

Frequently Asked Questions:

What is **Breathe Extended** - LA County's Guaranteed Income Program?

Breathe is a guaranteed income project that will provide 200 former Los Angeles County DCFS foster youth with \$1,000 per month for two years. While the benefits of guaranteed income programs have been documented, this is an independent research project that will be used to study the effects of this type of program so that the County and other jurisdictions can learn about the project's impact on the economic stability of participants, as well as its impact on participants' overall health and well-being.

Guaranteed income is a monthly cash payment given directly to individuals. It is unconditional, with no strings attached on how to spend it and no work requirements. It is meant to supplement, not replace, the existing social safety net.

Program participants do not need to participate in the research study to remain in the program and receive their monthly payments.

Who is eligible to apply?

To be eligible for the expanded program for former foster youth, an applicant must meet **ALL** the following requirements below:

- Be between 21 years old and under 24 (won't turn 24 until September 1, 2023 or later) when applying
- Be a former Los Angeles County DCFS foster youth who was in care on or after their 18th birthday (AKA "aged out")
- Live in a Los Angeles County neighborhood that falls at or below 100% of the County's Area Median Income (AMI)
- Have a household income that falls at or below 100% of the County's AMI, for a single person household (see [Income Eligibility Table](#) below)

<OR>

Have a household income that falls at or below 120% of the County's AMI, for households with two or more persons (see [Income Eligibility Table](#) below)

- Have been negatively financially impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic
- Not be currently enrolled in another Guaranteed Income project offered by the County, a city, or other public or private entity (**EXAMPLES:** *Breathe, Long Beach Pledge, West Hollywood Pilot for Guaranteed Income, El Monte Guaranteed Income Program, Miracle Messages, TAYPortunity, or others*)

Additional eligibility notes that apply to both cohorts:

- Only one participant per household may be selected to participate
- Applicants should apply using their physical address. A mailing address is only acceptable when someone attests to being homeless
- Someone living in a Transitional Housing program is treated as homeless
- Students with a permanent address in a qualifying census tract but who attend school outside of LA County are eligible to for this pilot program

Income Eligibility Table

	Number of Persons Residing in your Household							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8**
Maximum Annual Household Income Amount*	\$56,000	\$76,800	\$86,400	\$96,000	\$103,700	\$111,350	\$119,050	\$126,700

* These amounts are for your pre-tax or gross income.

** For every additional member of your household above 8, add an another \$7,700.

How do I apply? Can I apply in person?

You can apply online or using a cell phone, computer or tablet at <https://ceo.lacounty.gov/pai/breathe/>. You can also visit a number of sites to apply in-person, using a computer at that location. A list of available sites with support to help you complete the online application will be listed on this website before the application is open.

The research survey for collecting baseline data that is attached to the application may take approximately 45 minutes to complete.

There will be questions about your annual income and your income earned over the last four months. It will be helpful to know this information before you start to complete the application.

Enrollment Process

Completing the Application:

Applications must be completed through the program’s websites at either <http://breathe.lacounty.gov> or <http://respira.lacounty.gov>

Application Assistance:

If an applicant would like additional assistance, they can call the Strength Based Community Change (SBCC) Hotline at (323) 736-2122 between the hours of Monday – Friday, 8 am – 8 pm, and

Saturdays 9 am – 1 pm. They can also choose to visit one of the multiple drop-in centers that have been set up across the County. The list of these can be found on the website or by calling SBCC.

Additionally, if an applicant has a disability that makes it difficult for them to apply, they can use accessibility software on their device (the application is compatible with this), visit a drop-in center if possible, or call SBCC to get help completing the application over the phone.

Application Window:

The expanded program application will be available on the website for 14 days between Tuesday, June 20th at 6 am and Monday, July 3rd at 11:59 pm.

Questions: If someone has questions, they should contact SBCC at breathedcfs@sbaycenter.com or (323) 736-2122, or the Poverty Alleviation Initiative at: pai@ceo.lacounty.gov

How will participants be selected?

200 former Los Angeles County DCFS foster youth will be randomly selected from the pool of eligible applicants by the research team, the University of Pennsylvania, Center for Guaranteed Income Research, much like a blind drawing.

The date and time applicants apply, or the method, will not impact the selection process, as long as they apply during the open enrollment period. As this is also an independent research study, applicants will be asked a series of questions to gather baseline data on overall health and well-being. Some of these questions are sensitive and may be difficult to answer. **[These questions are only for purposes of gathering baseline data for the research study. Answers to them will not have any impact on being selected to participate in the project.](#)** The participants will be randomly selected from the pool of eligible applicants who meet the stated eligibility requirements and submits an application during the application enrollment period.

- Participants selected to participate will be notified by SBCC as part of the on boarding process
- Control group participants will be notified by the research team
- Applicants not selected to participate will be notified, by either email or text, that they were not selected, if they gave the County permission to contact them on the screening tool portion of the application
- Regular updates on the selection process will also be posted on the website

What is the “control group?” Is there a benefit for participating?

After participants are selected, another 450 applicants will be randomly chosen to participate in the research study only, as part of the “control group.” Control group participants will not receive the monthly payment. They will complete periodic surveys and interviews about their well-being so that information can be compared to the “treatment group” and help determine whether the program was effective. Control group participants will receive \$50 gift cards for each survey completed (this does not include the application and initial survey).

How will the research study work? How will success be measured?

