

CCWRO New Welfare News

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ORANGE COUNTY VIOLATES FOOD STAMP LAWS

From August 17 through August 24, 2009 DSS conducted their annual Food Stamp Management Evaluation (FSME) of Orange County. The FSME is a federally required monitoring of the Food Stamp program. This is one of the rare monitoring actions done by DSS. DSS views counties as their “partners” instead of agents of the State administering the welfare system as set forth in state law. **See W&IC § 10553.** The evaluation revealed the following violations:

Violation of MPP §63-300.34- Applications not readily available in the food stamp office.

The evaluation found that, “food stamp applications in the North Region FSS Office are not readily available in the lobby (63-300.34).”

“MPP 63-300 .34 - Contacting the Food Stamp Office - The CWD shall make application forms readily accessible to potentially eligible households. The application form shall be provided to anyone who requests the form.”

The evaluation goes on to say that, “Individuals must wait in line for the customer service/concierge or wait in line at window 1 or 2 to request a FS application from a receptionist. Individual should not have to wait in line in order to request an application. Applications should be made available in the lobby for anyone who would like an application with the option of taking the application home to complete or standing in line.”

VIOLATION OF MPP §11-601.314

(b)-No signs telling applicants how to apply and submit complete/incomplete food stamp applications and where to drop off the application if the individual is unable to stay or wait in line.

The evaluation reveals that this is the second year in a row that Orange County has been informed that they are violating MPP 11-601.314.(b) by intentionally refusing to post a sign informing applicants that they can simply take the application home, complete it and bring it back or that they can simply put down their full name and address and place it in a drop box rather than waiting around for hours or standing in line.

“MPP 11-601.314 - Post notices in prominent locations within the CWD’s offices and in the public areas, including the doors, immediately outside the CWD’s offices which inform the public of the following:

(a) The working days, or the regular eight hours of a working day, when the offices will be closed;

(b) The procedures for obtaining and filing applications for Food Stamp and AFDC benefits during these hours of office closure; and

(c) The procedures for applying for and receiving expedited Food Stamp, immediate need AFDC, and homeless assistance benefits within the time limits prescribed by federal and state law, during these hours of office closure.”

VIOLATION OF MPP §634-300-.31.

– Applicants are not allowed to apply during normal business hours on the initial day of contact with the office.

The evaluation states: “At the point of contact with reception and/or concierge, applicants are only allowed to submit an application after 3:00 P.M. if they assert that they have an emergency. Applicants who wait in line at reception or concierge desk are informed of intake screening hours (7 A.M. to 3 P.M.) and given the option of taking the application home and returning the next day or mailing in the application.”

VIOLATION OF MPP §63-301.521 – Refusal to inform applicants of expedited service.

The evaluation finds that, “Applicants are not verbally informed of ES and how to apply for it (MPP 63-301.521). **This was also a finding for the FFY 2008 ME.** The report recommends that, “Steps should be taken to ensure that all potential applicants are verbally informed of ES and how to initiate the process (MPP 63-301.521). This should be accomplished prior to applicant signing the SAWS 1.”

“MPP 3-300.521- A CWD employee or volunteer shall inform potential applicants orally of the right to expedited service for eligible households and how to initiate the process, the availability of assistance in filling out the application and shall be responsible for screening applications as they are filed. The CWD also shall advise individuals who inquire about the Food Stamp Program by telephone of the expedited service processing standards for eligible households. The CWD shall assist an applicant, upon request, in filling out forms and completing the application process.”

County Single Allocation In Brief

In 2009-2010 counties received over \$1.5 billion “single allocation” money to operate the CalWORKs and Welfare-to-Work programs. Similar to a block grant counties can spend the money however they choose. Some counties hire many welfare fraud investigators. Others hire more welfare workers. Some counties are management heavy while others are not. This is one of the reasons some counties have a longer wait time to see a worker, while others do not. The resources serving clients are not allocated consistently throughout the state.

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