

CCWRO Welfare News

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In Brief

◆ DSS is planning to set up a workgroup to plan reengagement strategies if the Legislature approves the Governor's proposal to have all parents engaged in a welfare-to-work (WtW) activity as soon as babies are born. Currently a parent with a child under 2 is exempt from participation in WtW.

◆ DSS Review of County Food Stamp Program - The California Food Stamp Division conducts annual Management Evaluations (MEs) for large counties. During April of 2012 there will be a ME review of Stanislaus and Merced Counties. During May of 2012 DSS will do a ME review for San Francisco County. Advocates interested in meeting with the DSS staff conducting the review in these counties should contact Kevin Aslanian of CCWRO.

◆ E-Applications for Food Stamps. According to the CWDA CalFresh Committee meeting minutes, CalWIN, which covers 18 counties, requires food stamp e-applicants to sign three different food stamp applications. CCWRO has information that this results in many applications being denied. The applicant, who is still often hungry and in need of emergency food stamps is forced to reapply, clogging up the system. C-IV only requires one signature and one form. Maybe CalWIN can learn from C-IV.

◆ DSS Doing a Questionnaire. DSS will be sending out a questionnaire to all the counties inquiring about each county's application (SAWS and DFA series and e-application) process due to request by FNS. State law requires that the Rights and Responsibilities (R&Rs) be signed separately BUT DSS would like to add the R&Rs and the Statement of Facts to the application and make one form which will only require one signature. At a recent CWDA meeting there was a question raised whether or not an application needs to be re-signed if the customer adds information during the interview. Rosie Avena of DSS has reminded the counties that the only entries required on a CalFresh application are the applicants name, address and signature and **once the customer signs the application, he/she does not need to re-sign if additional information is obtained during the interview.**

◆ Fleeing Felon Proposed ACL Held Up By Finance – According to CWDA committee minutes CDSS has proposed to incorporate the fleeing felon standard from the Martinez settlement regarding SSI to CalFresh. This would limit fleeing felon discontinuances from CalFresh to only warrants for escape, flight, and avoiding law enforcement. This will draw down more federal funding and create administrative efficiencies. Unfortunately, the state Department of Finance did not accept this premise and has not approved the ACL. This denial is being appealed. An ACL has been drafted and will be sent out for review if the appeal is successful.

◆ Fraudulent Letter - CWDA has discovered that a fraudulent letter on what appears to be USDA letterhead has been circulating. The letter is a financial release form asking for financial information.

◆ Child Care IPV Against Providers - CWDA has set up a

workgroup on childcare overpayments that is working on policies to impose Intentional Program Violations (IPV) upon childcare providers and then "black-balling" providers convicted of an IPV. The suggestion for imposing IPV penalties upon providers, many of who are current or former welfare recipients trying to become self-sufficient came from Los Angeles County. The Workgroup is planning to take their recommendations to CDSS and CDE. We would hope that these recommendations would be shared with advocates.



News From Washington

The Food Stamp Program is under attack in Washington D.C. The House Budget Resolution provided for a \$33.2 billion cuts in programs under the jurisdiction of the Agriculture Committee that include Food Stamps and commodity subsidies that generally go to large corporations. The Budget Resolution assumed that \$30 billion would come out of commodity subsidies and \$3.2 billion from Food Stamps. The House Agriculture Committee most likely looked at the list of the contributors to their campaigns and could not find anybody getting food stamps, and decided to take all \$33.2 billion from the SNAP program. Meanwhile, the Senate Agriculture Committee will cut \$4 billion from SNAP by eliminating the "heat and eat" program that simplifies the administration of the Food Stamp Program.

