process-oriented measurements (e.g., number of benefits recipients participating in a work activity) to outcomes (e.g., what number of benefits recipients gain employment, then once they leave assistance are remaining employed and not returning to the program) through a strategic planning effort called the CalWORKs Outcomes and Accountability Review (Cal-OAR) which operates on a five-year cycle. The SFHSA CalWORKs team completed the self-assessment and the system improvement plan and are now working on a final progress report due to the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) in January. Trent highlighted two of the outcomes, noting he was proud of the team for their achievements, thanking Anna Pineda, Deputy Director of Economic Support & Self-Sufficiency and the workforce development staff: (i) the team increased engagement from one out of five

families participating to one in three and within a short time frame of about 11 months; (ii) the reentry rate—cases that exited CalWORKs and returned within 12 months—was reduced from 22% of families returning within a year to 13%.

#### *JobsNOW!*

Trent highlighted another workforce development program he was proud of, not only for its longevity but also the strength of the partnership with UCSF—the UCSF EXCEL Medical Assistant program. JobsNOW! participants go through an education training program sponsored by UCSF. The most recent cohort graduated 15 out of 23 participants, all of whom were recipients of benefits (i.e., CalWORKs, CAAP and/or CalFresh). In spite of a hiring freeze at UCSF, outcomes remain strong with many participants gaining permanent, full-time positions.

The subsidized wage-based learning program, also referred to as the OST program, is also making progress. The OST program is a partnership with private employers. SFHSA pays the wages of the JobsNOW! participants and the private employers agree to provide on-the-job training with a stronger commitment to hire once the program ends.

The Public Service Trainee (PST) program has relaunched. This program is a partnership with other city departments where SFHSA pays the PST wages, largely through federal and state sources, to work for, mainly, DPW, DPH, Rec & Park and SFMTA. When the news of the relaunch was announced, Trent's colleagues at a department head meeting shared how happy and relieved they were because they really rely on PSTs to help perform work from beautification through DPW to gardening at Rec & Park, etc.

#### *CAAP*

The County Adult Assistance Program (CAAP) continues to integrate Workforce Development services, moving away from siloed services. Employment specialists are transitioning to a group-orientation model, the purpose of which is efficiency and efficacy, to move CAAP recipients more quickly into a workforce development track that they want to do and have the skills to be able to succeed.

#### *FCS*

Thank you to President Kahn for participating in the Annual Adoption Day event. Nine children were adopted that day which brings the year-to-date total to 55. Other than reunifying a child with their birth parents, adoption is the next best outcome for children to have a permanent home.

Trent closed his report with news of the passing of disability activist and icon Alice Wong. She was incredibly generous with her time, donating her expertise to SFHSA. She recently was the featured guest at the Agency's National Disability Employment Awareness Month event for staff where she reflected on ableism and creating a more inclusive workplace. Alice was a force for change. Her work embodied the values of the "Access is Love"

project, a campaign she co-created. This continues to inspire us as we work to provide equitable and accessible programs and services for people with disabilities and older adults throughout our City. We are so grateful for her work, her generosity, and her love. May her legacy live on. Trent thought it would be a nice gesture if the Commission would adjourn in her honor.

President Kahn's call for public comment yielded no responses.

#### EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH

President Kahn presented the November 2025 Employee of the Month Award to PRISCILLA MCCORD, an SFBN Eligibility Worker, which she accepted with thanks to all in attendance.

#### CONSENT CALENDAR

President Kahn's call for public comment related to the consent calendar yielded no responses.

On motion of Commissioner Coghlan McDonald, seconded and unanimously carried, the Commission approved the consent calendar, comprising actions taken by the Executive Director since the October 23, 2025 Regular Meeting in accordance with Commission authorization of November 20, 2025:

1. Submission of request to encumber funds in the total amount of \$448,025 for purchase of services or supplies and contingency amounts.
2. Submission of 1 temporary position for possible use in order to fill positions on a temporary basis made during the period 10/21/25 to 11/14/25.
3. Submission of 4 temporary appointments for possible use in order to fill positions on a temporary basis made during the period 10/21/25 to 11/14/25.

#### COMMISSION BUSINESS – ACTION ITEMS

##### AHSING SOLUTIONS

Sam Dodge, Director of Street Response Coordination at the Department of Emergency Management (DEM), presented the request to enter into a new grant agreement with AHSING SOLUTIONS.

Commissioner Bravo asked about reporting, are all calls included in the outcomes data and is a full incident report filed? Mr. Dodge responded in the affirmative, adding that the police, Sheriff's Office and Ambassadors are often working in tandem and responses converge.

President Kahn's call for public comment yielded no responses.

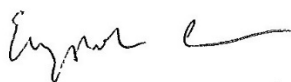
On motion of Commissioner Bravo, seconded and unanimously carried, the Commission approved the request to modify the existing grant agreement with AHSING SOLUTIONS for the provision of the Community Safety and Engagement Program; for the period of 11/1/2025 through 12/31/25; in the additional amount of \$132,175 plus a 0% contingency for a revised total grant amount not to exceed \$630,442.

GENERAL PUBLIC  
COMMENT

President Kahn's call for general public comment yielded no responses.

ADJOURNMENT

President Kahn adjourned the meeting in honor of Alice Wong at 10:17a.m.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elizabeth LaBarre', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Elizabeth LaBarre  
Commission Secretary  
Human Services Commission

Posted: 12/5/25