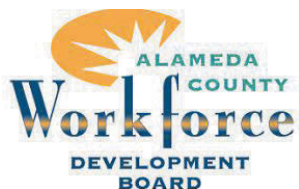


A Fresh Start

Having a job won't fix
every problem in your
life, but it will fix most
problems in your life



CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES
ALAMEDA COUNTY

Learn how we have partnered
to help you find a career and
support your family.



A Special Advertising Supplement



PARTNERING FOR YOUR SUCCESS

The year 2020 was extraordinarily challenging, especially for parents in Alameda County.

As you struggled to balance remote learning and childcare while keeping your family safe from the COVID-19 virus, you may also have seen your job disappear or your paycheck cut.

And if you were under- or unemployed before the pandemic started, your concerns were amplified. It can seem overwhelming and insurmountable.

But we are here to help. Alameda County Child Support Services has partnered with the Alameda County Workforce Development Board to give immediate and low-to-no-cost assistance to parents.

For example, if you recently lost your job and need to contact your child support specialist to modify your support payments, she will also connect you with her counterpart at Workforce Development, where you can be linked to financial assistance, job workshops, career training and local employers.

The best advice from the staff at both agencies? Don't delay. Get in touch today so we can help you get your family back on stable footing and secure a bright and hopeful future.

To contact Alameda County Child Support Services, visit www.acdcss.org or call 866-901-3212. To contact the Alameda County Workforce Development Board, visit www.acwdb.org or call 510-259-3842.

Overcoming a Challenge

How to turn an
unexpected layoff into a lucrative new job

BY ALLEN PIERLEONI

Hannah Lambruschini didn't see it coming. She'd worked as a digital analyst for Kaiser Permanente in Pleasanton for five years, commuting from her home in Newark, when she was laid off in December 2019. "It happened right before Christmas," she says.

With a husband who had retired, one son in college and another son just out of high school, she was the family's sole breadwinner.

"It was crushing and I was depressed for a long time," says Lambruschini, 52.

While applying for unemployment insurance benefits, "I happened to run into a really good counselor," she recalls. "She recommended I talk with the Alameda County Workforce Development Board, in terms of its re-involvement programs. I thought it was a good avenue to explore."

The WDB's mission is to empower job seekers with the tools they need to re-enter the work force. Lambruschini contacted WDB counselors in late January.

"They explained how the program works and what kind of help I could get," she says. "It was a great thing that happened to me."

Over the next six months, Lambruschini immersed herself in the WDB's ocean of opportunities, including a grant to help with the household bills and a slew of job development classes.

"I was able to improve my interview skills and talk with classmates on Zoom and share their insights," she says. "That was absolutely helpful. (The WDB program) is very productive and can help you get out of your comfort zone and meet people who can help you."

Lambruschini focused her studies on "business intelligence," a tech-driven process of analyzing business data and distilling it into information for practical use. For that, her job coach set her up with a Metrix Learning portal, which offers new-skills training to dislocated workers.

"I put that on my resume and it helped me with my job search," she says.

Lambruschini began interviewing for jobs in June, and by July got a call from a healthcare company in Long Beach. A part-time virtual gig as a business and data analyst turned into a full-time job in October.

As fortune would have it, "they use (a software tool called Tableau), which I learned on the Metrix Learning portal (at the WDB)," she says.

How have things changed for her? "Finding a new career has helped me regain my self-esteem and confidence," she says.

What's her best advice to job seekers? "Never give up," she says. "You have to go out and look for the support."



**DID YOU
KNOW**

...

Alameda County Child Support Services has partnered with the Alameda County Workforce Development Board to give immediate and low-to-no-cost assistance to parents.



DID YOU KNOW...

Research shows that children who receive child support do better academically and are more likely to graduate from high school.



WHERE TO FIND HELP

The Right Direction

Job Centers can **help** parents **develop** a new career

BY
ANNE
STOKES

In 2018, Pearl Burks went to the Eden Area office of America's Job Centers of California. A recently laid-off single mother, she was looking for help supporting herself and her two children.

"I was unfocused on what I wanted to do," she says. "I started with (building) a resume and then in 2019 I decided I needed to go back to school." With help from the center, Burks was able to earn her certificate in medical administration thanks to the Workforce Innovative Opportunity Act. The federally funded program provides grants for adult education and training that enables job seekers to get industry-recognized credentials. And it helps businesses train employees to fill those positions.

