

CHANGES PROGRAM ANNUAL REPORT

Community Help and Awareness of Natural Gas and Electricity Services

Program Year: June 2022–May 2023

This California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) report summarizes the services provided by the Community Help and Awareness of Natural Gas and Electricity Services (CHANGES) program, for the Program Year (PY) June 01, 2022 – May 31, 2023, and highlights areas of interest for CPUC, other policymakers and interested parties.



**California Public
Utilities Commission**

CHANGES PROGRAM ANNUAL REPORT (JUNE 2022–MAY 2023)

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Executive Summary

The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) launched the Community Help and Awareness of Natural Gas and Electricity Services (CHANGES) program to help limited English proficient (LEP) clients to manage their natural gas and electricity services. Services are delivered by 24 Community Based Organizations (CBOs) across the state and was launched in a statewide pilot in 2012. The program was formalized through CPUC Decision 15-12-047 “as an ongoing statewide program, effective January 1, 2016.”¹ The CARE proceeding (A.19-11-003) further extended CHANGES funding in Decision 21-06-015 from 2021 through 2026 at an amount of \$10,515,012 per year.²

This report summarizes the services provided and related insights from the most recent program year (PY), June 01, 2022 – May 31, 2023. Program delivery is contracted to Self Help for the Elderly (SHE), a non-profit organization based in San Francisco that is supported in operating the program by Milestone Consulting. The program has three service components: individual case assistance, education, and outreach.

Most individual case assistance cases are provided by community-based organizations (CBO) staff working in their offices, advocating with utilities on behalf of their clients in response to disputes or needs assistance (e.g., support applying for bill reduction programs such as CARE). Education classes are provided either on CBO premises or in nearby facilities. Outreach is mainly conducted via promotions at community events or through media outlets.

Summary of Annual Activity

Overall, CHANGES services increased significantly over the last program year. In particular, the number of case assistance services provided increased by **16 percent** from the previous PY. In large part this is due to an increasing caseload of LEP consumers facing financial challenges.

Case assistance services rose by **16 percent** from the previous PY (from **7,888** to **9,164** services). The single most provided service – support with LIHEAP applications increased from **3,093** applications in the last PY, to **3,732** in this one, an increase of **21 percent**. Also, support with applying for other emergency financial assistance programs increased from **1,711 cases** last year to **1,843 (8 percent increase)** cases in this PY.

Consumer education attendance increased by **32 percent** from the previous PY. This is mainly because CBO facilities opened their doors to the public again. There was also an increase in remote educational workshops. However, LEP populations served by the CBOs are mainly over 60 years old and often prefer in-person events.

¹ D.15-12-047, p.1 and additional information on CHANGES, and the CPUC Decisions underpinning it can be found at: <https://www.cpuc.ca.gov/about-cpuc/divisions/news-and-public-information-office/consumer-affairs-branch/team-and-changes-programs>

² D.21-06-015, Ordering paragraphs 20-22, p. 475-476: <https://docs.cpuc.ca.gov/PublishedDocs/Published/G000/M387/K107/387107687.PDF>

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Outreach increased significantly, particularly community events such as ethnic festivals (e.g., Chinese New Year). This PY, CHANGES' community events saw an almost three-fold increase in attendees from 42,599 last year to 117,949³ this year. Finally, media outreach increased by **14 percent**, reaching a potential audience of almost 1.4 million people this year.

Client Demographics

Recipients of CHANGES case support had the following characteristics:

1. They were overwhelmingly low-income, where approximately **96 percent** of participants were eligible for CARE.⁴ The percentage of CARE eligible participants who were already enrolled in CARE dropped from the last PY. This may have been because some clients are unaware when recertification moratoriums ended.
2. The age of participants, similar to the last PY, showed that most consumers are above 60 years old - **72 percent** were over **60** years old, and the remainder between **21** and **59** years old.⁵
3. Approximately **59 percent** of case assistance recipients were either Spanish (**37 percent**) or Cantonese (**22 percent**) speakers. The next largest language groups were English – **16 percent**, and Vietnamese - **7 percent**. CHANGES serves a wide range of different languages in California's LEP communities e.g., case assistance services were provided in **33** different languages. This included increasing support to newly arrived refugee populations speaking Ukrainian and Pashto.

³ These figures are based on the total number of attendees at the community events in which a CHANGES CBO hosted a display

⁴ See Table 4: CARE Enrollment at Time of Case Services.

⁵ This data was provided by the program contractor and is based on the TEAM clients' database.

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Program Year (PY) June 2022 – May 2023

1. Introduction

The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) launched the Community Help and Awareness of Natural Gas and Electricity Services (CHANGES) program to help limited English proficient (LEP) clients to manage their natural gas and electricity services. Services are delivered by 24 Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) across the state. The program was launched as a statewide pilot in 2012. The program was formalized through CPUC Decision 15-12-047 “as an ongoing statewide program, effective January 1, 2016.”⁶ The CARE proceeding (A.19-11-003) further extended CHANGES funding in Decision 21-06-015 from 2021 through 2026 at an amount of \$10,515,012 per year.⁷

The CHANGES program is modelled on the Telecommunications Education and Assistance in Multiple (TEAM) languages program, which helps clients with their telecommunication service needs.⁸ TEAM and CHANGES are delivered together under the same contract with the CPUC, through the same lead contractor and CBOs.

This report summarizes the services provided by the CHANGES program and highlights areas of interest for CPUC, other policymakers and interested parties. This report covers the last PY, June 2022 through May 2023. It provides information on the three components in which CHANGES delivers services:

- Individual case assistance
- Education
- Outreach

The CPUC contracts with Self-Help for the Elderly (SHE) to operate the CHANGES program. Milestone Consulting LLC supports SHE with the management of program operations, particularly strategy and CBO training. SHE and its subcontractors oversee a statewide network of 24 CBOs to provide program services to LEP clients.

