

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...

70% of Food Stamp Money for Admin Costs? - At the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) this March in Washington D.C. former Presidential candidate Michele Bachman asserted that 70% of the Food Stamp money goes to the bureaucracy. This is not true. The actual cost of running the food stamp program (the administrative costs) nationally is 5% when you add the national office costs, state and county administrative costs and educational programs for food stamp recipients.

CDE Fails to Spend Allocated Money- CDE did not spend all of their childcare funds for 2011-2012 for CalWORKs education program. The unspent amount is \$188,382.

AB 2035-EBT Skimming Victims. Counties cannot claim federal dollars for reimbursement. The State proposes to use EPPIC system and bypass the consortia. FAADS wants to use the consortia for better tracking. AB 2035 was effective January 1, 2013. As of February 7, 2013 there were five claims submitted. Four have been resolved and one is pending. We are in the process of finding out the disposition of these skimming events. Counties fear that replacement benefits may be issued by counties and Xerox causing an overpayment. The skimming replacement only applies to CalWORKs and not food stamps.

Counties are illegally assigning 22/32 weekly hours to WtW participants. The State law is clear- 20 hours a week for single parents with children under 6 years of age and 30 hours a week for single parents with children over 6 years of age. It was enacted in SB 1041 in 2012. Counties are fully aware of the law. Moreover ignorance of the law is no excuse - even for counties. It appears that counties have decided to unlawfully force parents to perform two (2) more hours of unpaid labor or other activities, often against their will in many cases, contrary the State Law.

USDA Administrative Notice 12-03 - Beginning Fiscal Year 2013, FNS would begin to monitor timeliness of recertification (RC) actions. Per Section 11(e)(4) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (The Act), SNAP/CalFresh households are entitled to a timely RC and a limited period of eligibility. The Act requires state agencies to notify the household that its certification period is ending prior to the last month of the certification period. It also requires state agencies to provide eligible households with benefits no later than one month after the last allotment was received.

Counties Penalize Impoverished Families Unnecessarily - There is a California Immunization Registry (CAIR) database that can verify immunization of children. Many counties, rather than using the CAIR database, are imposing penalties upon families who already live on 1987 fixed income levels. Counties are reducing their benefits even when many of the children have had all of their immunizations. All the county has to do is look at the CAIR data base. <http://cairweb.org/>

Saturday Termination of Mail Delivery Implications - There is a concern about the business/services delivery implications with the discontinuance of Saturday U. S. postal delivery to become effective August 1, 2013. It should be noted that counties will have larger mail deliveries on Mondays, and that the timely delivery of EBT cards to clients and 10-day client notices may be adversely impacted. CDSS is looking into this issue.

Healthy Families Applications Not Being Processed Timely - At the February 2013 California Welfare Directors Association (CWDA) Medi-Cal Committee meeting there was a discussion that Healthy Family applications/cases may have been held by "Mr. MIBB" since December and are now being sent to counties without sufficient screening. For some counties these applications go back to October.

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COUNTY WELFARE DEPARTMENT VICTIM REPORT

ACA Medi-Cal Application - HHS Center for Medical Services (CMS) released the simplified application that is 21 pages in length for the Affordable Care Act effective January 1, 2014. Placer County tested the application with positive results. DHCS has started policy meetings with the CWDA Medi-Cal Committee members.

MEDS Computer Out of Commission for One Week. The Department of Health care Services antiquated MEDS system broke down during the last week of January 2013. Counties backed-up for a week and then we received double the following week. Counties have asked the State not to do QC or cite timeliness errors during this period.

Federal Government Audits California's TANF and SNAP Programs - DSS has reported to CWDA that they just had their exit conference with the Bureau of State Audit reviewers (KPMG is the vendor) in which all aspects of the program were reviewed including SNAP and TANF block grants. The finding with TANF pertained to what was deemed inadequate relative to the State's oversight responsibility specific to their field monitoring of eligibility. They have been asked to submit a corrective action plan. CDSS will take the following two approaches relative to this finding and intends to spend more time in examining a corrective action approach.

a. County auditors will be asked to include additional components in their A-133 reviews (as the State reviewers felt these reviews were lacking) to ensure they are examining certain aspects of TANF eligibility.

b. While this is still a work in progress, CDSS will improve oversight in the TANF eligibility area and asked about how to best accomplish this such as electronic sharing of case information and electronic reviews. Given limited resources, actual on-site visits were not a favored approach.

Cash Aid Reduced, but Food Stamps Stay the Same in Sacramento County

- A California CalWORKs assistance unit in Sacramento County had their benefits reduced from \$725 to \$608 effective December 1, 2012. This is what a family of three received in 1987. Now that the income went down effective December 1, 2012 one would assume that the billion-dollar California computer system would increase the food stamps to reflect the reduction of cash aid. The food stamps should be increased by \$48 in this case to make sure that the family had food for Christmas. Did that happen? No. The food stamps went up January 1, 2013. The computer system is rigged to make sure that families do not receive the right benefits at the right time in the right amount. The victim in this case is Mr. 1B06930. There are thousands of other victims in 18 counties that are subject to the CalWIN system which was built with zero input from the CalWORKs and Food Stamp customer community.