"It's an intensive one-on-one individualized service that we offer to clients. They get a dedicated career coach to work with them on their job search," says Vi Ngo, the Eden Area site manager. "If they lack certain skills, need specific upskilling or training to move up the career ladder, for example, then there's a possibility of exploring training programs. And the WIOA program will actually fund that training program if it's a demand occupation that we know is high growth and high wage."

In addition to administering the WIOA program, the Eden

Area center offers job seekers a wide range of services, including virtual career readiness workshops, an online job board, virtual job fairs and a chat line with dedicated staff available to answer questions or refer clients to additional resources. It also supports businesses through the WIOA by connecting employers with qualified candidates and providing subsidized employment and training.

Further, the WIOA program provides COVID-impacted relief through Supportive Services grants that can cover living costs like utilities, internet access, transportation, work supplies and

more. Burks was able to qualify for help with rent and other bills.

Even though she's still job searching, Burks says the Eden Area office continues to help her through this tough economic time with job leads and advice. She says she's optimistic that the solid career foundation she's built will lead to a better life for herself and her family.

"I'm going to be able to do what I want to do and pay my bills at the same time, on time at that," Burks says. "It's given me a lot of hope and faith and motivation (because) I can stick to one thing and keep going. ... I want to keep going in the right direction."



Being unemployed can be frightening and confusing.

"If they don't know where to go, we're really the first step," says Vi Ngo, site manager for the Eden Area American Job Centers of California. "We have staff who are experts in community resources, emergency grants, subsidized employment, we can help provide that to the community." Here's what is offered at all Workforce Development job centers:

Financial assistance

- Free or low-cost occupational training programs
- Supportive Services grants can help with bills, housing, childcare, retraining, job search assistance and other work-related costs
- Referrals to community resources such as low-cost or free internet services, food banks and COVID testing sites

Education and career training

- Resume writing and interviewing skills
- Career readiness workshops
- Quarterly job fairs
- Online job board
- Free online courses including new job skills training, software, industry certifications and more

Employment

- Connections with local employers and open positions
- Subsidized training and wages for new hires or existing employees

Visit edenareanestop.org or call 510-670-5700 for more information.

Connections for Parents

Alameda County child support specialists can guide families to a brighter future

BY ALLEN PIERLEONI



All families everywhere experience overwhelming issues at one time or another, and all of them need help when those crises arise.

That's where Alameda County Child Support Services can enter the situation. Its mission is to provide empathetic, unbiased, accessible support to both parents. Services are available virtually, by phone and by email, as well as through the ACCSS website, where you can apply for child support, estimate your child support and find links to make a payment or get help with custody and visitation.

Most importantly, if you've lost a job or seen a reduction in income, child support specialists can help you modify what you pay now and reduce past-due child support debt. They can also refer you to other services, such as the Workforce Development Board, for financial assistance and employment opportunities.

In fact, every day, ACCSS' staff are on the front lines offering parents nonjudgmental guidance through the system so that families can thrive—their one and only goal.

One of those child support specialists is Michelle Arrington, an 18-year veteran who has dealt with every situation imaginable.

"Just forget everything you ever saw on 'Jerry Springer'—Child Support Services isn't like that," says Arrington. "We are not adversarial, we really want to see parents succeed, it's better for their children. We ask, 'What issues are you having and how can we help?'"

Initially, clients' emotions can be intense, but ACCSS staff are experts at lowering the situational temperature. "Some clients may not like or agree with their options," Arrington says. "But we try to make sure they make the right decisions."

On the other hand, many of Arrington's clients have been "so appreciative, it makes you blush. When you get those accolades, it gives you a little extra pep in your step."

As the mother of two young children herself, she finds "almost a kinship" with some of her clients. "Even though I'm in an authoritative position, I hope it doesn't feel that way on their end when we're talking," she says.

Much of Arrington's job satisfaction comes from "giving clients a sense of calm, and being able to educate and help at the same time," she says. "Like when I have two people (in conflict) and I'm able to get the message across, 'Things may seem bleak right now, but you will get through this.'"

Helped by Both Sides

A child support client finds new livelihood at Workforce Development

BY ALLEN PIERLEONI

The Alameda County Workforce Development Board is like a treasure hidden in plain sight. For job seekers, it can be a journey of empowerment through a wealth of virtual courses that teach new skills devoted to helping people return to their existing career fields—or embark on new ones—better equipped than ever.