⁶ D.15-12-047, p.1 and additional information on CHANGES, and the CPUC Decisions underpinning it can be found at: <https://www.cpuc.ca.gov/about-cpuc/divisions/news-and-public-information-office/consumer-affairs-branch/team-and-changes-programs>

⁷ D.21-06-015, Ordering paragraphs 20-22, p. 475-476: <https://docs.cpuc.ca.gov/PublishedDocs/Published/G000/M387/K107/387107687.PDF>

⁸ The TEAM Program stems from the CPUC’s Consumer Protection Initiative – CPUC Decision D.06-03-013, where the CPUC ordered protections for clients and directed another proceeding to determine what, if any, protections, or assistance should be provided for clients with limited English proficiency.

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The funding for the program is restricted to the jurisdictions of the four large Investor-Owned Utilities (IOU) – Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E), Southern California Edison (SCE), San Diego Gas & Electric (SDG&E) and SoCal Gas (SCG).

2. Overview of CHANGES CBOs

SHE and Milestone operate the CHANGES program as a single state-wide coalition of 24 CBOs that work on a variety of issues impacting LEP communities. CBOs in the coalition are required to provide all components of CHANGES services. As shown in Table 1, the CBOs are geographically concentrated in four different regions across the state. A full list of CBOs in the coalition can be accessed at:

<https://www.cpuc.ca.gov/about-cpuc/divisions/news-and-public-information-office/consumer-affairs-branch/team-and-changes-programs>.

Table 1: Number of CBOs in Each Region	
Bay Area	8
Central Valley	4
Greater Los Angeles	10
San Diego County	2

CHANGES CBO Locations

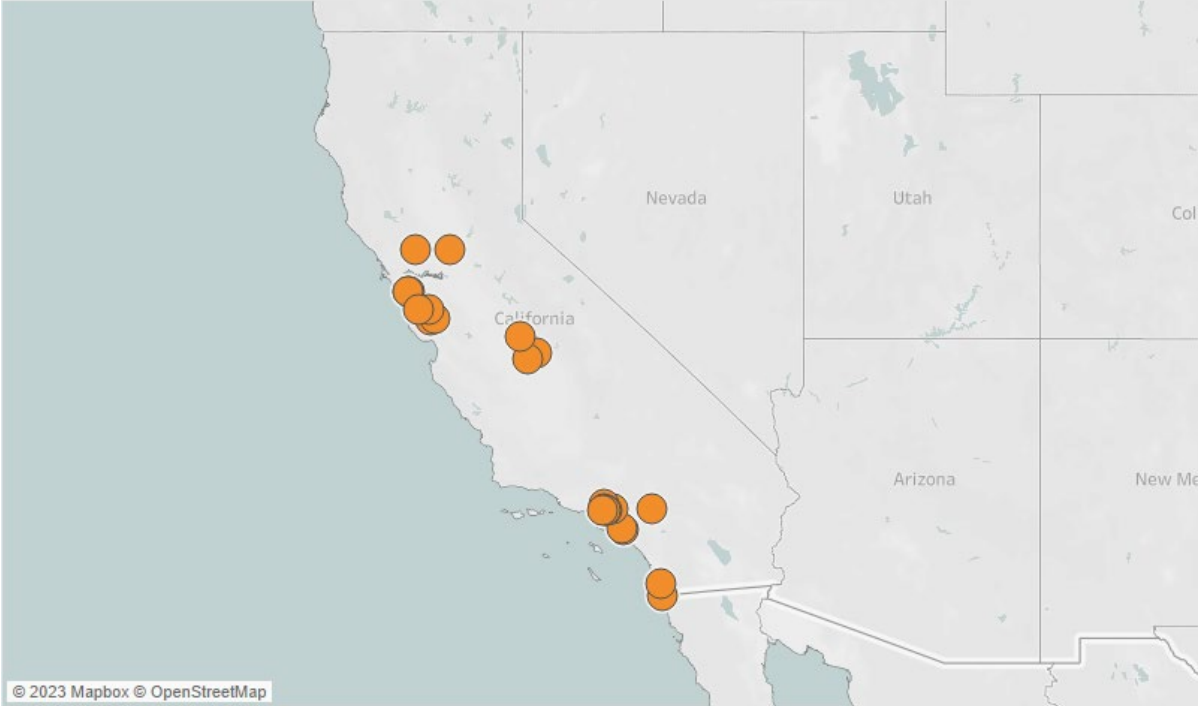


Figure 1: Map of CHANGES Program CBOs

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3. Individual Case Assistance

Types of Case Assistance Services Provided

CBOs provide case assistance for clients who need help with payment difficulties, lowering their ongoing monthly energy bills, disputing the accuracy of bills, managing their accounts, or other billing issues. Regardless of the reason for a consumer’s initial contact, CBO staff assess their clients’ full range of needs. Consumers submit disputes if they believe that a utility has acted in error concerning their account or service. CBOs provide needs assistance to clients who request help with services or bills that are unrelated to IOU errors. The overall range of services are shown in Table 2.