Contra Costa County Violates MPP \$63-508.65

- Ms. R.N. 51004's QR-7 for the month of 9-12-12 was due by the first day of 11-1-12. It was received by Contra Costa County on 10-17-12. According to DSS, "The CalWIN system automatically discontinues any uncured or unsupported accounts in the third week of each month." This is a major reason for churning in California. The computer systems are designed to cause churning. "Churning" is when households are terminated from CalFresh for procedural reasons and not because they are financially ineligible for CalFresh. Most of them reapply before getting back on CalFresh at an unnecessary administrative cost. Inasmuch DSS alleges that it is trying to do away with churning, it has never done an analysis of how LEADER, C-IV and CalWIN cause churning and what to do to reverse churning in California. Contra Costa County agreed with DSS and submitted the following corrective action plan:

"Supervisors reviewed all negative action cases. Address/Discuss all invalid negative action at the Division meeting, Unit meeting and Department Monthly Bulletin. Assign and take action promptly upon receipt of the QR-7 by the assigned worker. Review and Modify the business operation based on Department and County policies."

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“Supervisors reviewed all negative action cases” means that this should never had happened. But it did. The corrective action plan does not guarantee that this wouldn't happen again and again. The solution is simple. There should be a presumption that all QR-7 will be received. If it is not received by the last day that the QR-7 is legally due, then the worker should inform the computer to take negative action. This may mean that some households will be overpaid, but it would sure reduce the churning. The question is, what is more important- “food security for impoverished families and individuals” or “avoidance of food stamp overis-suance”?

Contra Costa Refuses to Process Food Stamp Application in 30 Days and Issues a Erratic Notice of Missed Appointment

- Ms. RN 51005 applied for Food Stamps in Contra Costa County electronically on 9-7-12. DSS states that no record exists that the county screened this application for expedited service (ES). However Contra Costa County did schedule an appointment for 10-26-12. Yes, Food Stamp applications are supposed to be processed within 30 days according the federal law and state regulations, but then why would Contra Costa County care about that? Contra Costa County also mailed a notice of missed appointment (NOMI) dated 10-27-12 “informing the client he must reschedule and complete his interview by 10-26-12. Is there a way to go back in time in Contra Costa County?

The corrective action was identical to the one for RN 51004. It was just copied and pasted.

San Joaquin County Stops Food Stamp Benefits Without a 10-day Notice

- San Joaquin County issued a notice of action to Ms. RN 510065 dated 10/24/12 stating that effective 10/31/12, Ms. RN0065's food stamp benefits will be terminated. DSS notes that because the notice is not a 10-day notice, the termination is invalid. San Joaquin County submitted a corrective action plan alleging that “supervisor will discuss error with staff & share type or error, incorrect processing procedure & correct procedure that must be adhered to.” Would this happen again. Most certainly. Moreover, why would the computer issue a notice of action that is not at least 10 days in advance? Would the computer issue benefits over the Maximum Aid for Cal-WORKs recipients?

Siskiyou County Takes an Electronic Application on the 13th and the Casefile Shows the 14th

- Ms. 510071 applied on line for food stamp on 9/13/12 in Siskiyou County. The case record shows that the application was filed on 9/14/12. Thus, Siskiyou county is systematically fleecing food stamp applications filed on-line out of one-days benefits. The county also miscalculated the households income and incorrectly denied the household's application when the income of the household was \$66 below the maximum allowable limit. Siskiyou county did not submit a corrective action plan. Why should they? There are no consequences at all. Siskiyou county continues to receive federal and state dollars to administer the food stamp program – even in violation of the law.

Sonoma County Terminates Food Stamp Benefits for Household that Completed the Recertification

- On 9/21/12 Sonoma County mailed a notice of action terminating Mr. RN 510072's food stamp benefits effective 10/31/12 because the certification period ends that day. A recertification interview was conducted on 10/12/12. On 10/13/12 this victim received a notice of action stating that his food stamps will stop because he did not sign the statement of fact. All recertification forms, including the signed statement of fact, were received on 10/17/12 yet on 11-1-12 there were no food stamps issued by Sonoma County. The Sonoma County Corrective Action Plan is “... current business process (due to staffing issues) dictates this process.” We wonder what Sonoma County would do if a food stamp recipient said that he or she did not have the resources to respond to Sonoma County's demands for verifications and forms? The household's benefits would be halted in a New York minute and the household would experience “hunger.”

Fresno County Stops Food Stamp Benefits for Incomplete QR-7 but Does Not Say What Was Incomplete

- Fresno County terminated food stamp benefits for household R.N. 510006 because the QR-7 was incomplete. Fresno county violated MPP §63-504.211. DSS asserted that “State QC determined that the Agency didn't inform the client of what they actually needed to submit to render the report complete. The reason presented to the client in the NOA was not clear and understandable because the Agency should have required the 09/01/12 pay stubs and clarified which questions were not correctly answered...” The corrective action plan is to educate and train staff. A corrective action plan where, for the next 12 months, all 296Ys will be reviewed by the supervisor who would evaluate the NOA based on a check sheet of what constitutes an adequate NOA, would have been a plan that would actually correct this problem. In most cases like this, benefits are terminated, the household reapplies and is eligible for benefits again. Another reason is “churning” which is pervasive in California.