

# CCWRO Welfare News

Coalition of California Welfare Rights Organizations, Inc.

1901 Alhambra Blvd. Sacramento, CA 95816

<http://www.ccwro.org>

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## Social Engineers Tell The Poor How to Eat

Social engineers are at work again. For the past several years some of the so-called think tanks and their confused allies have decided to tell food stamp recipients what kind of food to buy and eat.

One would think that these social engineers would have the intellect to know that the food stamp program now called Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), does not meet all of recipients' food needs. In fact the average food stamp household gets about \$133 a month. That is about \$4.50 a day or \$1.50 a meal.

It is a miracle that poor people in this country manage not to die from starvation with the amount of food stamps they get every month. Rather than applauding food stamp recipients for being inventive fiscal geniuses, groups like the Center of Science and Public Interest are proposing to dictate to recipients how to use their meager benefits. Do not buy sodas. Buy fresh food. They have found allies in some misguided food banks in Oregon who have Senator Wyden doing a press release supporting his amendment to force food stamp recipient to choose what they call "healthier diets". The problem is healthier food is more expensive. What happens when this healthy diet results in having nothing to eat the last two weeks of the month? Would the social engineers be willing to give those hungry people a credit card to eat at an organic restaurant?

## Sanction is the Purpose of the WtW Program

On July 5, 2011, Joyce Fields, program manager for the Solano County Human Services Agency asked: "We have a single-parent family applying for CalWORKs, the mother is still under a WtW sanction. The family is over income with the mother excluded. The mother wants to cure her sanction, so her family can be approved for CalWORKs. Can we allow her to cure her sanction during the 45-day period we have to process the CalWORKs application?"

On April 5, 2012, about nine (9) months later, DSS responded as follows:

"The Manual of Policies and Procedures is silent on this question. The CWD may give the applicant a chance to cure her sanction during the 45 day application period, and if the applicant fails to cure she would remain in sanction status and the AU would be ineligible." Solano County can now take this "timely" answer, go back in time and in lieu of denying the application for being over income, allow her to cure the sanction while the application was pending. State law does not preclude any person from curing a sanction at any time.

We will admit that MPP 42-721.48 is very poorly drafted and does not say that a person can cure the sanction at any time. The statute provides that the sanction will stop anytime the "noncomplying participant" complies. (Welf. & Inst. Code § 11327.5(d).) Any reasonable person would assume that this means a person should be allowed to cure the sanction. In fact several years ago counties received several hundred million dollars to help sanctioned persons cure sanctions. Despite that, DSS says that the

regulations do not require counties to allow applicants to cure a previous sanction while the application is pending. DSS knows very well that many sanctions can be cured by simple actions such as having the participant go to orientation/appraisal. That could have been done on the date of application in some cases. It is unfortunate that CDSS seems to be encouraging decreasing benefits instead of curing sanctions.

### **2012-2013 Budget Trailer Bill SB 1011**

SB 1011 is the CalWORKS trailer bill that will be considered by the State Legislature. The sections effecting CalWORKs start at Section 6 that continues the current exemption for families with children under 2 – savings of \$327 million for 2012-2013. This cut does not hurt any impoverished families or the kids living in the family. The Legislature has the option of exempting families with kids under 6 as they did under Governor Reagan and save two or three times that amount without hurting any impoverished families and their kids. It should be noted that any exempt recipient who wants to participate in the WtW program can still volunteer to participate under current law. SB 1011 also will restore the CalLearn program and require reporting on the program from DSS.

### **SAR Helps State Federal Work Participation Rates**

With the enactment of AB 6, which provides for semi-annual reporting, California's federal work participation rate may get a boost. Currently when a person is meeting the work participation in the "data month", those participation hours for the data month are projected for the next three months. With semi-annual reporting if the individual meets the federal work participation during the semi-annual "data month" those hours are projected over the next 6 months. This change will go into effect when California updates its Work Verification Plan for Fiscal Year 2014.

### **Pregnancy in Any Trimester Does Not Exempt from WtW**

On May 3, 2012, Tracy Donovan of HHS asked DSS whether or not California exempts pregnant women from participation in the WtW program. Tracy also informed California that most states exempt pregnant women in the woman's third trimester. Joel Reynolds of DSS responded on May 3, 2012 that in California, a pregnant woman in any trimester is required to participate 32 hours per week (or up to 35 hours per week if in a two-parent family) in a welfare-to-work activity as a condition of eligibility for cash aid under CalWORKs. Joel continued saying, "However, a woman who is pregnant is exempt from welfare-to-work participation if the pregnancy impairs her ability to be regularly employed or participate in welfare-to-work activities. An exemption based on a medically-verified pregnancy may also be granted when the CWD determines that participation will not readily lead to employment or that a training activity is not appropriate."

### **Sanctioned Persons Work Hours Counted for Meeting States Federal Work Participation Rates**

Mr. TANF ID# 013CB860405 is working 35 hours a week and meeting the federal work requirements. When reporting it's federal work participation, a county did not enter "status code 19" for this individual meeting the 35 hours work participation rates because the individual was being sanctioned by the county. It appears that the federal government caught this county/state error and entered the right status code and the State of California got credit for this sanctioned individual being punished for not meeting the WtW requirements.

### **CCWRO NUMBER OF THE WEEK**

In 2010, the child poverty rate for children under 18 years of age in California was

**22%**