Overall Category	Subcategory	Service provided	# Services provided	%	
PAYMENT DIFFICULTIES	HEAP/LIHEAP	HEAP/LIHEAP Application Assistance **	3,732	41%	
		Subtotal	3,732	41%	
	Arrearage Management Plans	Arrearage Management Plan (AMP) Enrollment	622	7%	
		Arrearage Management Plan Follow-Up	137	1%	
		Arrearage Management Plan – Billing or Enrollment Problem	90	1%	
		Subtotal	849	9%	
	Emergency Financial Assistance Programs	Enrolled in SCG Gas Assistance Fund	459	5%	
		Enrolled in SDG&E - Neighbor to Neighbor Program	268	3%	
		Other source of one-time payment (e.g., faith-based org, private emergency fund) ***	224	2%	
		REACH program - PG&E territory	165	2%	
		Enrolled in SCE's Energy Assistance Fund	73	<1%	
		COVID-19 Emergency Payment****	32	<1%	
		Subtotal	1,221	13%	
	Support with payment plans/extensions	Set Up Payment Plan	275	3%	
		Set Up Payment Extension	102	1%	
		Subtotal	377	4%	
	Other	Assisted with Reconnection	18	<1%	
		Cancel 24-Month Payment Plan	17	<1%	
	Total – PAYMENT DIFFICULTIES			6,214	68%

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REDUCING MONTHLY BILL CHARGES	Support with CARE program	CARE/FERA	721	8%
		High Energy User Dispute	3	<1%
		Assisted High Energy User	14	<1%
		Subtotal	738	8%
	Medical Baseline	Medical Baseline	335	4%
	ESA Program	Applying for/support with ESA	141	2%
	Support with Lowering Energy Use /Managing Bills	Scheduled Energy Audit	0	0
		Energy Efficiency Tool	89	<1%
		Added/Removed Level Pay Plan	4	<1%
		Demand Response Programs	0	0
Subtotal	569	6%		
TOTAL - REDUCING MONTHLY BILL CHARGES			1,307	14%
BILLING DISPUTE	-	Bill Adjustment	33	<1%
	-	Collections	0	0
	-	Request Meter Service or Testing	3	<1%
TOTAL - BILLING DISPUTES			36	<1%
COMMUNITY CHOICE AGGREGATORS (CCAs)	-	CCAs	126	1%
GAS AGGREGATION/ CORE TRANSPORT AGENTS (CTAs)	-	Gas Aggregation	360	4%
SOLAR ISSUES	-	Solar issues	18	<1%
MANAGING/ SETTING UP/ MAKING CHANGES TO ACCOUNT	-	Set Up Online Account Access	298	3%
	-	Billing Language Changed	175	2%
	-	Changed Consumer Information on Account	100	1%
	-	Set Up Energy Alerts	88	1%
	-	Set Up New Account	78	<1%
	-	Assist with Making a Payment	55	<1%
	-	Add/Remove Paperless Billing	43	<1%
	-	Closed Account	39	<1%
	-	Add/Remove Automatic Payment	13	<1%
-	Set Up 3rd party Notification	9	<1%	
TOTAL – MANAGING/SETTING UP/CHANGES TO ACCOUNT			898	10%
OTHER ITEMS	-	Scheduled Service Visit	14	<1%
	-	Reported Scam	8	<1%
	-	Reported Safety Problem	1	<1%
	-	Consumer Education Only	2	<1%

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	-	Utility Company Would Not Speak with CHANGES CBO	9	<1%
	-	Time of Use/Rate Plan Selection	171	2%
TOTAL - OTHER ITEMS			205	2%
TOTAL OVERALL CASE SUPPORT SERVICES PROVIDED			9,164	100%

* Figures in percentage column are rounded and may not add up to 100 percent

** LIHEAP consists of emergency and non-emergency payments.

*** Source of bill payment/reduction assistance that does not include HEAP/LIHEAP or IOUs. Sources include faith organizations, foundations and private assistance groups.

**** Includes the range of COVID-19 Emergency Assistance Programs including County, Municipality, and other sources.

Clients are offered multiple services to fit their needs. Overall, 6,985 clients received a total of 9,164 different services during the year. This is an average of 1.3 services per client case. Of these 6,985 clients, 6,333 (**91 percent**) received needs assistance services and 652 (**9 percent**) received dispute resolution services. Most of the disputes were related to disconnections. The program experienced a steep decline in dispute resolution during the COVID-19 pandemic mainly due to the moratorium on disconnections however, during this program year, dispute resolution cases began to increase in the last 2 quarters.

In common with the previous PY, most CHANGES services support clients with financial issues. There are two main financial categories - payment difficulties (**68 percent**), or to reduce their monthly bill charges (**14 percent**).⁹ In the last PY the corresponding percentages were 67 and **14 percent** respectively. This reinforces the ongoing concern that rising energy costs continue to disproportionately impact LEP clients who are predominantly low income.

CBOs facilitated 3,732 HEAP/LIHEAP applications, representing **60 percent** of payment difficulties services, and **41 percent** of all services. Consistent with previous PYs, this is by far the largest single service provided by CHANGES. Compared to last year, services to relieve payment difficulties increased by **17 percent**, driven strongly by LIHEAP services, which increased by **21 percent** over the previous year.

To further underscore the ongoing and increasing need for payment assistance, CBOs processed 1,843 applications for emergency financial assistance programs (excluding LIHEAP), making up **20 percent** of all case services. These applications include Arrearage Management Program (AMP), other one-time payment sources (e.g., churches), and IOU assistance programs. This is an increase of 132 from the 1,711 similar services provided in the last PY. This highlights that demand for emergency payment assistance remains high as we enter the post-pandemic period. There could be multiple reasons for that, but it is likely that a

⁹ See “Overall Category” column in Table 2.

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common factor is higher ongoing bills, such as the unprecedented high energy bills seen by many customers this past Winter.

Languages Used for Case Assistance

Figure 2 below shows the languages spoken by case assistance clients. They spoke 33 languages in total. More than half of clients were either Spanish or Cantonese speakers, receiving **37 percent** and **22 percent** of services respectively.

