

2013

**CHANGES Pilot Program Annual Report**



**Community Help and Awareness of Natural Gas and  
Electricity Services (CHANGES)**



California Public Utilities  
Commission

Consumer Service and  
Information Division

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## ***Executive Summary***

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The California Public Utilities Commission's (CPUC) Consumer Service and Information Division (CSID) is providing this report which documents activities provided through the CPUC Community Help and Awareness of Natural Gas and Electricity Services (CHANGES) pilot program. The report covers January 2013 through December 2013.

The CHANGES pilot provides limited English proficient (LEP) people with natural gas and electricity (energy) education and assistance in the language of the LEP person's choice. Services include education and assistance in understanding and managing energy bills. It includes assistance to help LEP people establish payment arrangements, or renegotiate payment arrangements which are more agreeable with their budgets. The pilot helps LEP people avoid disconnection, or assists them in reconnection of their service. It helps them sign up for consumer assistance programs and financial assistance, and helps them receive adjustments or corrections to their bills. These services are provided through a statewide network of community based organizations (CBOs).

The CHANGES pilot is modeled after a CPUC program which was created to assist California's significant LEP population to understand and resolve issues with telecommunications services and bills. According to the U.S. Census, more than six million, or 22 percent of California's adult population is LEP. The level of LEP people in California is likely to continue, since California remains a primary immigration destination. For the telecommunications program, the CPUC utilizes CBOs to assist LEP consumers. CBOs provide solid support because, through provision of vital services such as food, housing and employment, they have developed strong, positive relationships with the LEP communities they serve. Therefore, the LEP population has come to trust the CBOs.

While providing these services in selected locations throughout the state, the CHANGES pilot provides opportunity for the CPUC to collect data to demonstrate the level of demand for these services. The CPUC collects demographic data on the populations served, and whether those served fall within the income eligibility requirements for the California Alternate Rates for Energy Program (CARE) which is provided through the CPUC. The data collected is to be used to determine whether the CHANGES pilot should be made a permanent program, and if so, whether the services should be expanded to encompass all areas of California.

The pilot will also consider the funding level and funding source for an ongoing program, if adopted. The pilot is funded through CARE, as provided in the California Public Utilities Code,



Section 739.4 (b) (3) (attached), because most of the consumers to be assisted in this pilot are likely to have income levels that fall within CARE eligibility requirements. In fact, the CHANGES Needs and Dispute Resolution database notes that 94% of all of the clients assisted have been CARE eligible.

During the year 2013, 18 CBOs participated in the pilot<sup>1</sup> with the potential to communicate directly with consumers in 31 languages.<sup>2</sup> The CBOs involved in the pilot provide services to California's most vulnerable population, including seniors and people new to California who do not speak English or understand American culture. The services they provided (as of the writing of this report) are summarized below, and are detailed later in this report and in the attachments.

- ❖ **27 Languages** - Outreach, Education Workshops, and Needs and Dispute Resolutions were transacted in 27 languages. Caseworkers are able to directly communicate with the clients seeking their services.
- ❖ **1,773,186 Outreach Contacts** – Through attending community events, and enlisting print and broadcast media, the CBOs contacted clients to inform them of the existence of the CHANGES pilot at their respective CBOs.<sup>3</sup>
- ❖ **14,293 Educated** – CBOs held workshops to educate people on six different topics. CPUC staff observed that the events are so successful that more people remained afterwards to receive assistance, than the CBO staff could manage in the time allotted.
- ❖ **1,295 Cases with 2,902 Needs and Dispute Resolutions** –There were approximately 2.25 resolutions per case, meaning when a client came to a CBO with one concern, the caseworker took care of other matters as well. CSID noted that in the last six months of 2013, the CBOs helped clients receive \$20,491, mostly in financial assistance, but some from bill adjustments and lowered or waived deposits.<sup>4</sup> For example, a Laotian-speaking couple came to a CBO seeking assistance with their bill. The caseworker helped them with the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) application, cancelled the third party energy company because it was charging more than the utility, and explained Medical Baseline and the procedure for getting approval to be on the service.

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<sup>1</sup> The list of the CBOs participating, and the general service area they covered, is attached.

<sup>2</sup> The list of the languages of which the CBOs provided services is attached.

<sup>3</sup> This figure is based on the industry standard of each respective media's reported subscribership.

<sup>4</sup> CSID has only tracked dollar amounts for the last six months; therefore, we assume that on a yearly basis the figure is likely to be higher.



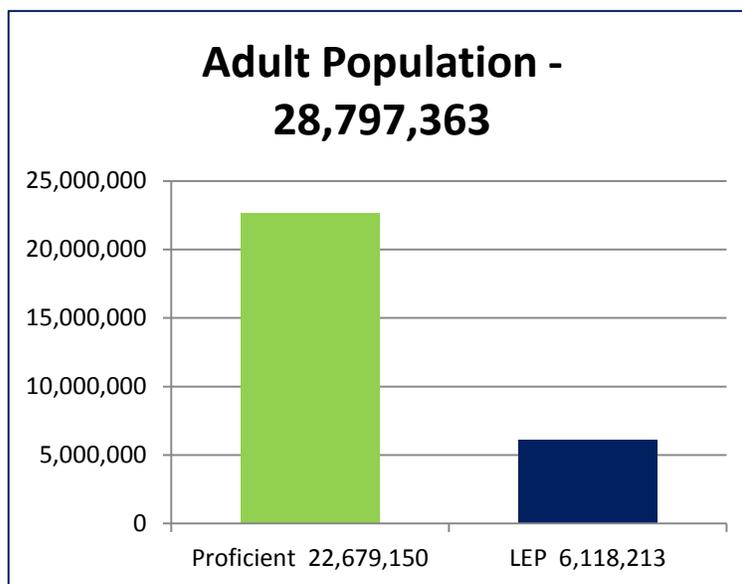
The report concludes that in 2013, the CBOs were successful in the provision of all of the services provided in the pilot. The report acknowledges that the CHANGES database should be enhanced if the pilot becomes an ongoing program. However to enable CSID to better evaluate the pilot, CSID reviewed all of the case notes for the Needs and Dispute Resolutions that occurred in 2013 and transferred that information to an Excel workbook which enabled CSID to store, sort and filter the data. The report mentions that an ongoing program, if adopted, should include generic collateral material with CHANGES' own branding. The report also provides data indicating that having CHANGES provided through the same CBOs involved in another similar CPUC program has benefitted consumers because they have been able to receive assistance from both programs at the same time.

