

CCWRO Welfare News

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Some Homeless Families Not Allowed to Apply for Homeless Assistance

At a legislative hearing on November 3, 2011, Phil Ansell, Acting Chief Deputy Director of Los Angeles County presented information that requests for homeless assistance have increased by 98%. Many of the homeless assistance requests are related to the fact that the current CalWORKs benefits are at the same level that they were in 1985. No other segment of the public benefits community has been forced to live like it is 1985.

The most recent DSS homeless assistance data called the HA 237 report reveals that counties have erected major barriers between the homeless and homeless assistance.

<http://www.cdss.ca.gov/research/Pg283.htm>

Table #1 reveals that in June of 2011, 43% of CalWORKs applications were approved. In September of 2011, 58% of the Food Stamp application were approved and 77% of the homeless assistance applications were approved. To an untrained eye this may seem like counties are approving more homeless assistance applications. But a trained eye sees that the devil is in the details. It is a known fact that in most counties when a homeless person appears at the welfare department seeking homeless assistance they are told to wait and see a homeless assistance worker or their regular welfare worker. Rarely are homeless applicants given a

TABLE #1 Homeless Assistance Application known

Month	June 2011	Sept. 2011	Sept. 2011
Program	CalWORKs	Food Stamps	Homeless Assistance
Applications Received	53,612	182,174	5,600
Applications Approved	22,870	106,330	4,330
Percentage of Applications Approved	43%	58%	77%

as a CA 42 without first being seen by a worker.

A regular business practice would provide that when a person appears at the welfare office and says they are homeless they would get a CA42 (homeless assistance application) to complete. But that is not the practice in most California counties. In practice counties prescreen applicants to make sure the family is eligible for homeless assistance before they are given the CA 42 to complete.

See **Table #2** for county-by-county percentage of homeless assistance applications approved during September 2011, which is the most recent data available to the public.

Which counties prescreen homeless assistance applicants? Contra Costa, Kings, Placer, Sacramento, Santa Clara, Tulare, Fresno, San Diego, San Francisco, Orange, Ventura, Alameda, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Solano and more.

During September of 2011, Sacramento County received 324 homeless assistance applications and approved 324 of the applications. San Diego County received 139 applications and approved 137. Tulare County received 113 applica-

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TABLE # 2

Sept. 2011 HA 237 Counties	Percentage of HA Requests Approved
Statewide	77%
Contra Costa	102%
Calaveras	100%
Colusa	100%
Inyo	100%
Kings	100%
Lassen	100%
Placer	100%
Plumas	100%
Sacramento	100%
San Benito	100%
Santa Clara	100%
Santa Cruz	100%
Sierra	100%
Sonoma	100%
Tulare	100%
Yolo	100%
Yuba	100%
Fresno	99%
San Diego	99%
San Fran	97%
Orange	97%
Ventura	96%
Alameda	96%
Santa Barb	95%
Merced	95%
San Joaq	95%
Stanislaus	94%
San Mateo	93%
Solano	93%
Mendocino	91%
Shasta	91%
Nevada	89%
San Luis Ob.	89%
Siskiyou	89%
Kern	89%
Del Norte	88%
Imperial	88%
Marin	86%
Sutter	81%
Riverside	81%
Tehama	80%
Lake	78%
Monterey	76%
Butte	75%
El Dorado	75%
Napa	75%
San Bern.	70%
Humboldt	70%
Los Angeles	68%
Trinity	50%
Tuolumne	50%
Madera	41%

tions and approved all 113 of those applications. We wonder if these counties have the same rate of approval for CalWORKs and Food Stamp applications.

Homeless families are suffering in California. The county welfare departments have erected major barriers between the homeless and the safety net that is available to them. Homeless assistance is only available once in a lifetime with some exceptions. If a family was homeless in the last recession and becomes homeless during this recession – sorry – stay homeless is the answer for California's impoverished families with children – many of them babies. And then we say we have compassion. Is this compassion?

COUNTY CLIENT
ABUSE
REPORT

Kern County Does Not Process Food Stamps in 30 days - Kern County household 2027039 applied in July of 2011 and received benefits September 23, 2011. In response to this enormous delay in issuing benefits to a household that was most likely in need of expedited services, the Kern County Welfare Director agreed to provide training at the unit level and continue to have supervisors review negative actions. With these kinds of corrective action this problem is certain to reoccur.

Is there a better corrective action plan? Yes. When the case has not been acted upon within 25 days an alert should go to the supervisor who should meet with the worker and state in the case file what is being done to make sure that the application is acted upon within 30 days. If on the 30th day the county has not acted upon the application, an alert should go out to the supervisor's immediate boss, the deputy director and the director. Of course, if being late is common in Kern County, then this could be burdensome on the upper management of Kern County.

Monterey County Does Not Allow Applicants 30 Days to Complete the Application. - On September 21, 2011, Monterey County Welfare Director Elliot Robinson was informed that Review Number 507-041 failed to keep a food stamp scheduled appointment on June 30, 2011 relative to the 6/16/11 application face-to-face interview. The appointment notice said that the applicant must complete the application by 7-10-11. This was cited as an "invalid negative action." DSS's letter said that the ap-

plicant should have 30 days to complete the application process, which would have been 7-16-11 and not 7-10-11. DSS's letter informed Monterey County "No reply is required in this instance." It appears that DSS sees nothing wrong with Monterey County continuing to shut down application processing before the 30th day.

Stanislaus County SIU Terminates Food Stamps Because the Recipient Was Taking Care of a Severely Ill Relative on Orders of an SIU Investigator Improperly

- Stanislaus County terminated benefits for household 0364936 "...because he was not living at the last address he gave. EBT usage outside of the project area motivated the agency to contact the client to review residency. The client explained to the agency he was spending time with his extremely ill brother who happens to live in another county. A SIU investigator was sent to meet with the client at the address of record. It was at this time that the client maintained he still resided in Stanislaus County. The investigator's Case Log makes reference to two other persons who confirmed the client's claim, but SIU was of the opinion that the client did not appear to be living where said he was. The agency terminated CalFresh based on the SIU investigative conclusion. State QC must cite an error as there was not sufficient cause to support the agency's action to terminate benefits." The DSS letter cited MPP §§ 63-401.3 and 63-401-5 in support of their conclusion.

What corrective action did Stanislaus County take? "StanWORKs management sent a reminder to case manager to follow-up with customers when residency is in question." Will this happen again? Yes. Stanislaus County will continue to terminate food stamp benefits to food stamp recipients who may want to assist an ill relative and terminate benefits per ORDERS from SIU.

The corrective action should be an ACL informing workers that they cannot take negative action solely on the commands of SIU because SIU does not determine eligibility.

Los Angeles County Fails to Process Expedited Service

- Ms. R# 5055017 from Los Angeles County District 11 applied for food stamps on 4-27-11 and was eligible for expedited service. The case was screened and referred to "Regular Processing." This was an invalid negative action. There are hundreds like Ms. R# 5055017 in Los Angeles County and no corrective action is being taken.