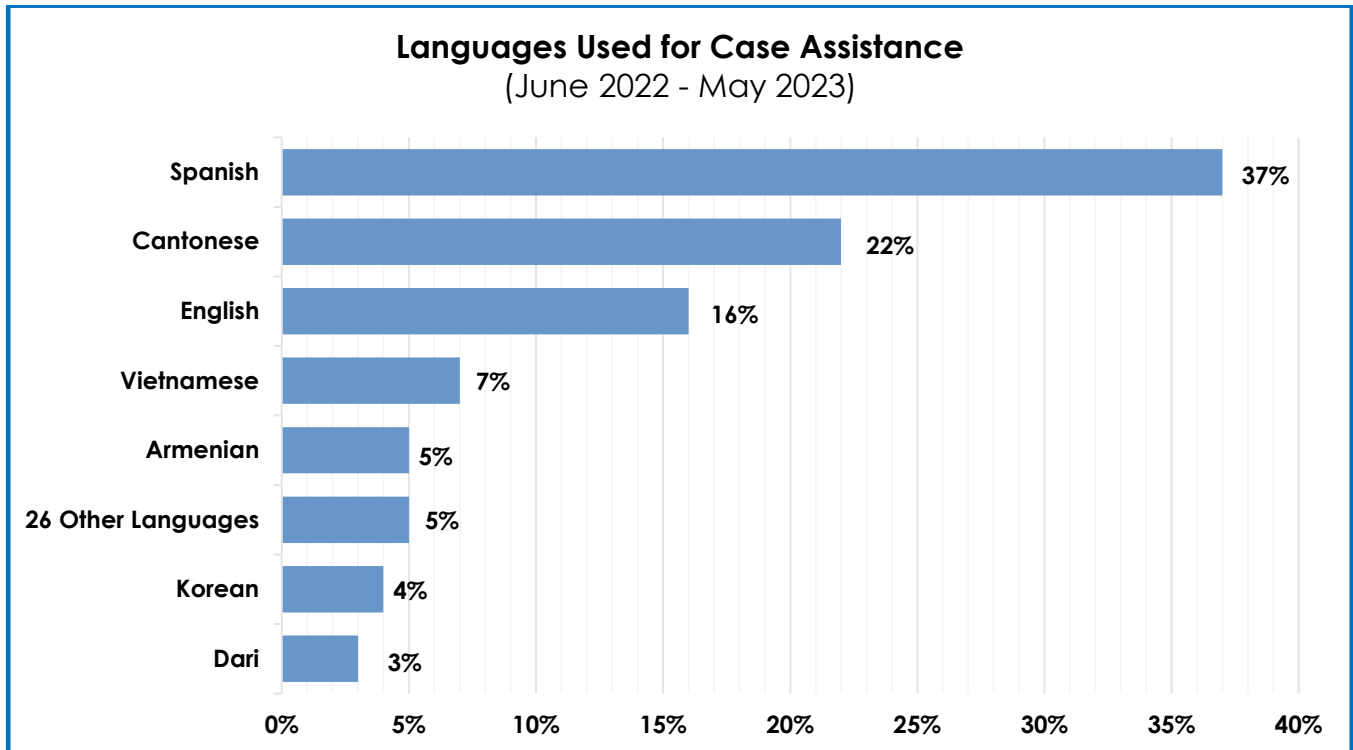


Figure 1: Languages Used for Case Assistance

Comparisons with Previous Year

Column D, in Table 3 compares the proportional share of each large service category to the previous PY as shown by the figures in parentheses in columns A) and B). This data indicates that the distribution of services has stayed constant year over year. The most marked change here is that services helping those with payment difficulties, which were already significant, are even higher this year, increasing to **68 percent** of all services. These services, alongside assistance with reducing monthly bill charges, formed the vast majority of the 1,276 additional services provided this year.

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Table 3: Comparison of Case Assistance in 2021/22 Versus 2022/23				
Overall Category	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)
	2021-22	2022-23	YOY Actual Variance	YOY Distributional Change (%B) - (%A)
	Services Provided (% of All Services)	Services Provided (% of All Services)		
PAYMENT DIFFICULTIES	5,293 (67%)	6,214 (68%)	921	1%
REDUCING MONTHLY BILL CHARGES	1,142 (14%)	1,307 (14%)	165	-
BILLING DISPUTE	39 (0.5%)	36 (0.5%)	(3)	-
COMMUNITY CHOICE AGGREGATORS (CCAS)	176 (2%)	126 (1%)	(50)	(1%)
GAS AGGREGATION/CTAs	330 (4%)	360 (4%)	30	-
SOLAR ISSUES	29 (0.3%)	18 (.5%)	(11)	-
SUPPORT WITH MANAGING/SETTING UP/CHANGES TO ACCOUNT	683 (9%)	898 (10%)	215	1%
OTHER ITEMS	196 (2%)	205 (2%)	9	-
TOTAL SERVICES PROVIDED AS PART OF CASE SUPPORT	7,888	9,164	1,276	16%

CARE Eligibility

Table 4 illustrates that consumers seeking case assistance are nearly all (**96 percent**) low-income households. At the time of seeking case assistance, **81 percent** of consumers were enrolled in CARE, **15 percent** were qualified but not enrolled, and **4 percent** were not qualified for CARE. The percentage of consumers who were qualified for CARE but not enrolled increased from **11 to 15 percent** in this PY. This may have been caused by clients being unaware that the recertification moratorium had ended and that they needed to submit their renewals.

Table 4: CARE Enrollment Status at Time of Case Assistance				
Enrolled in CARE	Qualified for CARE But Not Enrolled	Not CARE Qualified	Total enrolled and qualified for CARE	TOTAL
5,644 (81%)	1,065 (15%)	276 (4%)	6709 (96%)	6,985 (100%)

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Assistance Program Service Detail

Most services related to assistance programs were for new enrollments and applications. Moratoriums on recertifications for most programs remained in effect for a portion of the program year, reducing the need for recertifications.