## Background

**According to the 2012 U.S. Census Community Survey, more than six million, or 21 percent of California's adult residents, have limited proficiency in English.<sup>5</sup>**

Nationwide, California has the highest LEP population and the highest immigrant population at 27%. According to a report issued by the University of Southern California Population Dynamics Research Group, "The foreign born share of the population is higher in California,

and the number larger, than any nation in the world with a population of 10 million or more..."<sup>6</sup> California's high LEP population goes hand in hand with its immigrant population. California's tendency to have a high LEP population is likely to continue, since according to the U.S. Census report, California remains the primary destination for immigrants in the United States.



<sup>5</sup> California's total population is 38,041,430. We are using statistics for the adult population because California has taken a stance that children should not be expected to interpret adult concepts for their parents.

<sup>6</sup> Generational Projections of the California Population By Nativity and Year of Immigrant Arrival, p.13 [http://www.usc.edu/schools/price/research/popdynamics/futures/2012\\_Pitkin-Myers\\_CA-Pop-Projections.pdf](http://www.usc.edu/schools/price/research/popdynamics/futures/2012_Pitkin-Myers_CA-Pop-Projections.pdf)

Difficulty with understanding and communicating in English may create a barrier to learning about, and receiving the benefits of, consumer programs. To mitigate this, both state and federal requirements direct agencies, and recipients of funding for programs, to provide services in languages other than English.<sup>7</sup> The CPUC, as well as the utilities it regulates, have taken measures to assist LEP consumers through bilingual staff, telephonic language centers and collateral material in several languages. However, these measures do not provide hands on, one-on-one assistance to LEP consumers who do not read English or, for an assortment of reasons, are too leery of government and large corporations to contact them for assistance.

That program is referred to as Telecommunications Education and Assistance in Multiple-languages (TEAM) and is managed by a contractor under the auspices of the CPUC's CSID. It provides Outreach, Education and Complaint Resolution services to LEP consumers through a statewide network of CBOs, which are subcontracted by the contractor. The Team program was created as a result of formal proceedings in which the CPUC ordered that, "We believe that we can improve our complaint resolution efforts by working more with CBOs, which possess unique insights into problems faced by specific communities."<sup>8</sup>In CPUC Decision D.07-07-043, Ordering Paragraph 13, staff was directed to "...design a program that integrates CBOs in the Commission's Outreach, Education and Complaint Resolution processes..." In CPUC Resolution CSID-002, the CPUC established the TEAM program to meet D.07-07-043's requirements.

The CPUC is relying on some of the CBOs in the TEAM program to also carry out the CHANGES pilot program because they speak the client's language, rather than relying on a computerized translator. CBO staff are often from the same countries as the communities they serve, enabling them to explain or translate issues with cultural sensitivity. In addition the CBOs utilized are often the organizations that have already helped LEP consumers with other issues, such as housing, food, job referrals and immigration requirements. For example, one CBO meets its clients as they first arrive in the United States, and helps them with their basic needs; provides food, shelter and in the days/weeks that ensue, the CBO helps them seek employment.

The CPUC determined it should adopt an energy-related pilot because since the beginning of the TEAM program, consumers who have visited CBOs for TEAM-related assistance have also requested help with energy issues and bills.<sup>9</sup> As a result, CSID met with the four major investor owned utilities (IOUs), namely, Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E), San Diego Gas and

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<sup>7</sup> Executive Order 13666 signed by President William Clinton in 2000 and California's Dymally-Alatorre Bilingual Services Act.

<sup>8</sup> CPUC Decision D.06-03-013, p.101.

<sup>9</sup> The TEAM contractor has stated this to CSID staff, several caseworkers involved in the TEAM program have stated this and CSID staff have experienced this request first hand while attending TEAM events.



Electric (SDG&E), Southern California Edison (SCE) and Southern California Gas Company (SCG), to discuss creating a pilot program, modeled after the TEAM program, to determine if the CPUC should adopt such a program to assist LEP consumers with natural gas and electricity services and bills. All of the IOUs were receptive to the endeavor and continue to assist CSID through funding the CHANGES pilot program, active participation in refinement of the program's data collection and reporting, and attendance at monthly meetings.

CPUC Resolution CSID-004, on November 19, 2010, approved a one year pilot program and set the funding for the year-long pilot at \$500,000 through the CARE Outreach budget. The CPUC determined that the pilot could be funded through CARE funds, as indicated in the California Public Utilities Code, Section 739.4 (b) (3), because the majority of the consumers to be assisted in this program were likely to have income levels that meet CARE eligibility requirements.<sup>10</sup> The Resolution also determined that the pilot should evaluate whether an ongoing program, if adopted, should continue to be funded through CARE funds and if so, at what level.

The Resolution ordered that payment would be made by the IOUs using the same proportions as other joint funded programs, as follows:

- ✓ PG&E – 30%; \$150,000
- ✓ SDG&E – 15%; \$75,000
- ✓ SCE – 30%; \$150,000
- ✓ SCG – 25%; \$125,000

The pilot utilizes the same contractor as it does for the TEAM program. However, because it is currently only a pilot and the funds are limited, only about 55% of the TEAM CBOs are participating in the CHANGES pilot. The CPUC will also evaluate if an ongoing CHANGES program should be combined with the TEAM program to provide full utility assistance services to the same clients.

From November 19, 2010, through January 2011, CSID, the contractor and the IOUs developed the Scope of Work for the pilot and services began in February 2011.

In Resolution CSID-005, approved on November 10, 2011, CSID detailed the achievements of the pilot from February 2011 through September 2011, in compliance with CSID-004 which ordered CSID to recommend to the CPUC whether the pilot should continue. CSID reported

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<sup>10</sup> This was determined by looking at statistics generated from the database used for the TEAM program which showed that 80% of TEAM clients reported that their yearly income was less than \$25,000 in 2010. At that time, income qualification for CARE began at \$31,300, so it is likely that the percentage of people who were CARE recipients is higher. Additionally, many of the CBOs conducted Outreach or workshops for seniors (another consumer group noted in Section 739.4).

that despite a certain amount of lag time for a learning curve and for the pilot to produce results, the CBOs:

- ❖ Provided assistance in 17 languages.
- ❖ Helped more than 100 LEP clients apply for CARE and assisted hundreds more to apply for financial assistance.
- ❖ Educated 11,400 LEP clients about energy services and bills which helped them lower their energy usage, avoid disconnections and understand payment arrangements.
- ❖ Resolved 1,083 Needs and Disputes such as signing people up for financial assistance, negotiating payment arrangements and helping clients enroll in Energy Savings Assistance Programs.