SENATE FOOD STAMP CUT	HOUSE AGRICULTURE FOOD STAMP CUT
\$4 billion	\$33.2 billion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eliminate the "heat and eat" program that simplifies the administration of the program. – Hurts the Poor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limit categorical eligibility to cash assistance programs – Hurts the Poor Eliminate the "heat and eat" program that simplifies the administration of the program. – Hurts the Poor Limit shared federal financial assistance to states operating food stamp work programs – Does not hurt the poor Eliminate state performance bonuses programs - Does not hurt the poor Reduce federal allocation for food stamp work programs to \$79,000,000. - Does not hurt the poor

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Food Stamp Policy Made by County Human Services Departments

At the County Welfare Directors Association Food Stamp Committee meetings county human services agencies raise issues and agree upon answers thereto establishing underground rules that have statewide application. The following are some of the underground rules promulgated by CWDA.

Stanislaus County – Utility Allowance – Situation: Intake applicant, no utilities paid, therefore not allowed on case. Household reports a change of address a few months later and is now paying utilities.

Question: Is the household allowed a utility allowance?

Answer: Yes, if the household reports a change and the change will increase his/her benefits, the household is allowed a utility allowance.

Stanislaus County – Situation: Household refuses to allow SIU staff into his/her home.

Question: Can the county deny the case?

Answer: Yes

CCWRO COMMENT: The correct answer is "no". Allowing SIU staff into the home of Food Stamp recipients home is not a condition of eligibility for food stamps. Per MPP §63.-300(h) (3):

"Home Visits

Home visits may be used when documentary evidence is insufficient to make a determination of eligibility or benefits level or cannot be obtained and the visit is scheduled in advance with the household."

In this example there is no showing that an appointment was made, that the county had asked for verification that was not provided by the household thus necessitating the home visit. This is clearly a welfare fraud referral and SIU is doing a criminal investigation. The Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination should mean that refusal to talk to a criminal investigator cannot be a basis for denying benefits.

Humboldt County – Situation: Applicant for CalFresh completes the SAWS1, question 8 – Is anyone applying for: CalFresh is answered No. But the applicant completes questions 14 – 17 (ES questions).

Question: Is this considered an application for CalFresh?

Answer: Counties were not in agreement, some said if the CalFresh box was not checked at all, then yes, this is an application for CalFresh, but since the applicant had check the No box, then it shouldn't be considered an application for CalFresh.

Los Angeles County – Situation: Minors who commit drug felons, their records are sealed by the court

Question: If the county finds about the drug felony, are they eligible to CalFresh?

Answer: Technically this not a conviction, the drug felony would not be addressed in CalFresh and the individual would be eligible. Per Riverside County, this question was addressed on an ACIN.

Statewide Customer Service Centers for 2013

At a recent CWDA Board meeting the Board discussed development of networked systems of county customer service centers to ensure coverage across the state and ensure efficient workload management and coverage for workload overflow. The Board adopted the following motion that would provide that all 58 counties would have Call-Centers that would interact with each other and all call-centers would adhere to statewide standards developed in concert with the State. CWDA would establish a strike force to provide technical assistance to counties that are struggling to meet the established performance standards that would include participation of CDSS and DHCS. The resolution fails to include voice of the consumers in development of this system or as a part of the strike force. We hope will be remedied.

The following is the language of the motion adopted by the CWDA Board Directors at the March 9, 2012 meeting:

"MOTION: The 58 county human service agencies which comprise the County Welfare Directors Association of California are committed to using contemporary technology to create a statewide network of excellent customer service to applicants and recipients for the CalFresh, CalWORKs, Medi-Cal and other health reform programs. To this end, county human service agencies intend to implement a statewide network of customer service centers during 2013. This network will have the following characteristics:

All 58 counties will be part of the Customer Service Center Network.

The Customer Service Centers will be able to receive phone calls routed by a statewide toll-free number established by the Health Benefits Exchange.

As needed, overflow calls in one county will be seamlessly handled by another county with available capacity.

To the extent that Customer Service Center services are required outside of regular business hours, this need will be met through the Network.

In consultation with CDSS and CDHCS, the counties will establish performance standards for the Network and monitor performance in relation to those standards.

In collaboration with CDSS and CDHCS, the counties will establish a state/county strike force to provide technical assistance to any part of the Network that is struggling to meet the established performance standards.