That's how Jawad Mehdizadeh of Fremont sees it. He'd been a supervisor at Berkeley Farms in Hayward for five years when it was announced that the milk plant would close for good at the end of April. Mehdizadeh is the father of two children and was naturally worried about how he would meet his child support obligations and keep himself afloat.

But before he and hundreds of other employees showed up for their last day, the WDB reached out.

"We had Zoom meetings with them where they explained their job-search program and offered it to us—distance learning, training, services. They were proactive and did what they said they would do," he recalls.

"We ask, 'What issues are you having and how can we help?'"

Michelle Arrington
Child support specialist, Alameda County Child Support Services

Mehdizadeh and his co-workers didn't know the WDB even existed before then. "We were wondering what was going to happen to us," he says. "Now I look at what (the WDB) has done for us and it's phenomenal."

The WDB class that caught Mehdi-zadeh's attention was an intense course in project management.

"I started my training within two weeks of Berkeley Farms shutting down," he says. "I didn't have to wait weeks or months, which is another thing I appreciated. It's been like a short MBA program, that's how much it taught and enabled me."

Now, after five months of full-time study—"that has been energizing"—Mehdizadeh is preparing to take the final exam.

"When I was in meetings with upper management at Berkeley Farms, they used terminology I didn't understand," he says. "Now I know exactly what they were talking about. The course has enabled me so much that I won't be looking for a supervisor position when I return to the job market, but a managerial position."

Mehdizadeh also plans to take a certification exam offered by the Project Management Institute, a global professional organization. Passing the WDB exam and earning the PMI certificate "will open new career doors and turn my life around," he says.

What's his best advice for other job seekers?

"Use this pandemic downtime to get with the Workforce Development Board, learn new skills and knowledge, and elevate yourself," he says. "Investing in yourself is priceless."



Back to Work

Alameda County Workforce Development Career Center coordinators can help parents find a better job or a new career—even now

BY
ALLEN
PIERLEONI

It's a perfect storm for job seekers and their families, in the worst of ways: The coronavirus caused record-level unemployment, a wrecked economy, and extreme stress as people across the employment spectrum have unexpectedly found themselves jobless, through no fault of their own.

The Alameda County Workforce Development Board and its roster of partners want to change that dynamic by offering help and guidance to job seekers via a lengthy menu of mostly free virtual educational programs, workshops and other tools.

"You have to squint really hard to see the silver lining (in the job hunt), but it's there," says WDB Career Center coordinator David Dias. "We're seeing more and more people come to the realization that the (unemployment) situation has become direr, and they're reaching out to us."

Dias helps oversee and fund the WDB's four career centers in Alameda County, which provide day-to-day services to job seekers.

"We are asking job seekers—who are victims of these times—to dig down and push through, and use our career

services centers to help them find jobs," Dias says. "There is no benefit in waiting for this situation to blow over. When you wait, you create gaps in your resume."

Of the many service center offerings open to job seekers, Dias sees several as the most vital.

Supportive services can help offset the costs of educational materials, training, transportation expenses and more, he says.

Because job seekers come from extremely diverse work experiences and backgrounds, specific workshops and training can provide job basics, fine-tune existing skills and teach new ones, and offer access to employers.

"Getting a job by just blasting your resume online is not the way to do it," Dias says. "It's very much about who you know, so networking through virtual job fairs and networking events is as important as anything else."

Dias' best advice: "Find the inspiration to reach out and get help. As dark as things may seem, there are people here who can help you find a job. The success stories are why we do what we do."

"As dark as things may seem, there are people here who can help you find a job."

David Dias
WDB Career Center coordinator





HELP IS
AVAILABLE

Alameda County Child Support Services offers a variety of services to help parents at low or no cost.

- ✓ Requesting child support orders from the court
- ✓ Requesting medical support from the court
- ✓ Enforcing child and spousal support orders
- ✓ Modifying child support orders
- ✓ Collecting and sending child support
- ✓ Establishing paternity (fatherhood)
- ✓ Locating parents

For parents who are struggling to pay child support, we can:

- ✓ Work with you to release your driver's license if it's been suspended
- ✓ Review your case to change the child support amount
- ✓ Determine if you are eligible for debt reduction (COAP)
- ✓ Connect you with the Alameda County Workforce Development Board for financial and employment help

Contact us today at 866-901-3212 for help and more information.