CPUC Resolution CSID-005 determined that the pilot duration be extended to allow time for additional data collection and pilot evaluation, as well as time to review the appropriate CARE funding, if any. The Resolution also increased the funding level to no more than \$60,000 monthly, for the next portion of the pilot. The increase was ordered because some of the CBOs were so successful that they were turning clients away. The Resolution also directed that CSID, ED and an independent consultant should review 12 months of data to evaluate the pilot and the benefits of the pilot's use of CARE funds.

The resulting independent evaluation was accepted to the CARE proceeding (A.11-05-017) by a judge's ruling on November 6, 2012. The ensuing CPUC Decision D.12-12-011 stated that while the evaluation "lays some general foundation to confirm the need for the CHANGES Pilot Program for the California's LEP population,"<sup>11</sup> the evaluation did not provide sufficient review and analysis to determine if an ongoing program should be funded by CARE funds, whether wholly or partly. Therefore, the CPUC decision directed continued funding not to exceed \$60,000 per month for the pilot until the end of the 2012-2014 CARE program cycle, or until alternate or complimentary funding can be put in place, whichever came first. The decision also directed improvements to the pilot program success criteria and the pilot program tracking and reporting.

CSID, ED, the contractor, and the IOUs met regularly to develop the improvements. As a result the contractor enhanced the CHANGES database and its monthly reports. CSID, ED, the contractor and the IOUs created a working document detailing program components and their evaluation, and the IOUs developed two tables which became Tables 10 and 11 in their CARE monthly reports to the Commission.

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<sup>11</sup> D.12-12-011, at p.10



## 2013 CHANGES Activities

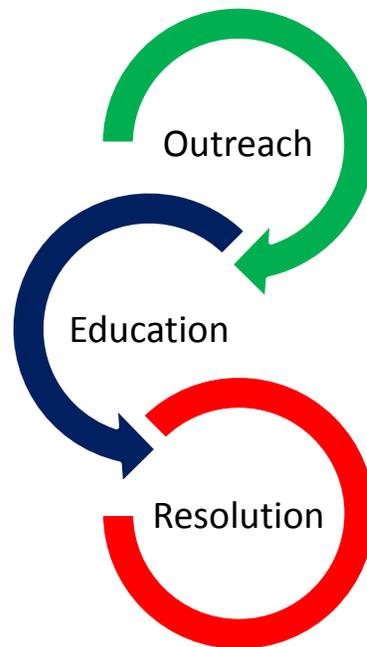
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The CHANGES pilot contains four components which are interrelated (Outreach, Education, and Needs and Dispute Resolution). To assure that their constituents are provided with cultural sensitivity, the CBOs handle all four components with assistance from the contractor and lead staff, when necessary. This includes developing their own presentations, press releases, and interacting with the IOUs on behalf of the clients. Thus, the pilot provides a holistic approach to meeting Outreach, Education and Needs and Dispute Resolution requirements of the LEP population.

**Outreach** advises the public of the existence of the program and encourages them to seek the CBO's assistance.

**Education** provides awareness of utility services, issues and consumer assistance programs. Education encourages clients to bring their bills and speak to a caseworker for one-on-one assistance with securing needs or resolving disputes.

**Needs and Dispute Resolution** allows the client to discuss the concerns with the caseworker and the caseworker provides direct assistance tailored to the situation and when appropriate, advocates on behalf of the client. A situation is considered a "Need" if the client indicates he or she has not made contact with the IOU, or if it appears to the caseworker that the client can be assisted without contacting the IOU. A situation is considered a "Dispute" if the client indicates he or she has contacted the IOU but the issue was not resolved to the client's satisfaction.





❖ **1,773,186 Outreach Contacts in 2013**

- ✓ 1,609,800 consumers contacted through the media
- ✓ 163,386 consumers contacted through community events

The Outreach budget for the pilot is not sufficient to finance mass marketing. Additionally, marketing on a large, or even an average scale was not considered because the pilot is limited in size and did not want to attract more people than it can manage. Instead it was determined to use a simpler yet more direct approach of informing the public about the CHANGES pilot, by keeping Outreach within the local CBO community. The CBOs are compensated for attending two community events and two local media placements per year. However, the CBOs also promote the CHANGES services through signage at their CBO and other community locations, or through word of mouth.

CBO staff attends community events and tells clients, who approach their booth, about the services they can receive from the CBO. CBO staff may also contact print or broadcast media, utilizing interviews or press releases, to inform the community of the existence of CHANGES at their organizations.<sup>12</sup> The contacts are conducted in the language of the community (ies) that the CBO serves. The CBOs provide details and documentation to the contractor of how many people visited the CHANGES CBO table at events. If the Outreach was through media, the CBOs provide the contractor details pertaining to which media option they pursued, the particular media's subscribership and if print media, a copy of the news clips.

CBOs which have established CHANGES client bases are not required to conduct Outreach. Instead they may discuss a modification of their contract with the contractor, to enable the CBO to use the Outreach funds for Education, or Needs and Dispute Resolution.

Outreach is considered a success because clients have been attending the CHANGES Education Workshops and one-on-one assistance sessions (Needs and Dispute Resolution). To further measure the success of Outreach, the caseworkers ask the clients seeking help with Needs and Dispute Resolution, how they heard of the program. The caseworker records the clients'

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<sup>12</sup> The media contact figure is based on each respective media's reported subscribership.

responses in the “Referral Source” field in the CHANGES Needs and Dispute Resolution database. Of those cases, 158 or 12% had heard of the CHANGES pilot through community events or through the media. The year to date referral source table is attached to this report.



❖ Workshops: 14,293 people attended in 2013

- ✓ Assistance programs
- ✓ Payment plans
- ✓ Explaining the bill
- ✓ Energy conservation
- ✓ Avoiding disconnection
- ✓ Safety

Education Workshops are where the caseworker provides information and engages the attendees to share their own experiences related to the subject. Most workshops are conducted at the CBO location, but often a caseworker will give a presentation at another organization or an adult school class such as English as a Second Language (ESL) class. The six workshop subjects are noted above. Workshop presentations and group discussions last at least 30 minutes. Afterwards, clients may arrange to visit the CBO for assistance, or when possible, receive immediate assistance, through the Needs and Dispute Resolution components.

