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To: CDSS SHD County Stakeholders
CDSS SHD Advocate Stakeholders
CDSS SHD Agency Stakeholders

From : Juliet O. Macaulay
Deputy Director/Chief Administrative Law Judge
CDSS State Hearings Division

Date : April 6, 2020

**SUBJECT : CDSS STATE HEARINGS DIVISION - COVID-19 RESPONSE -EXTENSION
OF MORATORIUM ON IN-PERSON HEARING MODALITY THROUGH MAY
15, 2020**

Dear CDSS SHD Stakeholders,

On March 13, 2020, the CDSS State Hearings Division (SHD) informed all stakeholders that in conformity with the magnitude of the unprecedented Covid-19 emergency, the policy statements from the Governor's Office and the California Department of Public Health; CDSS SHD was compelled to immediately move to conducting hearings by telephone in lieu of in person hearings.

The primary objective in reaching that determination was to protect the health and safety of claimants and all involved in the state hearings process since most in person hearing locations are small and render it impossible to maintain a 6 feet physical distance between participants as required by the CDPH directives.

Since the March 13, 2020 announcement, many more county locations have closed and remain inaccessible to the public (including claimants, claimant representatives, advocates and Administrative Law Judges). In addition, a statewide shelter in place order is now in force, exempting only specified persons/groups.

This state of affairs necessitates an extension of the temporary moratorium on in-person hearings through May 15, 2020. The SHD will continue to schedule hearings by telephone and will reassess this process on an ongoing basis. Our next assessment for cases scheduled after May 15, 2020 will occur at the end of April 2020.

Be assured that we have not reached this determination lightly, and that the SHD will continue to do all it can to ensure that claimants' due process rights are protected. SHD has been able to seamlessly move to hear cases by telephone, and county /agency representatives are fully participating by telephone, ensuring that claimants continue to have due process.

We will continue to address requests for in person hearings on a case by case basis, and when specifically requested, we will schedule cases as in person hearings. However, as the hearing day approaches, where logistics such as availability of hearing sites fail, we will postpone such hearings to the next hearing cycle, with good cause, so that aid paid pending can continue when appropriate.

We appreciate your flexibility as we respond to this unprecedented crisis and continue to strive to provide hearings to claimants by currently available means. Our highest priority remains the health and safety of all claimants, claimant representatives, county staff, agency representatives, and SHD staff.

Please direct any questions regarding this communication to the SHD at 800-743-8525.