Life Happens

Learn what to do when you get hit with changes beyond your control

BY KRYSTA SCRIPTER

I'm a parent who pays child support and I lost my job. What should I do?

When someone loses a job or has a change in life circumstances, it doesn't automatically modify his or her child support obligations. Alameda County Child Support Services can review the original agreement and provide guidelines to follow. But it's important to let ACCSS know sooner rather than later.

Supervising Attorney Vangeria Harvey shares why you should contact ACCSS as soon as possible when things in your life change unexpectedly.

- Child support isn't retroactive, so unless you alert your child support specialist about your change as soon as it happens, you still will need to pay the same amount as before. **If you lost your job in October, but didn't report until December, you're still on the hook for those original payments.**
- It can take **45 to 60 days** to get a court date for changes in child support. Reporting these changes immediately preserves the original date so that the change can reflect the current financial situation.
- If you report your change in circumstances and provide enough evidence to ACCSS quickly enough, **you may not even need to go to court.** Harvey says they can draft and file a document with the court as a stipulation, alleviating the need for a court hearing and any further delay in actually modifying the support.



I'm making payments but my child lives with me now. Can the child support order be changed?

Yes, when there is a change in custody or visitation, your support can be modified. But it's important to remember that just like a change in income, it doesn't happen automatically. If you simply stop paying your support payments, it can accrue as debt you're still responsible for. The best advice is to act immediately to modify your child support order by contacting your child support specialist.

If I have a suspended driver's license or a hold on my passport because of unpaid child support, can I get it released?

Your child support specialist can work with you to release your driver's license, particularly if you can show you need your license to go to work, even if you haven't paid all your arrears. A passport hold can only be lifted if your unpaid child support balance is zero, but a child support specialist can sometimes help you reduce the amount you owe so you can pay it off more quickly.



DID YOU KNOW...

If your license has been suspended because you have fallen behind in your support payments, contact your child support specialist to understand your options.

More Than A Job

Why changing careers can be rewarding

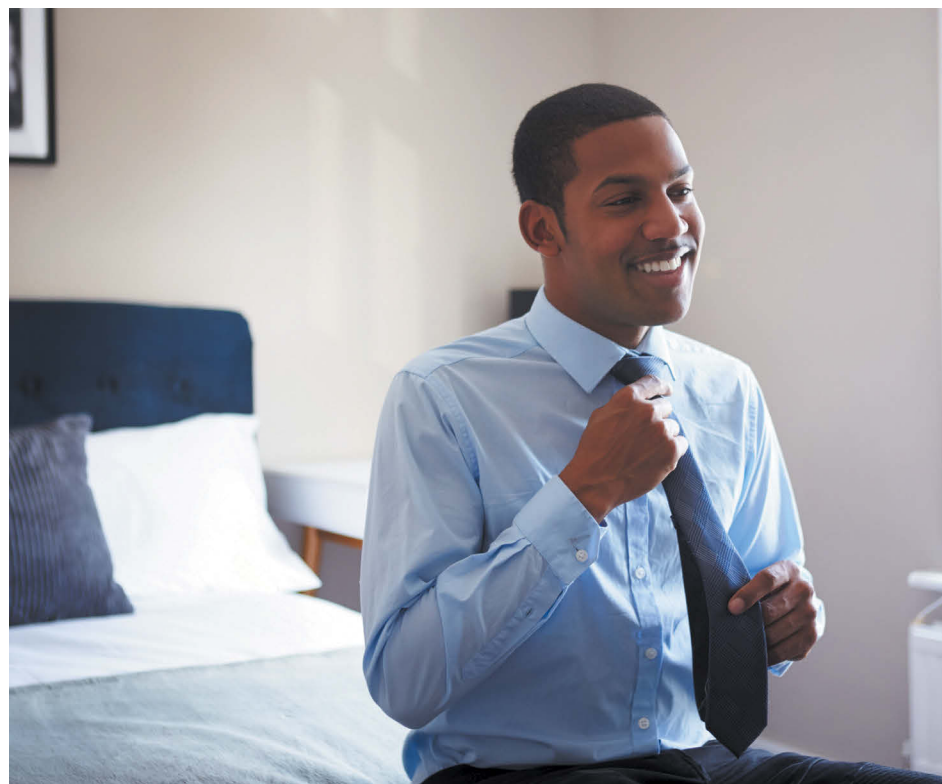
BY KRYSTA SCRIPTER

Jobs aren't just about paying bills—they can also determine how we feel about our lives, ourselves and our futures.