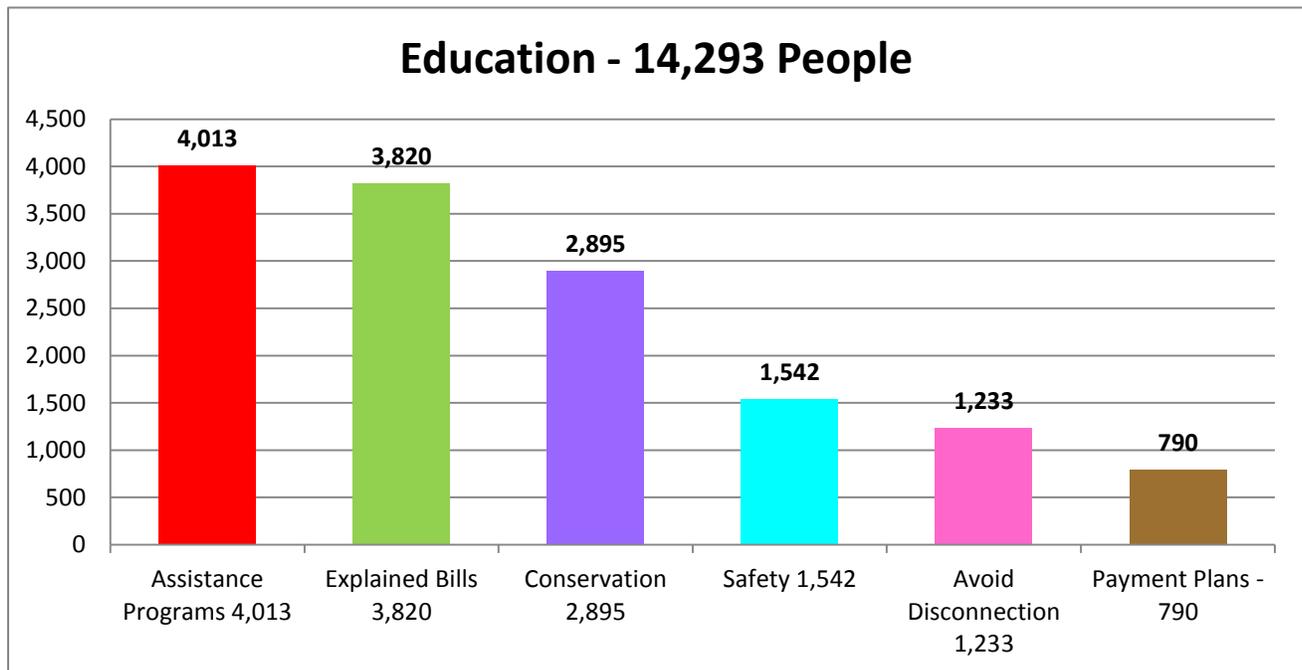
Workshop success is measured by pre- and post-tests, where the caseworker asks a question or two about the issue before and after the workshop. Pre- and post-tests are conducted verbally and the contractor has indicated that the results have been positive. To further measure the success of the workshops, the caseworkers ask the clients who are seeking help with Needs and Dispute Resolution, how they heard of the program. The caseworker records the clients’ responses in the “Referral Source” field in the CHANGES Needs and Dispute Resolution

database. Of those cases, 398 or 31% had heard of the CHANGES pilot through educational workshops.

CSID has attended these CBO workshops and found the caseworkers to be well prepared and successful in engaging the attendees. The group discussions encourage attendees to discuss their particular situations in a positive, nonthreatening environment. Many people who attended had also brought their bills and were seeking assistance resolving them or managing payments.

During the Education Workshops, clients have asked for collateral material in their language. Currently the CBOs provide clients with the utilities CARE, Family Electric Rate Assistance (FERA) and Medical Baseline applications and, when available, they are provided in the client's language. However, if the pilot becomes a permanent program, it should have its own branding and collateral materials to hand out. CSID did not pursue this for the pilot because creating and securing translations of them could have taken longer than the initial duration of the pilot, and the translation costs would have been prohibitive for what was expected to be a one year pilot.

The chart below shows the attendance for each of the six subjects for 2013.





❖ 1,295 Total Needs and Dispute Resolution Cases in 2013 with 2,902 services

- ✓ 2.2 services per case
- ✓ \$20,491,000 secured for consumers

The Outreach and Education components both attract clients to seek the CBOs' help in resolving Needs and Disputes. Of note is that in 2013, 158 or 12% were referred because of Outreach about CHANGES, 398 or 31% were referred because of a CHANGES Education Workshop, and 133 or 10% were referred because the client had received assistance through the TEAM program. A table showing the referral sources is attached.

Generally, a situation is considered a "Need" if the client indicates he or she has not made contact with the IOU and needs help, or if it appears that the client can be assisted without contacting the IOU. A situation is considered a "Dispute" if the client indicates he or she has contacted the IOU but the issue was not resolved to the client's satisfaction. Both Needs and Disputes are recorded in the CHANGES database. Statistical data is provided in the monthly reports and to the IOUs in the table format they developed.<sup>13</sup>

The monthly reports show that in 2013, there were a total of 1,345 *resolved* Disputes and *resolved* Resolutions. When a caseworker completes helping a client, the caseworker designates the case as *resolved*. Later, the case is audited by the contractor's lead team and

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<sup>13</sup> The contractor completes basic information about the contact and the IOUs check their records and provide additional information, such as if the person is enrolled in CARE. To avoid duplicity, CARE enrollments are not compensated as part of the CHANGES program, since the IOUs already have a program (CARE Capitation) where they compensate CBOs to enroll customers in CARE. However, to provide "one stop shopping," for potential CARE recipients, the CHANGES CBOs are also included in the IOUs program.

when they have completed their review, the lead team marks the case as *closed*. CSID determined it would evaluate cases once they had reached their final phase (*closed*).<sup>14</sup>

Early in 2013, CSID was reviewing closed cases in the database and discovered the database was recording only one service per case. However, caseworker notes in the database showed that the caseworkers were providing more than one service.<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately the database could not be changed to record more than one service without completely redesigning it, so CSID has reviewed the notes on all of the closed cases which were opened in 2013, and is tracking all of the services provided to better evaluate the services being provided.

There are 28 different services with which a client can be assisted through this process. However, to simplify this report, we have combined similar services into six categories as shown in the following table. We are also attaching a table that lists the 28 services and their corresponding statistics.