The University of Pennsylvania, along with other local and national research partners, will conduct a randomized control study to measure the project’s outcomes. Participants are not required to participate in the research study in order to receive the monthly payments. For those who do choose to be part of the study, program and control group participants will be asked to provide information periodically on different aspects of their overall health and well-being across different domain areas, and will both receive a \$50 gift card for each survey completed (this does not include the application and initial survey).

The individual information collected will only be used by the research team, and no individual information will be shared with anyone else. Only aggregate data will be shared with others to report on the overall project outcomes as a whole. The data will be used to help reform current policies, guide future programs, and aid in the expansion of our social safety net.

If I start my application, but cannot finish all at once, can I save the information and continue it later?

Unfortunately, there is not a way to save your information, if you need to stop for some reason. You should be prepared to complete the application in one sitting.

How will I know that my application was received?

Once your application is completed and submitted, you will receive an automated email confirmation stating that your application was received. Once you receive this, there is nothing more for you to do. The selection process will occur at a later date, after the application window has closed.

If selected, how will I receive my monthly Guaranteed Income distribution? Do I need to have a bank account?

Monthly payments to participants will be distributed through debit cards. You do not need to have a bank account to participate.

Who will I be engaging with if I'm selected to participate?

The County has partnered with a non-profit community-based organization, Strength-Based Community Change (SBCC) to be the program administrator for **Breathe**. SBCC and their team will be the people who answer questions from applicants, contact participants as needed, and troubleshoot any issues that arise over the course of the program. SBCC can be reached at: Breathedcfs@sbaycenter.com or (323) 736-2122.

How will I know if I've been selected as a participant?

The program administrators will contact selected participants using the contact information provided with the application.

Will I hear from someone if I wasn't chosen?

The program administrators will email applicants who were not selected to be part of the program to let them know, *if they checked the box giving the County permission to contact them outside of the application process and provided an email address and/or cell phone number in that section*. Additionally, the County will update the website once all notifications to participants have been completed. If you check the website and it says that notifications to participants have been completed and you have not been contacted, then you have not been selected to participate.

I was not selected to participate but I still need help. Are there any resources available to me?

If you would like to find other resources that may help, please click on this link <https://ceo.lacounty.gov/pai/resources-and-opportunities/>, or contact SBCC at Breathedcfs@sbaycenter.com or (323) 736-2122.

Will my public benefits be affected by participating?

Some benefits could be affected while others will not be affected at all. Those selected to participate will have an opportunity to talk to a benefits counselor about their specific situation regarding any public benefits they are receiving such as CalWORKS, CalFresh, General Relief, and others before starting in the program. At that time, they will be able to decide whether they want to participate.

Who do I contact if my Guaranteed Income distribution is not received?

You should contact SBCC, at: Breathedcfs@sbaycenter.com or (323) 736-2122.

What should I do if my contact information changes?

If your contact information changes, please email us at pai@ceo.lacounty.gov or Breathedcfs@sbaycenter.com, or call SBCC at (323) 736-2122, and include your full name and the contact information you used to apply (phone number, email address, street address), along with your updated contact information.

Will I have to verify my information?

Yes, those selected to participate will need to show proof of meeting the eligibility requirements stated above before being enrolled in the program.

Why should we provide people with guaranteed income?

Early research suggests that cash may be the simplest yet most powerful way to do the most good for the most people. It can be powerful for three reasons. First, it moves quickly. Even with U.S. Treasury problems, 80 million American households have already received a check the government just mandated several months ago. Second, it allows for flexibility. No two American households are identical in their needs. While one will need funds for rent, others will need it for childcare, and yet others will need it for a laptop so their child can engage in distance learning. And of course, most families need something different every month. Third, many people are only partially covered by or completely left out of existing social safety net programs. Cash could help fill these gaps.

Why not just guarantee jobs or housing?

Cash is effective and immediate, but it is not a silver bullet. A cash infusion can address immediate needs and provide the level of consistency required to keep a household from going into a greater financial crisis. Larger systemic changes must be addressed to ensure affordable housing, healthcare, and jobs are available. We need meaningful, systemic change to our economy – and cash is just one part of that.

How do local communities benefit from guaranteed income?

More cash in people's pockets keeps families financially secure and stimulates the local economy. Especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, a guaranteed income could stimulate spending at the local level and generate much-needed state and local revenue to drive the economy across the country. Addressing the needs of our residents undoubtedly improves the circumstances of the broader community.

Glossary of Terms

Average Median Income (AMI): AMI is the median average income calculated for a particular area across our country. In this case, we are using household AMI for Los Angeles County and its census tracts.

Participants: People who have been selected to receive the Guaranteed Income payment of \$1,000 per month for 24 months.

Treatment Group: The treatment group is another way of referring to the participants who have been selected to receive the Guaranteed Income payments.

Control Group: People who will not receive the Guaranteed Income payment but have been invited to participate in the research activities.

Non-Participants: People who will not receive a guaranteed income through the project and will not be invited to participate in research activities.

Screening Tool: The initial questions determine a participant's eligibility for the Guaranteed Income project. Once eligibility has been approved, an in-depth application survey must be filled out. The screening tool must be completed online.

Application Survey: The application survey is a complete overview of your demographic background, mental, physical, and financial health, goals, and overall well-being. The survey may take approximately one hour to complete. In-person assistance to complete the online application survey is available. The survey must be completed online.

Cash Distribution: The cash distribution is the monthly payment amount of \$1,000 that will be given to participants in the project. These payments will be disbursed through debit cards.