

CCWRO Welfare News

Coalition of California Welfare Rights Organizations, Inc.
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June 10, 2011
Issue # 2011-08

In Brief

● On June 8, 2011 the California State Assembly and Senate Budget Committees took the following actions: "CalWORKS: Restores approximately \$90 million related to additional grant cuts for safety net and child-only cases that exceed 60 months. Also restores \$50 million of the single allocation, which is the funding used by counties to provide welfare-to-work services."

What is WtW Really About

For every twenty-two 22 families sanctioned by counties that means reduction of their fixed income by 25% one (1) family finds employment that may result in self-sufficiency.

CalWORKs took a \$1.1 billion hit in March of 2011. While the restoration of the Incremental Grant Cuts (IGR) was welcome news, the restoration of the \$50 million to the county single allocation means now families with children between ages 24 and 36 months would be subject to the **WtW punitive sanctions that reduces grants by 25%**. The WtW program sanctions 22 families for every one (1) family that find employment that may make them self-sufficient.

The primary force behind the repeal of the Incremental Grant Cuts was Assemblywoman **Holly Mitchell** of Los Angeles and the Latino Caucus plus the advocates who worked tirelessly to get the IGR repealed.

● What has TANF meant for poor families? The alleged successful "welfare reform" program touted by Republicans and many Democrats? "In **1994-1995**, just before TANF's creation, the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program (AFDC, TANF's predecessor) served **75 families with children for every 100 families with children who lived in poverty**. In **2008-2009**, TANF served **only 28 families for every 100 in poverty**. This ratio varies among states; in **seven states in 2008-2009, TANF served fewer than 10 families for every 100 in poverty**." Source: *Center on Budget Policy and Priority*.

● In a letter dated March 24, 2011 Beverly Beasley of San Mateo County was informed that San Mateo county has committed an underissuance of \$94 to a HH by not authorizing the Standard Utility Deduction when the case file had verification of a PG&E bill, even though SUA is not a mandatory verification item.

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FNS 2010 California State Agency Management Evaluation Corrective

On September 30, 2010 Food Nutrition Services issued a 2010 State Agency Management Evaluation pointing out, among other things, that Los Angeles and Riverside are not allowing applicant to apply the same day and are refusing to assess applicants for Expedited Service Food Stamps (ES-FS).

These have been statewide problems for decades. Counties rarely make applications available to applicants for Food Stamps and ES-FS rules have been consistently ignored by counties with the acquiescence of the single state agency - California Department of Social Services.

In a letter dated March 17, 2011 DSS transmitted a so-called "corrective action plan" by Riverside and Los Angeles county.

These are serious problems. Babies and children go hungry when counties violate ES-FS rules.

The response from Riverside County was a November 17, 2010 two page letter from Patricia Reynolds of Riverside DPSS.

Los Angeles County had a similar response, but they had more than a two page response.

In response to the fact that "some households are not allowed to file an application on the same day . . ." Los Angeles and Riverside counties stated that staff has been issued a reminder and that this topic will be covered during new hire training. We wonder how many people have been hired during 2010 and 2011?

(con't on page 2- FNS Audit Response)

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● On February 26, 2011, **Ms. Monica Gonzales of Los Angeles County DPSS** was cited for wrongfully denied an eligible applicant expedited service food stamp benefits. On October 22, 2010, Ms. R.N. 511020 applied for food stamps. Her net income was less than her rent and utilities. This was an invalid negative action against an eligible applicant for food stamps eligible for emergency food stamp benefits.

● On February 4, 2011, **Fresno County Director Pat Cheadle** received a letter informing her that a Fresno County client applied for food stamps on 9-22-10. The application was denied 10-26-10 for allegedly failure to provide mandatory forms and verification. The DSS review showed that the county had refused to issue the MPP §63-300.37 required form for verification:

“.37 Written Statement of Verification Requirements

At the time of application and at recertification the CWD shall provide the household with the FS 8. The notice shall inform the household that the CWD will assist them in obtaining required verification, provided that the household is cooperating with the CWD as specified in Section 63-505.1.”

The Fresno County denial was invalid.

● **Nevada County** received a letter dated 2-2-11 from DSS informing them the DSS Food Stamp Management Evaluation has discovered that the Nevada City District office does not make application readily available as required by MPP § 63-300.34. Nevada County also does not inform applicants of their eligibility for ES-FS benefits.

● In a letter dated February 10, 2011 **Plumas County** was informed the DSS Food Stamp Management Evaluation has discovered that “CalFresh applications are not readily available in the lobby.” Applicants are not verbally informed of ES and how to apply for it. Applicants are asked to sign the SAWS 1 without any information on ES. “Observations show that if questions 14 through 17 of the SAWS 1 are blank, the receptionist will instruct the applicant to line out the area on ES and initial to indicate they have no interest in requesting ES.”

● On February 25, 2011 **Ingrid Harita, Director of Orange County** was informed that the DSS Food Stamp Management Evaluation has discovered that potential applicants arriving after 3 p.m. were given an application and instructed to return the applications the next day. Applicants were deterred from applying for Food Stamps the same day in Orange County. Moreover, applicants who complete a DFA 285 and turn it in to the county are forced to complete a SAWS1, in essence forcing applicants to complete two (2) different applications. In 2009 Orange County was cited for not making applications available to applicants. Not much has changed.

● In a recent DSS Food Stamp Management Evaluation report discovered that **Madera County** was not allowing applicants to file an application during regular working hours and for refusal to access and process ES-FS in accordance with state regulations.

(Con't from page 1 - FNS Audit Response)

This is a typical bureaucratic response to a major human problem. We will remind staff and we will train them.

How would private enterprise respond if somebody complained that customers are not allowed to come into the store and buy products? Private enterprise would fire the responsible workers. Then they would sit down and decide what to do in order make sure people customers are properly served. An example in this case would be ensuring that applications are available when customers walk in the door and not forcing people to stand in line to get an application. Does Riverside or Los Angeles County want people eligible for food stamps to get a food stamp application? Their corrective action plan gives the impression that they do not. In Los Angeles County, customers often cannot even get into the welfare offices often without standing in the cold or heat for hours. Once people get in, they cannot even get an application. Often staff discourages applicants from filing a food stamp application.

Los Angeles and Riverside Counties were also cited for refusing to issue ES-FS to eligible clients. The county corrective action plan was the same – reminders and training. A true corrective action plan would be to enter the information from the SAWS1 into the computer and then have the computer decide if the applicant is eligible for ES-FS. Unfortunately, the county corrective action plans do not seem to address the root of these problems.