Table 5: Assistance Program Services Detail										
Assistance Program	Enrollment Assistance		Recertification Assistance		Enrollment Problem		Billing Problem		Total	
	CARE/FERA	548	81%	114	17%	12	2%	1	<1%	675
ESA	124	100%	0	0	0	0	0	0	124	100%
Level Pay Plan	3	75%	0	0	0	0	1	25%	4	100%
Medical Baseline	322	99%	1	.5%	1	.5%	0	0	324	100%

Disconnections

Although the moratorium on disconnections was no longer in effect, several IOUs delayed reinstating disconnections for most of the PY. Only **8 percent** of clients cases were reported as being in danger of disconnection and CBOs were able to stop pending disconnections for **74 percent** of those cases.

Table 6: Disconnections								
Account Status (questions asked to clients)	Yes		No		No Response		Total	
Was disconnection pending at the time of case assistance ² *	590	8%	6,387	92%	0	0	6,977	100%
If YES, was disconnection cancelled through case assistance?	437	74%	149	25%	4	1%	590	100%
Were services disconnected at the time of case assistance?	32	0.5%	6,962	99.5%	0	0	6,994	100%

* Consumer received disconnection notice from IOU.

Gas Aggregation

Data collected on gas aggregation cases indicates that **100 percent** of cases were from the PG&E territory. Detailed data is available for 245 cases (**68 percent**) of the 360 cases addressed for this issue. CHANGES CBOs negotiated case resolution with 16 different Core Transport Agents (CTAs) in this program year.

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Consumers were mainly concerned about higher bills or were unaware that their accounts were transferred to a CTA. It is unclear whether account balances were higher from a CTA than they would have been with an IOU. However, when addressing the high bill amounts, most consumers felt that switching back to the IOU would make a difference. **66 percent** of consumers with gas aggregation cases did not remember speaking to a salesperson or CTA representative or agreeing to transfer services to the CTA.

Figure 3 below shows that **49 percent** of Gas Aggregation cases were concerned with high bill amounts, and an additional **36 percent** were a result of consumers who felt surprised that their service was transferred from an IOU.

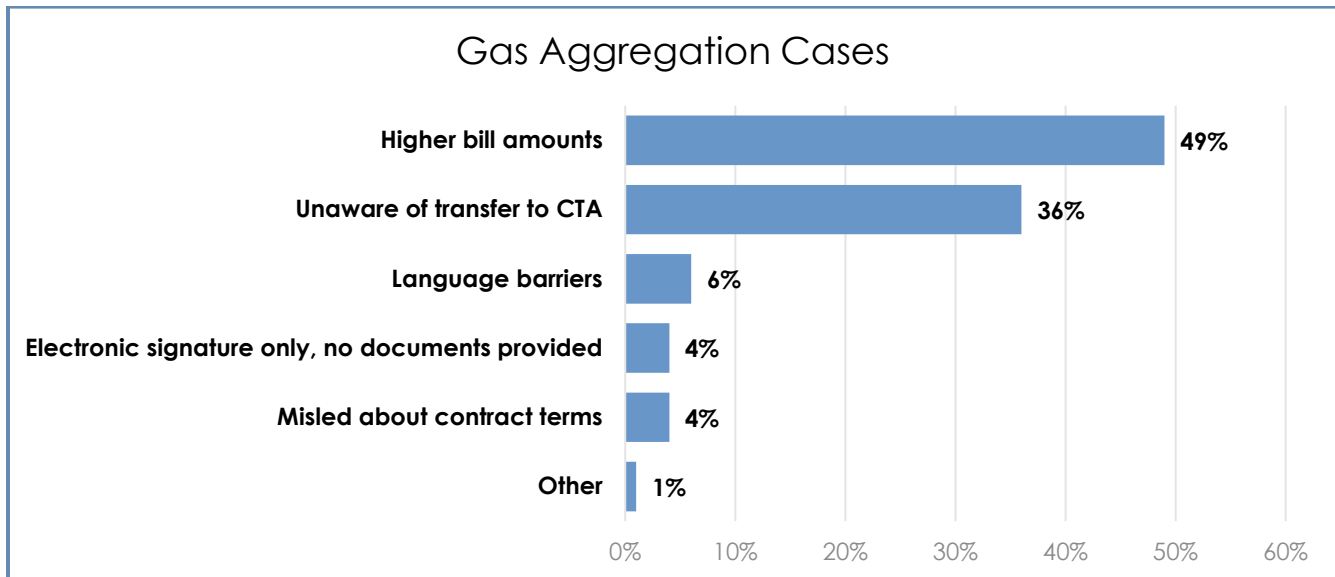


Figure 2: Gas Aggregation Case Issues

Almost all CTA cases (**99 percent**) were resolved by requesting services are transferred back to an IOU. Bill modifications typically address transfer or cancellation fees. Addressing cases with CTAs can be time consuming and difficult for CHANGES CBOs because they typically must deal with multiple calls to the CTA and the IOU to complete case resolution. Relationships and lines of communication with CTAs have not been set up for the CHANGES program, which means CTAs are often unaware of the program and can be less likely to fully cooperate with CBOs.

COMMUNITY CHOICE AGGREGATORS (CCAs)

CHANGES CBOs resolved cases with five different Community Choice Aggregators (CCAs) in the program year. **37 percent** of CCA cases indicated that they were unaware that their electricity services had been transferred to a CCA. Unlike gas aggregation cases, consumers did not have concerns about confusing or misleading sales practices. A possible explanation for that is that most were opted in automatically.

Figure 4 shows that consumer concerns echoed those of gas aggregation cases – high bills (**62 percent**) and lack of awareness of the change to a CCA (**37 percent**).