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<sup>14</sup> This explains the difference between the monthly report and CSID's figures (1,345 *resolved* Disputes and Needs compared to 1,295 *closed* Disputes and Needs cases).

<sup>15</sup> For example, a category includes helping with payment arrangements to avoid disconnection, assisting with getting financial assistance, and assisting with enrollment in ESAP.

<b>Needs and Disputes Services Related to Each Category</b>					
<b>Education</b>	<b>Assistance Programs</b>	<b>Avoiding Disconnection</b>	<b>Conservation</b>	<b>Manage Accounts</b>	<b>Schedule Service</b>
Understanding a bill and Baseline	LIHEAP/HEAP	Consultation on avoiding disconnection	Consultation on Conservation	Sign up for third party notification	Request meter service or test
CARE/FERA	EAF	Set up/Change payment extension		Verified bill	Schedule service visit
Medical Baseline	ESAP	Set Up/Change payment plan		Set up account	Schedule energy audit
All Assistance programs	GAF	Add or Modify Level Pay plan		Change account	
	N2N	Stop disconnection		Bill adjustment	
	Medical Baseline	Restore Service		Demand Response enrollment	
	REACH	Waive/decrease deposit			

**Key:**

CARE – California Alternate Rates for Energy – discounted service for qualifying low-income customers.

EAF – Energy Assistance Fund – SCE financial assistance program.

ESAP – Energy Savings Assistance Program – no cost weatherization for low-income households.

FERA – Family Electric Rate Assistance – discounted service for families earning slightly more than CARE levels.

GAF – Gas Assistance Fund – SCG’s financial assistance program.

Level Payment Plan – a client is billed the same amount year round.

LIHEAP / HEAP – Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program / Home Energy Assistance Program – Federal programs that provide financial assistance (HEAP) and weatherization and counselling.

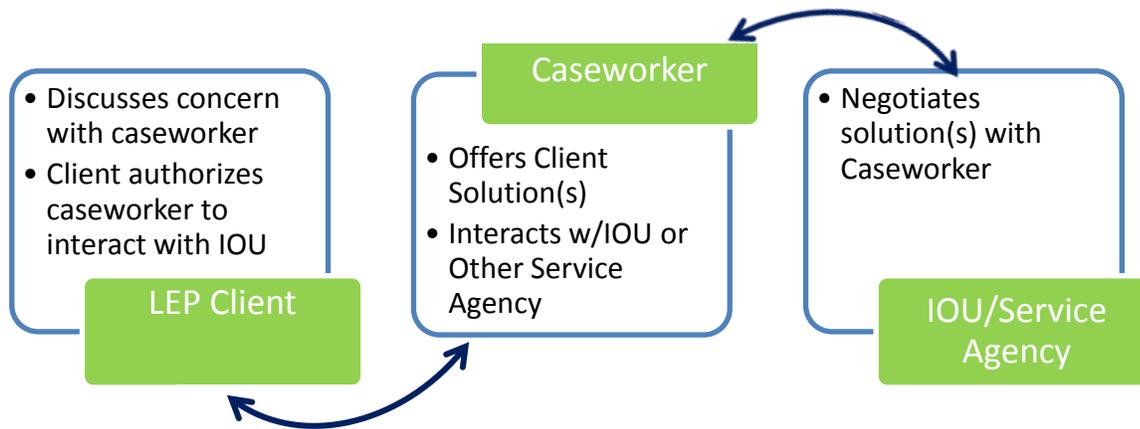
N2N – Neighbor to Neighbor – SDG&E’s financial assistance program.

Payment Extension – agreement to pay a bill on a specific date after the bill is due.

Payment Plan – arrangements to pay a bill in increments, such as \$50/month on an outstanding balance while keeping monthly bills paid in full.

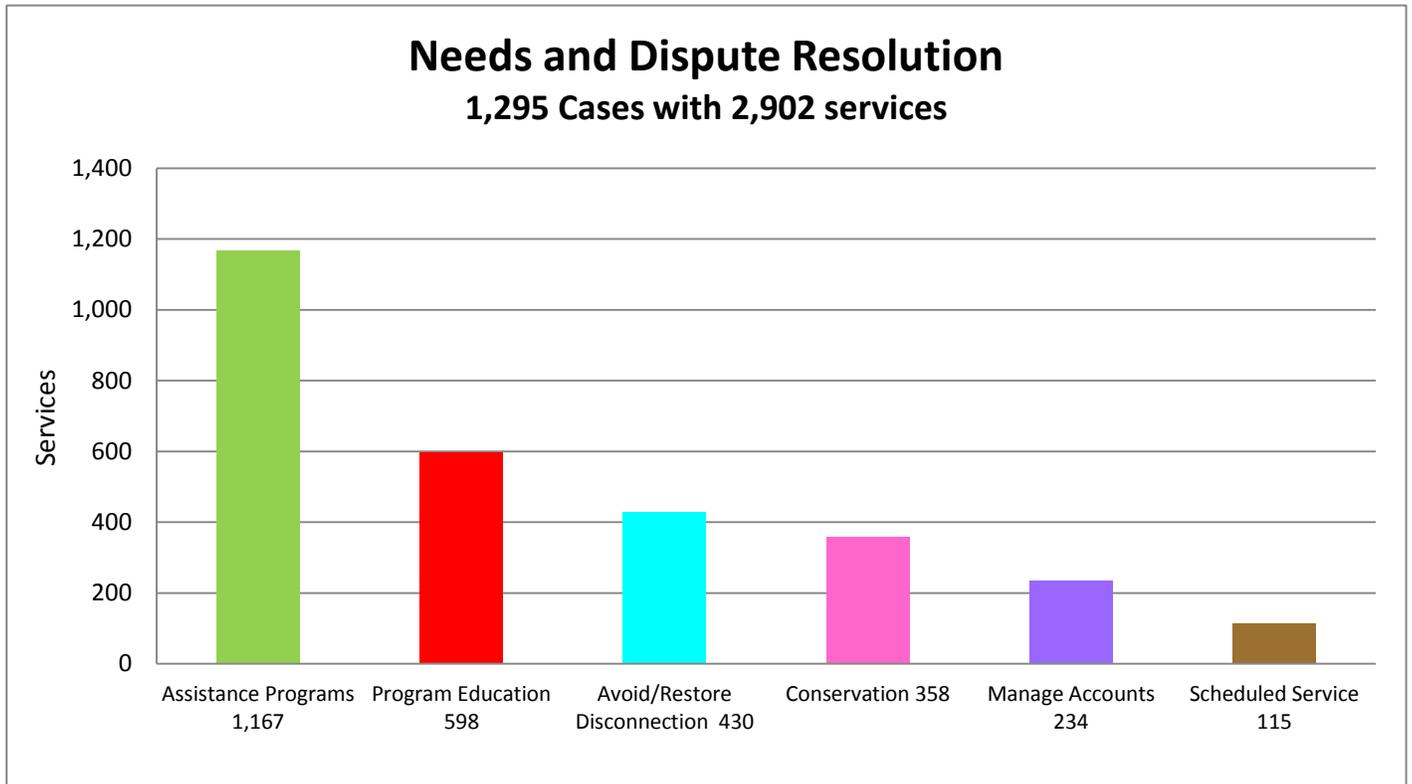
REACH – Relief for Energy Assistance through Community Help – PG&E’s financial assistance program.

