

CCWRO Welfare News

Coalition of California Welfare Rights Organizations, Inc.
1901 Alhambra Blvd. Sacramento, CA 95816

<http://www.ccwro.org>

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In Brief

◆ DSS has a system called “On-Line Policy Interpretation & Consultation System (PICS) that contains answers to questions posed to DSS dating from 1996. ACIN I-96-08 revealing this system was made public in 2008. The system has been dormant but DSS plans to reactivate this system. Hopefully DSS will be transparent and make this system accessible to all parties and not just the county human service agency officials.

◆ DSS issued ACL 12-03 regarding Senate Bill 43 making the Food Stamp Employment and Training program a positive program. This bill was conceived and shepherded through the legislative process by Jessica Bartholow of WCLP authored by Senator Carol Lui. DSS now plans to do a questions and answers ACIN/ACL.

◆ DSS plans to issue an implementation letter for AB 402 by July 2012. AB 402 promotes the enrollment of school lunch eligible families into the food stamp program. This bill was conceived by Cathy Senderling of the County Welfare Directors Association (CWDA). It was authored by Assemblywoman Nancy Skinner.

◆ Effective February 1, 2012, several counties are participating in a pilot project called The Work Number (WN) Express Service Pilot Program operated by Equifax. The web address is http://www.equifax.com/home/en_us. This 90-day pilot was free to counties. For those counties that participate in the pilot, there will be no limit to the number of users who can have access to the WN or service usage amount. They currently offer a “standard service” free of charge to County Social Services Agencies, which will be expiring at the end of January 2012. The free standard service offered by the WN consists of verifying only “known” employment. Participating counties complain that the training was not well publicized and county personal have problems registering with the system. The trainings were scheduled with short notice. The pilot has not been a success and it appears that Equifax may extend the pilot time. Equifax with online social security number (SSN) lookup will be available to all 58 California counties starting February 1, 2012.

◆ San Diego County implemented a very limited electronic signatures for certain food stamp applicants who are assisted by the local 211 system. It appears that the little 211 computer system can do telephonic signatures while the billion dollar + CalWIN system is incapable of doing it.

◆ The federal face-to-face interview waiver has been causing a lot of havoc for CalFresh recipients and applicants. Applicant households are being denied benefits because they either do not get the call for the telephonic interview, or for the failure to submit the signed application. In many cases, applications hand delivered to the Los Angeles County DPSS never find a way to the worker. The same is also true for telephonic recertifications. These problems are occurring in most counties doing on-line applications or waivers of face-to-face interviews.

◆ On May 31, 2011, Lupe Garibay of San Diego County asked DSS whether the county must give a WtW client a WtW 2 to be signed if the participant indicates that s/he will not sign it. DSS responded that the case worker should document that the participant refused to sign the WtW 2. DSS never advised the county to determine why the participant does not want to sign the form. Maybe there is a good reason. Of course if there is a good reason, then the county would not be able to impose a sanction. At the minimum when the worker documents on the WtW 2 that the participant did not sign the form, a copy should be given to the participant. Maybe the participant would then sign it. Finally the proper action is not the sanction, but it is to refer the person to a third-party assessment as required by state law and regulations.

◆ A FNS Memo dated May 27, 2011, states that States are prohibited from requiring an applicant to provide an e-mail address when applying on line. This letter also clarifies that a “...State agency must provide the client with an opportunity to submit an application at any point after providing their name, address and signature. . .” which is the minimum information required to submit an application pursuant to Section 11(e)(2)(B(ii) o the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008.

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County Client Abuse Report

SACRAMENTO COUNTY WELFARE FRAUD INVESTIGATOR HARASSES UNDOCUMENTED WELFARE MOM

Ms. BC63489 of Sacramento County has three children aged 13, 12 and 4. Ms. BC63489 reported to Sacramento County that the absent parent pays most of the rent directly to the landlord. Because of this, her welfare worker referred her to early welfare fraud. We are not sure what was there to investigate. Could it be the fact that the absent parent helps keep a roof over his children's head?

Most people would think that he should be helping. However, the Sacramento Department of Human Assistance thinks supporting his family is "potential fraud".

The welfare investigator came to her house, told her that she must cooperate with him in his criminal investigation otherwise she would lose her welfare benefits. In Sacramento County, welfare recipients lose their rights when they start getting welfare. The investigator flashed his badge, but refused to give Ms. BC BC63489 a card or otherwise identify himself.

He asked her "Are you working?" She said "I did, but not now." He then proceeded to inform her that she could go to jail for working because she does not have the legal right to work. He asked her if she was looking for work. She responded "yes." He then asked her "How could you interview for a job if you do not have papers?"

He then told her that if she does not let him search the house, she would lose her benefits. While searching the house, he went through drawers, clothing and did a thorough search of the house without a search warrant.

He then asked her if the car outside is hers? She said no. It belongs to somebody else that she uses to drive her kids to school so they can get an education. After she admitted that she did not have a driver's license the fraud investigator asked how she drove without a license. He then

asked her if she knew what would happen if she got busted for driving without a license. She responded: "I have no choice. I have to take my kids to school."

She then got a call from her worker saying that the absent parent cannot visit his children at her house. If he does, the children would be ineligible for welfare.

She then received two strange notices of action. The first one terminated her benefits because she received \$650 unearned income. The county has no verification of the receipt of \$650 of unearned income. Rent paid to the landlord is not income - it is in-kind income and the whole \$650 is not applied against the CalWORKs assistance unit. Now maybe in Sacramento County there are different rules for undocumented families? In reality this is welfare fraud against BC63489 by her worker - V1R3.

She received a second notice of action stated that she has a "\$0" overpayment. Why the computer system would issue a notice of action informing somebody of a \$0 overpayment is unclear. It appears "waste" is also a Sacramento County practice.

KERN COUNTY UNLAWFULLY SHORTENS FOOD STAMP CERTIFICATION PERIOD

RN 510013 of Kern County was certified for CalFresh effective March of 2010 for 12 months. Kern County shortened the certification period to November 30, 2010. Kern County terminated Ms. RN 510013 without due process of law and contrary to federal and state regulations.

Kern County tried to justify the unlawful behavior by saying that they wanted to align the food stamp certification period with the CalWORKs/Medi-Cal certification periods. The regulation governing shortening the CalFresh certification period is §63-504.161 which provides:

"The CWD shall not shorten a household's certification period. The CWD must end a certification if the CWD determines the household becomes ineligible."