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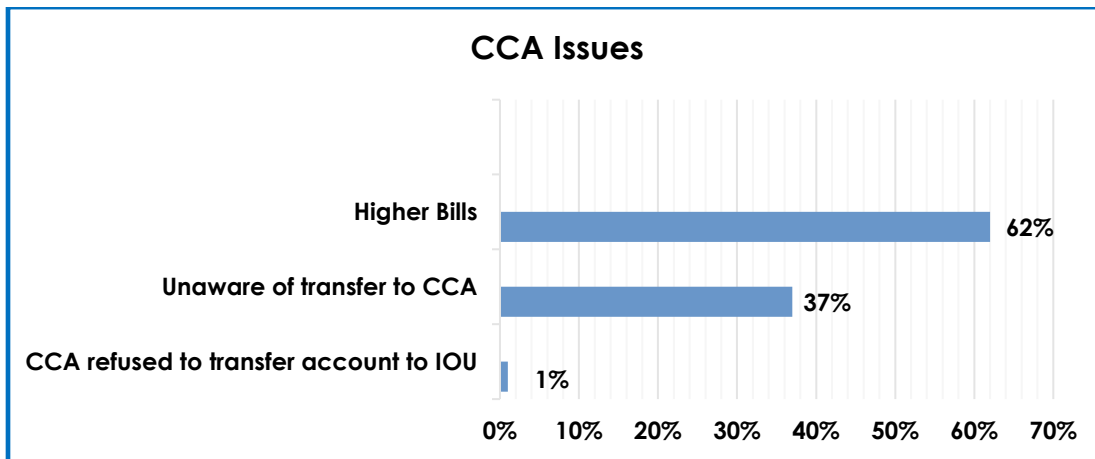


Figure 3: CCA Case Issue Type

As illustrated in Figure 5, all case resolutions were addressed by assisting the consumer to change their account back to an IOU.

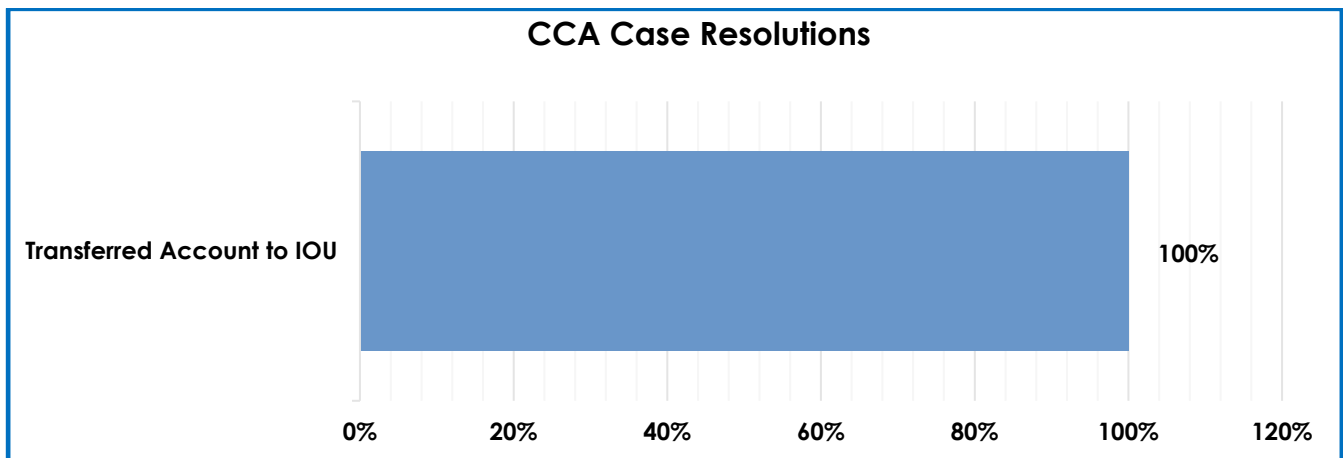


Figure 4: CCA Resolutions

Arrearage Management Program (AMP)

During this program year, Arrearage Management Program (AMP) plans were established for 622 consumers.

- The total amount of account balances included in AMP enrollments this PY was \$795,137.
- The average amount of balances included in AMP was \$1,278.

These amounts are consistent with the previous PY.

A limited number (137) of consumers enrolled in AMP were contacted for follow-up assessments to determine if the program had successfully reduced their utility debt. Consumers who have not been able to

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maintain the required monthly payments in AMP are provided with additional services to assist with reducing payments or balances. Follow-up of AMP cases indicated the following:

- 77 percent of consumers contacted at 3 months post-enrollment had AMP plans that remained active, although **26 percent** of them had already missed at least one payment.
- 71 percent of consumers contacted at 6 months post-enrollment had AMP plans that remained active and **64 percent** of them were able to complete all monthly payments.
- At 12 months post-enrollment, only **20 percent** of those surveyed were able to make their monthly payment and current charges to remain active in AMP. It should be noted, however, because this data relies on a small pool of respondents. It is a relatively new program and a small number have been on it for at least 12 months.

Time of Use

Assistance with selecting a rate plan was provided to 171 households in the program year. As shown in Figure 6, consumers overwhelmingly (**89 percent**) chose to remain on tiered rate plans.

