

CCWRO Welfare News

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IN BRIEF

● DSS has submitted a waiver of the Food Stamp face-to-face interviews for applications to USDA, FNS. FNS requests that the State show that the waiver would be cost neutral. Department of Finance is working on it. FNS has said that they would most likely approve the waiver within 30 of submission.

● The federal General Accounting Office will be in Sacramento every two (2) months to monitor the federal ARRA funds. California will need to prove that they meeting the matching requirements to get this federal money.

● At a May 14, 2009 CWDA meeting DSS clarified that a face-to-face interview: "A face to face is generally not required at the annual redetermination. The regulations at 40-181.311 require a interview but a telephone interview can fulfill that requirement. We also clarified that the SAWS2 does not need to be signed in the presence of the county worker, and can be mailed.

● AB 433, implementing the modified food stamp categorical eligibility, will be implemented effective 7-1-09, DSS has not provided any money to program any of the consortia systems.

● According to the 2009 DSS WtW25 report, a monthly average of 142,553 persons are participating in the Welfare to Work program and Counties have sanctioned 42,464 of those families. That is a 30% sanction rate. Without a sanction, a family of three (3) average grant is \$677 effective July 1, 2009. The sanctioned families average grant will be \$547 a month, which is 39% of the poverty level. This is the real legacy of welfare-to-work – forcing about 95,000 children deeper and deeper in poverty.

Sacramento Budget Battle Update

Last week, there were all kinds of things popping in Sacramento. The Budget Conference committee passed a motion to eliminate various agencies in state government that are loaded with political appointees and friends. These agencies oversee various state department, including the state Health & Human Services Agency. The big overseer – the Department of Finance was spared for some reason.

On June 2, 2009, Speaker Karen Bass and Senate Leader Darryl Steinberg held a press conference where they made it very clear that safety net programs will not be eliminated as proposed by Governor Schwarzanegger.

Darrell Steinberg suggested that they may shift some programs to counties and make it easier for locals to raise taxes. This would mean that residents of poor counties would get low quality services, while rich counties would provide better services. Under this proposal, California's services to the poor and middle class would become like the General Assistance Program. Many counties would only help the poor for three months a year and then sentence the poor to eating from garbage cans and living in the streets of California. Mr. Steinberg also reiterated that he is opposed to eliminating safety net programs like the Governor is suggesting, and said that there may be cuts, but they would be surgical and not wholesale.

Meanwhile, Mike Genest, a former Deputy Director for Welfare Programs at DSS, asserted that the California state budget primarily exists to

serve the poor. On June 4, 2009, the Sacramento Bee wrote an editorial pointing out that state services are primarily designed for the upper class and the middle class. The Bee asked if all education funding goes for the poor? Does all secondary education spending go for the poor? Does all of the education spending is \$51.7 billion go for the poor? Does all of nursing home spending go for the poor? Does all prison spending go for the poor, which is \$10 billion? Transportation and economic development is \$2.6 billion. The editorial concluded that "Genest's comments simply feed the myth accepted by far too many Californians- that only poor people need government services."

One of the savings that is being considered is the proposal by the Legislative Analyst Office (LAO) to temporarily suspend the mandatory requirement for participation in Welfare-to-Work. This would free up county welfare workers to assist clients to get their benefits and would save money by not forcing families to use child care and transportation services that they don't want to use.

This proposal to allow welfare moms to make decisions is not supported by California Welfare Directors Association (CWDA). They propose to limit this provision to families with children between 0-2 and to families with 2 or more kids up to six (6) years old. It does not appear that CWDA's proposal would yield the \$200 million in saving that LAO's proposal would yield. Moreover, what is the problem with empowering the poor to make decision about their lives? The proposed suspension would not prevent anybody from voluntarily participating in any welfare to work activity they are eligible for and wish to participate in. There is a hearing tomorrow, June 9th, 2009 that can be viewed at 2 p.m. - <http://www.calchannel.com/channel/live/2>