## Interactions Between Client, Caseworker, and IOU/Service Agency



In general, Needs and Disputes receive similar treatment from the caseworker. A client discusses concerns with the caseworker, one-on-one, and the caseworker determines if he or she should contact the IOU or another agency for assistance. Then the caseworker makes the appropriate contacts, continues to assist the client until the case is resolved, and notes the issue and the steps taken to resolve it in the database. For example, a client may meet with the caseworker with concerns that their energy service is going to be turned off because he or she cannot pay the bill. The caseworker may call a financial assistance agency to see if it can provide payment. If it can, the financial assistance agency will contact the IOU or just send in the payment. However, if the financial assistance agency will only be paying a portion of the bill, the caseworker will contact the IOU to negotiate payments arrangements suitable to the client. In one case the client's bill was nearly \$2,000. The Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) agreed to pay \$1,000, the Relief for Energy Assistance through Community Help (REACH) program paid \$200 and the CBO itself paid the balance of the bill. Attached are samples of typical cases handled in 2013.

In addition to the typical cases, CSID notes that there were several cases related to switching gas provision from the IOU to an outside company. In some cases, the switch was made upon request of someone in the home who was not the customer of record. In other instances the gas rates were not as low as the clients were led to believe. In resolving those cases the CBOs were successful in switching the clients back without them being charged the outside company's cancellation fee.



### Needs and Disputes Successes

Based on several discussions with the contractor and the IOUs, CSID determined the following criteria would be used to measure success of the Needs and Disputes components of the program:

1. Assistance in the client's language.
2. Assistance with or education about consumer programs.
3. Assistance securing bill adjustments.
4. Assistance securing payment arrangements.
5. Assistance seeking financial assistance.
6. Assistance avoiding disconnections.

Upon reviewing the data, CSID has determined the following successes:

1. 1,295 clients receive assistance in 27 languages.
2. 754 clients were assisted with enrollment, or educated about, consumer programs (services numbered 2, 6, 9, 10, 12, 23 and 24 on the attached Services chart).
3. 14 clients received bill adjustments (service number 14 on the attached Services chart).

4. 188 clients received payment arrangements (services numbered 17, 18 and 28 on the attached Services chart).
5. 875 clients were assisted with financial assistance applications (services numbered 1, 2, 4, 5, and 27 on the attached Services chart).
6. 274 clients avoided disconnections, had service reconnected or were educated on how to avoid disconnection (services numbered 7, 19, 21 and 22 on the Services chart).

## Languages

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- ❖ Communicated in 27 languages in 2013

The CPUC and the IOUs have taken measures to assist consumers in their preferred languages.

The IOUs employ bilingual staff in their customer service departments and the CPUC has certified<sup>16</sup> several of its staff. When combined, the CPUC and IOU staff provides interpretation in 13 different languages.<sup>17</sup> The CHANGES CBOs are able to communicate in 31 languages, as shown on the attached CBO list, both verbally and in writing. That is more than

twice the amount of languages that the CPUC and IOUs collectively provide. Also, the CBOs take great care to ensure that the communications are made with cultural sensitivity, as analogies that may make sense to English speaking customers, may make no sense to someone from another country. For example, a generic flyer listing different consumer programs was provided to the CBOs and one of the caseworkers recognized that it used terms and jargon that have no similar meaning in her language, so she took great care in rewriting it and obtaining approval to use it.



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<sup>16</sup> California State workers must pass its language exam to become certified interpreters or translators.

<sup>17</sup> According to the IOUs response to a data request, they collectively provide verbal assistance in English, Spanish, Mandarin, Cantonese, Vietnamese, Tagalog, Korean, and Cambodian. The CPUC provides assistance in most of those same languages plus has certified interpreters for Arabic, Armenian, Farsi, Italian, and Russian.

Both the IOUs and the CPUC contract with companies that provide language interpreters over the phone. However, those companies are directed to provide word for word interpretations and lack the training and experience that the CBOs have received on energy services and bills.

In reviewing the services the CHANGES pilot provides in language, CSID examined all the other state utility commissions' websites to determine if they provided other services that the CPUC should consider. CSID did not discover a product or service beyond what is already provided by the CPUC's bilingual services program, including its TEAM and CHANGES pilot programs. Staff also called the commissions that had the best consumer-related websites and discussed what interpretation/translation services they had. Several commissions have staff that speaks other languages, and they contract with companies for over-the-phone interpretation services. None of them enlist the help of CBOs to assist LEP consumers, although several of them indicated interest in the CPUC's TEAM and CHANGES pilot programs.

## ***Funding***

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The CHANGES pilot has been funded through the CARE program, as provided in the California Public Utilities Code, Section 739.4 (b) (3). The CPUC approved use of CARE funds because when evaluating the TEAM program, which CHANGES is modeled after, the CPUC discovered that most of the consumers assisted in that program had income levels which qualified for the California LifeLine service. Qualifying income levels for California Lifeline are lower than CARE; therefore, it was a reasonable assumption that the same client type is eligible for CARE. In fact, the Needs and Disputes Resolution data shows that 94% of all of the clients assisted up through 2013 have been CARE eligible. It is reasonable to assume that CHANGES will continue to be low-income, since a significant amount of LEPs are immigrants and according to a study by the urban institute, "Immigrants' hourly wages are lower on average than those for natives, and nearly half earn less than 200 percent of the minimum wage - versus one-third of native workers."<sup>18</sup>

Initially the pilot was funded at \$500,000 a year (or \$41,667 a month). Payment to the contractor was provided directly by the IOUs at levels consistent with earlier CPUC decisions related to joint IOU funding. That was:

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<sup>18</sup> Immigrant Families and Workers, brief 4, p.1



- ✓ PG&E – 30%; \$150,000
- ✓ SDG&E – 15%; \$75,000
- ✓ SCE – 30%; \$150,000
- ✓ SCG – 25%; \$125,000

In the first year, the CBOs were so successful in providing services that the funds did not last the entire year and some clients in need of services were turned away. In the second year, funding was increased up to \$60,000 a month and kept the IOUs' contribution percentages the same. The CHANGES pilot has remained within that new budget; however, the pilot has limited statewide coverage. If the program becomes a permanent ongoing program, the program and related funding should be expanded to bring more CBOs into the program, allowing for better statewide coverage.