So when someone loses a job or faces difficult circumstances surrounding their career or industry, changing gears can be stressful.

"It provides them with structure and assurance of a paycheck because when someone is not working, they lose a lot of structure. They lose a lot of their identity," says Shirley Calvert, a career advisor at the Ohlone College Tri-Cities Career Center.

The added stress of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has forced many to either work from home or look for new work entirely, isn't helping. Many industries have been impacted, Calvert says, so being willing to look at new options may mean the difference between dinner on the table and not being able to provide for your family. "So they would need to shift gears to see, 'How



can I transfer my skill to a different industry that has opportunities? What skills do I need to acquire in order to be competitive?"

Calvert has found that while it's difficult for some to let go of the idea of the career they had, those who are on unemployment longer tend to be more open to new career ideas as time passes. The hardest part can just be understanding how to transfer appropriate skills into a new setting.

In one example, a client of Calvert wanted to work at a food bank after being laid off from her previous job. Her experience working in management, however, made her appear over-qualified for an entry-level position. Calvert and her client took a look at her resume and skillset to see if they could present them as a better fit. They also devised a solution: She took a temporary position

that paid less than her previous job, something Calvert says endeared her to her prospective food bank employers.

"Because she had a temp position, which was at a much lower rate, she demonstrated to them that, 'Hey, I'm really serious about wanting to be in this industry and willing to take the entry-level position in the industry because I have such a passion for it.'"

It worked: Calvert's client got her dream job. Working with a career consultant gave this client a chance to support her family, but also pivot to a more meaningful new career.

"The best thing an individual can do is to be open and flexible about the opportunities," Calvert explains. "When they're open to possibilities, they're more likely to investigate and explore new careers that they have not considered."



ACT
NOW

"There's almost a shelf life when you're a job seeker," says David Dias, career center coordinator at the Alameda County Workforce Development Board. "If you're unemployed, you want to get a job as soon as possible because if they see someone that has been out of work for a certain period of time, you know, six months to a year, that's a red flag for a lot of employers. ...You don't want to wait for the economy to get better."

Waiting tables after working an office job may not be your style, but this is where the Workforce Development Board can help. From online classes to resume workshops to job fairs, going to a career center sooner rather than later can mean the difference between a temporary setback and a career slump that will be harder to get out of as time goes on.

"I just think that folks need to dig deep, deep inside, and just keep digging until they find a way to get motivated to get help," Dias said. "I would certainly recommend a job seeker not to try and go about this by themselves."



DID YOU KNOW...

If your circumstances have changed:

Contact Alameda County Child Support Services to see if your order can be changed. You might also be eligible for the Compromise of Arrears Program (COAP) to reduce your child support debt.

Reach Out Today

Find a wealth of services and **caring people who want to help**

CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES ALAMEDA COUNTY

Alameda County Child Support Services

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Pleasanton, CA 94588
(866) 901-3212

acdcss.org

Twitter: @AlCo_CS

Facebook: @AlCoChildSupport



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(510) 259-3842
acwdb.org
Twitter: @acwdb
Facebook: @acwdb

Career Service Providers:

- 1 Eden Area America's Job Center of California for Hayward, San Leandro, San Lorenzo, Ashland, Cherryland and Castro Valley residents:**
www.edenareaonestop.org
edenareaajcc@rubiconprograms.org
(510) 672-4150 or (925) 914-7675
- 2 Tri-Valley Career Center in Dublin for Dublin, Pleasanton, Livermore and Sunol residents:**
www.trivalleyonestop.org
employerservices@clpccd.org
- 3 Tri-Cities Career Center in Newark at Ohlone College for Fremont, Union City, and Newark residents:**
www.ohlone.edu/careercenter
careercenter@ohlone.edu
(510) 742-2323
- 4 College of Alameda North-Cities Career Center for Alameda, Berkeley, Emeryville and Piedmont residents:**
coa-ncitiescc@peralta.edu
(510) 748-2208