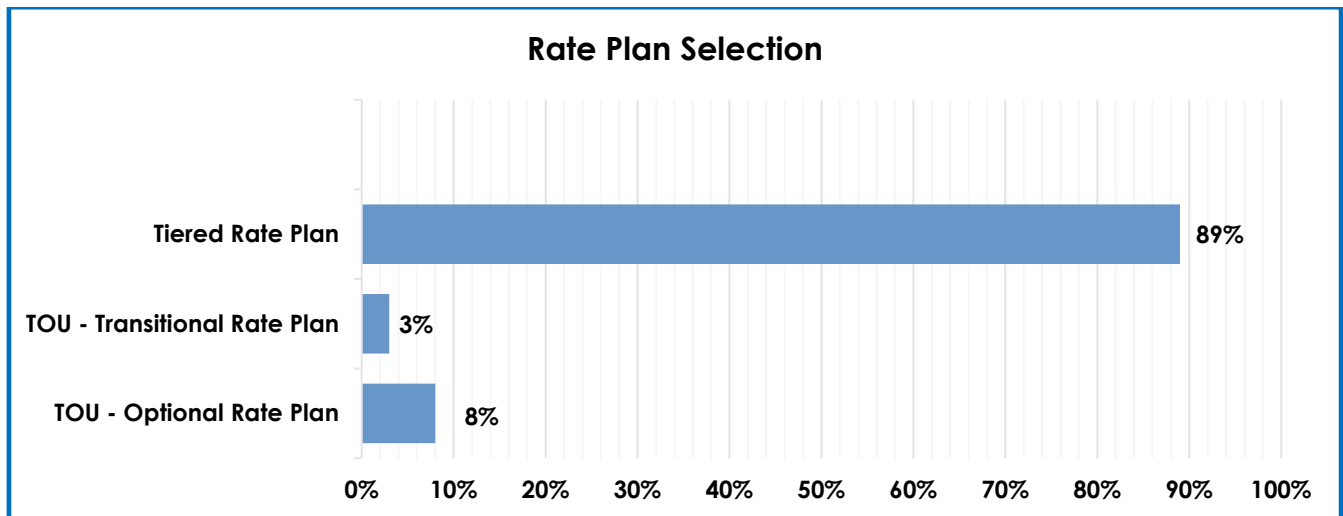


Figure 5: Rate Plan Selection

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4. Consumer Education

CBOs provided consumer education focused on eight different topics, in workshops that typically span 45-60 minutes in length. CBOs select educational topics to present to their community based on their assessment of the needs and interests of their respective communities.

The pandemic led to a far larger need for remote learning, and some CBOs continue to provide a remote delivery option for clients. At the height of the pandemic, the contractors developed over 300 consumer education presentation slide decks to ensure that all languages could be served in an online format. However, despite this flexibility online education is not as effective or accessible as in-person educational presentations for the target populations. Compared to the general population this demographic tends to be lower income and older, in addition to being LEP.

Services in the sister program TEAM continue to be leveraged, and enrollment in new Broadband discount programs have supported access to remotely conducted CHANGES educational sessions.

As shown in Table 7, overall, the CHANGES program educated **32 percent** more consumers in this PY compared to the previous one. The increase is reflective of CBOs’ ability to conduct more in-person workshops during the post-pandemic period.

The largest increase in attendance by far was for CARE/FERA and Other Assistance Programs. In percentage terms there were also large increases in attendance for sessions on Energy Conservation; Safety; and the Level Pay Plan.

Topic	2021-22 PY (Percent of attendees)	2022–23 PY (Percent of attendees)	YOY Change	YOY % Change
CARE/FERA and Other Assistance Programs	5,905 (21%)	9,375 (25%)	3,470	59%
Understanding Your Bill	8,032 (28%)	8,511 (22%)	479	6%
Avoiding Disconnection	3,068 (11%)	4,067 (11%)	999	33%
Energy Conservation	2,567 (9%)	3,850 (10%)	1,283	50%
Electric and Natural Gas Safety	2,352 (8%)	3,652 (10%)	1,300	55%
High Energy Use and CARE	3,093 (11%)	3,211 (8%)	118	4%
Level Pay Plan	1,412 (5%)	2,688 (7%)	1,276	90%
Gas Aggregation	2,150 (8%)	2,480 (7%)	330	15%
TOTAL	28,579	37,834	9,255	32%

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Education Topics Offered

As shown in Figure 7 below, the majority of those attending education workshops attended the topics on CARE/FERA and Other Assistance Programs (**25 percent**) and Understanding Your Bill (**22 percent**). The remaining topics on Avoiding Disconnection, Electric and Natural Gas Safety, Energy Conservation, High Energy Use & CARE, Gas Aggregation, and Level Pay Plan made up **53 percent** of education topics.

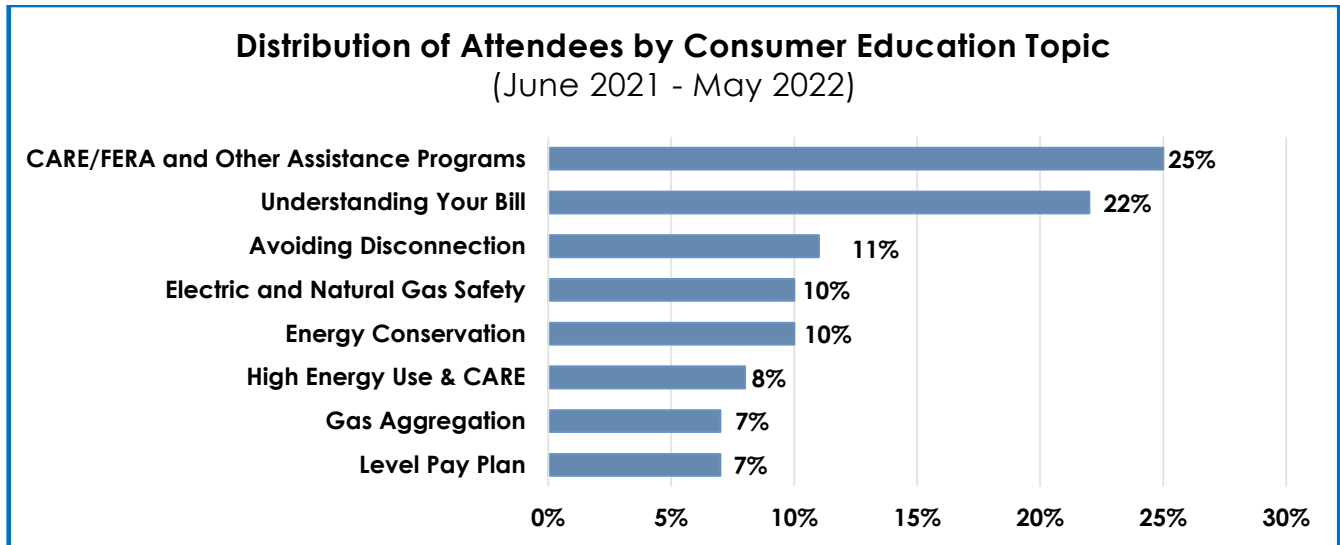


Figure 6: Distribution of Education Attendees by Workshop Topic

Education Breakdown by Language

As shown in Figure 8 below, the highest number of clients receiving Consumer Education spoke Spanish (**25 percent**), followed by Cantonese (**12 percent**), Native American English (**12 percent**), Vietnamese (**12 percent**), and Korean (**10 percent**).