## **Findings**

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After reviewing the CHANGES pilot activities for the 2013 calendar year, CSID finds (by category):

1. Outreach: Outreach generated interest in the program. This is determined by good attendance at Education Workshops and indications in the CHANGES Needs and Dispute Resolution database that clients had learned of the service through an assortment of Outreach approaches.
2. Education Workshops: Attendees were attentive and engaged. Pre-and post-tests indicated attendees gained knowledge. The issues discussed are important to CARE eligible clients because they helped people keep their bills as low as possible. They encouraged people to enroll in services like CARE, FERA, ESAP, LIHEAP, Medical Baseline, and assisted in securing financial assistance when necessary. Workshops taught them how to avoid disconnection, including prompt payment of bills, level payment plans, payment arrangements, and payment extensions. The one workshop that does not directly help them keep service on, relates to safety. Safety is a priority at the CPUC and with the IOUs, so we will continue this workshop as an important component to Education.
3. Needs and Dispute Resolution: Clients were assisted to enroll in consumer programs, avoid disconnection, secure financial assistance, receive bill adjustments and to turn on,

or restore, service. Even in instances where the client could not be helped, the one-on-one session often increased the client's awareness of energy services and bills, and is likely to aide them in the future.

## ***Attachments***

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- ❖ Public Utilities Code, Section 739.4
- ❖ List of CBOs
- ❖ List of Languages
- ❖ Referral Source
- ❖ Lists of Services Provided
- ❖ Case Samples

CALIFORNIA PUBLIC UTILITIES CODE, SECTION 739.4 (B) (3)

**739.4.**

(a) Any natural gas customer who enrolls in the CARE program after the effective date of this section, but before October 1, 2001, shall receive the same one-time bill credit based on the amount of each gas corporation's average CARE customer discount applied for each month in October 2000 to March 2001, inclusive. The credit does not apply to a customer who initiates service with a gas corporation after the effective date of this section, and who has no prior history of service with the gas corporation. CARE program funds shall be used for the purpose of providing these credits. The commission shall adjust CARE program income requirements annually to reflect the increased cost-of-living due to inflation.

(b) The commission shall require all electrical and gas utilities through which CARE program rates are available to do all of the following, in multilingual formats to the extent printed and recorded information is provided, to facilitate better penetration rates for the CARE program and to protect low-income and senior households from unwarranted disconnection of necessary electric and gas services:

(1) Provide an outgoing message on all calls, where the customer is seeking to establish service or is put on hold, to customer service lines that briefly describes the CARE program in standard language approved by the commission, and that provides a toll-free phone number for customers to call to subscribe to the program or for further information.

(2) Provide information to customers about the CARE program and facilitate subscription to CARE, on all calls in which customers are making payment arrangements, on all collections calls, and on all calls for reconnection of service.

**(3) (A) Provide information about the CARE program and other assistance programs, and attempt to qualify customers for CARE, and provide information about individual payment arrangements that allow customers to pay the amounts due over a reasonable period of time, not to exceed 12 months, and attempt to enroll customers in a payment arrangement program, before effecting any disconnection of service for nonpayment or inability to pay energy bills in full.**

<b>CHANGES PILOT CBO LIST</b>	
<b>PG&amp;E</b>	
<b>Asian Community Center (ACC Park City)</b>	
Languages: Cantonese, Hmong, Korean	
<b>Central California Legal Services, Inc.</b>	
Languages: Spanish	
<b>El Concilio of San Mateo County</b>	
Languages: Spanish	
<b>Lao Khmu Association, Inc.</b>	
Languages: Cambodian, Cantonese, Hmong, Laotian, Mandarin, Vietnamese	
<b>Self-Help for the Elderly</b>	
Languages: Cantonese, Mandarin, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, Taiwanese, Toisanese, Vietnamese	
<b>Southeast Asian Community Center</b>	
Languages: Cantonese, Mandarin, Vietnamese	
<b>Suscol Intertribal Council</b>	
Languages: Native American English, Spanish	
<b>San Diego Gas &amp; Electric Company</b>	
<b>Casa Familiar</b>	
Languages: English, Spanish	
<b>Alliance for African Assistance</b>	
Languages: Arabic, Spanish, Karen	
<b>Southern California Edison &amp; Southern California Gas Company</b>	
<b>Asian American Educational &amp; Cultural Center, Inc.</b>	
Languages: Cambodian, Cantonese, Hmong, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Laotian, Mandarin, Sign Language, Spanish, Tagalog, Thai, Vietnamese	
<b>Vietnamese Community of Orange County, Inc.</b>	
Languages: Vietnamese	
<b>Campaign for Social Justice</b>	
Languages: Arabic, Armenian, Bosnian, Croatian, Dari, Farsi, Korean, Pashto, Persian, Russian, Spanish, Urdu	

## CSID CHANGES 2013 Annual Report

<b>Chinatown Service Center</b>
Languages: Cantonese, Korean, Mandarin, Spanish, Toisanese
<b>Delhi Center</b>
Languages: Spanish
<b>International Institute of Los Angeles</b>
Languages: Cantonese, Farsi, Spanish, Vietnamese
<b>Koreatown Youth &amp; Community Center</b>
Languages: Korean, Spanish
<b>Little Tokyo Service Center</b>
Languages: Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Spanish, Thai
<b>People CORE's</b>
Languages: Cambodian, Cebuano, Chinese, Ilokano, Korean, Spanish, Tagalog, Vietnamese
<b>Pilipino Workers Center</b>
Languages: Tagalog