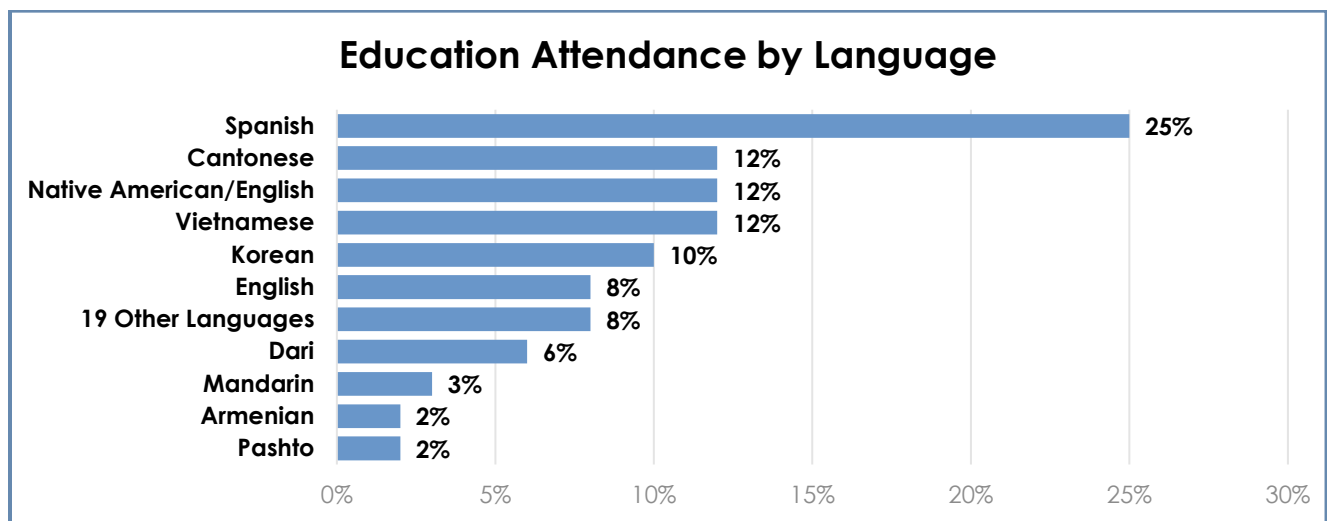


Figure 7: Distribution of Clients Educated by Language

5. OUTREACH

Sources of Client Referrals

Similar to previous years, Table 8 highlights that most consumers access CHANGES after receiving recommendations from friends and family members. This type of person-to-person recommendation is typical in low-income communities that may rely less on traditional media sources or other types of mainstream outreach such as glossy flyers. It is also very positive that previous program clients recommend the program to others in their community.

Table 8: Sources of Referral for CHANGES	
Referral Source	% of Clients
Friend or Family	42%
Participated in Another Program at the CBO	18%
Attended CHANGES Education Workshop	12%
Media Placement (print, radio, or television)	11%
Community Event	10%
Received TEAM Services	5%
Referred by Another CBO	2%

Types of Client Outreach

Outreach comprises the following five components: community events, media placements, social media, community presentations, and special outreach projects. As shown in Table 9 below, community events increased over the previous PY due to the ability to resume public gatherings after the pandemic but are still not at pre-pandemic levels. Average attendance at individual events has declined since the pandemic. Other forms of outreach increased from the previous PY except for social media posts, which although declining slightly, has become a more prominent feature of CBOs’ outreach approach.

CHANGES PROGRAM ANNUAL REPORT (JUNE 2022–MAY 2023)

Outreach Component:	2021–22 Program Year	2022–23 Program Year	YOY Change	YOY Percent Change
Community Events*	42,599	117,949	75,350	177%
Media Placements*	1,218,000	1,392,050	174,050	14%
Social Media (postings)	266	233	(33)	(12%)
Community Presentations	10	12	2	20%

* Number of Clients Reached

6. Conclusion

Overall, CHANGES services increased significantly over the last program year. In particular, the number of case assistance services provided increased by **16 percent** from the previous PY. In large part this is due to LEP consumers facing more difficulties in meeting their energy costs. For instance, LIHEAP services increased from 3,093 applications in the last PY, to 3,732 in this one, an increase of **21 percent**. Also, support with applying for other emergency financial assistance programs increased from 1,711 cases last year to 1,843 cases in this PY.

Consumer education attendance increased by **32 percent** from the previous PY. This is mainly because CBO facilities opened their doors to the public again. There was also an increase in remote educational workshops. However, LEP populations served by the CBOs are mainly over 60 years old and often lack the resources and knowledge to access online video conference platforms, and so the pivot back to in-person events is welcome for this group.

Outreach increased significantly, particularly community events such as resource fairs. CHANGES' community events saw an almost three-fold increase in attendees from 42,599 last year to 117,949 this year. Media outreach also increased by **14 percent**, reaching a potential audience of almost 1.4 million people this year.

Overall, the demand for CHANGES services continues to reinforce the ongoing difficulties consumers have with maintaining their energy services, which appears to be amplified when costs increase such as witnessed this past winter and will likely not be eased as IOUs plan further rate increases. Additionally, LEP consumers continue to struggle with navigating the often complex and changing requirements for qualifying and accessing utility assistance programs.