CHANGES PILOT REFERRAL SOURCES	
Referral Source	Total Y-T-D
Consumer Participates in Another Program at the CBO	340
Consumer was in a CHANGES Educational Workshop	398
Consumer Received TEAM Services	133
Consumer Received Program Information at a Community Event	88
Consumer Learned of the Program through Newspaper, Radio, or Television	71
Consumer was Referred by Friend or Family	265
Consumer was Referred by Another CBO	74
Unknown	84

<b>CHANGES PILOT 2013 LANGUAGES</b>				
<i>Consumer Education, Needs, and Disputes</i>				
Language	Education Y-T-D	Needs Assistance Y-T-D	Disputes Y-T-D	Total Y-T-D
Arabic	375	45	7	427
Armenian	10	1	0	11
Burmese	1	0	1	2
Cantonese	1,408	211	23	1,642
Cebuano	0	1	0	1
Dari	41	0	0	41
English	1,074	249	30	1,353
English (Native American)	450	0	0	450
Farsi	34	2	0	36
Fijian	4	0	0	4
French	2	0	0	2
Hindi	4	2	0	6
Hmong	44	5	3	52
Indonesian	39	4	0	43
Japanese	197	1	0	198
Karen	10	6	0	16
Khmer	163	29	13	205
Korean	622	13	5	640
Laotian	132	12	10	154
Mandarin	391	15	1	407
Mien	63	0	0	63
Punjabi	2	0	0	2
Romanian	1	0	0	1
Russian	26	0	0	26
Spanish	4,416	309	113	4,838
Tagalog	1,260	17	5	1,282
Vietnamese	996	201	9	1,206
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,765<sup>19</sup></b>	<b>1,123</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>13,108</b>

<sup>19</sup> This amount of people is lower than what is shown under the Education section because, in some instances, more than one workshop session was provided to the same group of people.

CHANGES PILOT SERVICES BREAKDOWN	
1. HEAP/LIHEAP Application Assistance	594
2. Energy Assistance Fund Application	75
3. ESAP Application Assistance	175
4. Gas Assistance Fund Application Assistance	158
5. N2N Application Assistance	42
6. Medical Baseline Application Assistance	37
7. Educated on avoiding disconnection	164
8. Educated on how to read the bill	171
9. Educated on CARE/FERA	84
10. Educated on Medical Baseline	69
11. Educated on Energy Efficiency/ Conservation	358
12. Educated on all energy assistance programs	354
13. Request Meter Service or Testing	42
14. Bill Adjustment	8
15. Scheduled Customer Service Visit	15
16. Scheduled Energy Audit	58
17. Set Up/Change Payment Extension	36
18. Set Up/Change Payment Plan	117
19. Stop Disconnection	97
20. Verified Bill	79
21. Waive/Decrease Deposit	2
22. Restore Service	11
23. Sign up for 3rd Party Notification	32
24. Enrolled in Demand Response Programs (electricity)	3
25. Set Up Account	16
26. Changes to Account	96
27. REACH Application Assistance	6
28. Add or Modify Level Pay Plan	3
<b>Total Resolutions</b>	<b>2902</b>

## CHANGES PILOT CLOSED CASES IN 2013

CASE	LANGUAGE	CASE NOTES
<b>CASE 1</b>	SPANISH	Client was five months behind on her gas bill and was the only person working in the household. Her husband had an identity theft issue; therefore, was unable to collect unemployment money. She feared getting a disconnection very soon. The utility was able to provide an extension for the total amount of \$142.43 and advised the client to make a payment now and then call back to make a new payment arrangement. CBO also referred the client to LIHEAP and after the struggle the client was satisfied with the assistance.
<b>CASE 2</b>	TAGALOG	Customer informed us that she was experiencing financial difficulties because of her husband recently being diagnosed with cancer. She was really concerned on how she would pay her bills on time, so we asked if she wanted to do a payment extension. She agreed that would be best because she was scared to be disconnected especially with her husband's delicate condition. Called the CHANGES assigned line and did a payment extension for the customer for 3/17/13 - a total of \$61.49 will be due. This will help ease the financial stress on the customer during her husband's medical visits.
<b>CASE 3</b>	ARABIC	Client, a refugee from Afghanistan that our agency helped resettle in San Diego this month needed help opening his SDGE account due to his lack of English and understanding about SDGE. One of our case managers was able to help him open his account and he was very happy and thankful for the help and he wouldn't have been able to do it without our help.
<b>CASE 4</b>	LOATIAN	Client and her husband are elderly and do not speak any English. They are on Social Security and do not get help from anyone. Client is already on the CARE program, but is seeking assistance with the HEAP application. I went ahead and started the HEAP application for the client and also made a call to the core transport agent (CTA) to cancel the services, because client is paying more with the CTA and they didn't know what they were signing up for when representatives visited their house. I also explained medical baseline and gave them paper work for their doctor to sign. Client and her husband were very happy that they came to us for help.

- CASE 5** SPANISH Client was interested in exchanging her refrigerator for a new one which the SoCal Edison program provides. After research from the CBO he stated she did not qualify since her refrigerator had to be over 15 years old and she had to be part of the CARE program as well.
- CASE 6** SPANISH CBO helped the utility set up a plan to pay \$17.87 each month during 6 months plus the new charge of each month. The client agreed with payment plan. The client already has CARE program, I also sent her to LIHEAP where they could help her pay her bill. Client was happy with the payment arrangements that had been made; she thanked me for the help. Client was relieved her service was not going to be disconnected, and happy with the payment arrangements.
- CASE 7** ENGLISH The client was afraid of service disconnection and explained financial hardships taking place at home. The client needed assistance with the HEAP Application and the CBO was also able to enter information for the CARE enrollment. The CBO gave energy saving tips and safety tips as well.
- CASE 8** ENGLISH Client came into our office with his friend who just did her HEAP application for him. The CBO was able to assist with both the HEAP application and CARE since he is a single father having financial struggles.
- CASE 9** ENGLISH Client complained about being over charged on her PG&E bill. After some research the CBO found out that she had a third party biller from a CTA. CBO encouraged the client to close the third party account and assisted with the HEAP application. They also educated the client about her payment arrangement and the current amount due. Client was very satisfied with my help and will refer others to get assistance.
- CASE 10** CAMBODIAN Client and his wife were seeking some help with the HEAP application. They speak very limited English, and the male is the only one working at their household, but not taking home much. They are having trouble paying their bills. The CBO filed a HEAP application and educated on assistance programs. They also called the third party biller to cancel services, which was charging the client more. The client and his wife were very happy, that they came in for help.