



CCWRO Welfare News

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In Brief

• **Transportation:** At the November 2013 CWDA Self-Sufficiency Meeting, participants discussed the failure to provide transportation services to over 45% of the WtW unduplicated participants. The meeting attendants discussed the possibility that counties are not correctly reporting Welfare to Work transportation reimbursements. Fresno, Placer, Los Angeles, San Bernardino and Lassen counties agreed to look and determine why WtW cases are not receiving transportation. There is no timeline for this effort.

ADVOCACY ACTION POINTER - If your clients are not receiving transportation reimbursements for Welfare to Work activities, please contact CCWRO for assistance.

• **Transportation payment rates:** Counties have low transportation payment rates. San Luis Obispo pays 17¢ a mile; San Joaquin pays 26.3¢ a mile; and San Bernardino pays 37.4¢ a mile. Meanwhile, these counties pay county employees 56¢ a mile.

• **SB 1041 Evaluation:** Lois Davis (Rand) and Gabby Fain of American Institute of Research (AIR) gave an evaluation overview to the county welfare director representatives. AIR will work with 6 counties, Los Angeles, Riverside, Stanislaus, Sacramento, Alameda and Fresno, to conduct site visits and in- depth interviews with counties.

Rand and AIR will conduct a survey of the implementation status of the WtW implementation of SB 1041's key components, organization and administration changes. Feedback on barriers are planned for late March 2015. The County CalWORKs Director and/or Agency Director will be the contacts for the survey. There are no plans to involve the beneficiary community in this endeavor at this time.

Personnel Changes

• Linda Patterson, formerly in charge of California Cal-Fresh Division of CDSS, is the Director of Human Services in Placer County. Linda Patterson worked for the State Health and Human Services Agency under the Schwarzenegger Administration.

• Greta Wallace, Deputy Director for DSS Legal Affairs retired in December 2014. Greta worked for DSS in legal affairs, she was then the Director of the Department of Child Support Services. DSS is looking for a new Deputy Director for Legal Affairs.

• Claudia Menjivar of Western Center on Law and Poverty will move to the Los Angeles Foundation of Legal Assistance this coming March. Welcome to the services side of our community and keep up the impact work.

CalWORKs in Need of Work Incentive Reform

Ms. McConnell has two children aged 4 and 5. She works part-time 20 hours a week, receives minimum wage, but meets the federal work participation rates for the California CalWORKs program. Ms. McConnell does not need childcare because she works when her children are in Headstart. Now that Ms. McConnell is working, her family is worse off financially than they were when she was working.

She works 20 hours a week, receiving a gross income of \$774/ month. Her take home pay is \$624, she pays \$550 a month for rent. When she started earning \$624 a month, her CalWORKs grant decreased from \$670 to \$395 a month and CalFresh decreased from \$494 to \$391. Between her wages and benefits she now receives \$1,410 a month. Prior to starting the part-time job, between CalWORKs and CalFresh, Ms. McConnell received a total spendable income of \$1,164 a month.

Now, she must pay transportation costs at about \$50 a week for gas and \$100 a month for insurance. She gets no help from the county. She is part of the 45% of the CalWORKs WtW participants meeting the federal work requirements and not getting transportation.

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In addition, Ms. McConnell now pays for lunch costs and other work-related expenses.

Today, the CalWORKs family loses when the parent works – this has a real adverse impact on the development of children. It is sad that working means more child poverty in California in 2015.

Although the old Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program did not provide adequate disregards for working CalWORKs recipients, AFDC did allow working recipients to deduct their actual transportation costs and child care from the gross income before the income disregards were applied. This kept families on aid longer compared to the way earned income is treated today. The old system would have helped California meet their federal work participation rates (WPR) TODAY by keeping the families meeting the WPR on aid.

TANF eliminated the transportation and childcare disregards for working recipients generally meeting the federal work participation rates and required them to ask the county welfare department for the transportation and child care money.

History shows that since TANF's enactment, an average of 50% of the unduplicated WtW participants have been fleeced out of their transportation money by California's county welfare departments. Accessing childcare has also been a major barrier for impoverished families.

In November 2014, Los Angeles County had 26,750 single parents participating in Welfare to Work activities, but only 15,809 received transportation. That means 10,941 did not receive transportation. Ironically, 10,709 of the 26,750 unduplicated participants were working in an unsubsidized job. We will not be surprised today, to find Los Angeles County CalWORKs recipients, who are working and meeting the federal work participation rates, being sanctioned and not receiving the transportation payments of which they are legally entitled.

What Needs to Be Done: No person should be working and living on an income that is less than 100% of the poverty level. In order to achieve this, the current system has to be redesigned to allow a \$600 deduction from the gross income plus 60% of the remainder should be disregarded. With this formula, a CalWORKs family of three, working 40 hours a week for minimum wage, would exit CalWORKs upon having earned income and CalFresh that is equal to 100% of the federal poverty level.

Figure #1 reveals that, today, families who work exit CalWORKs when their net income plus food stamps is equal to 55% of the federal poverty level and 41% of the supplemental poverty level.

County Welfare Department Abuse Report

San Mateo County- RN 508074, a CalFresh case, was transferred from San Mateo County effective 9/26/2013. San Mateo County sent a CalFresh Notice of Expiration of Certification to the household on 7/18/2014 informing the household that the certification period was ending on 8/31/2014. There is no evidence that an appointment letter was mailed to the household; however, per case comments dated 8/13/2014, a face-to-face interview was scheduled verbally on 8/14/2014 at 9:00 a.m. Case comment dated 8/25/2014 confirmed that the household completed its recertification interview on 8/14/2014. There is no evidence that any other information was pending.

The CalWIN system took action on 8/20/2014, as part of its monthly update that occurs during the third or fourth week of the month, to discontinue the CalFresh case effective 8/31/2014 due to "non-compliance with Redetermination process and for other eligibility requirements not met." However, at the time the action was taken by the system, the household was fully compliant with the redetermination process.

Santa Cruz County - RN 508076 HH's certification period ended on 8/31/2014, as evidenced by the Approval Notice of Action dated 9/4/2013 and CalFresh Notice of Expiration of Certification (CF 377.2) dated 7/18/2014. There is no evidence that an appointment letter was sent to the household; however, per case comment dated 8/5/2014, an interview was conducted and Ms. Lopez was given a "CalFresh Request for Information" form requesting verifications by 8/15/2014. CalWIN system took action on 8/5/2014 as part of its review of all unsuppressed termination actions during the 1st week of the month, to discontinue the CalFresh case effective 8/31/2014 due to failure to provide verification. Ms. Lopez submitted her verifications on 8/20/2014 and her CalFresh case was authorized on 9/8/2014 as evidenced by the approval notice dated 9/9/2014; no loss of benefits occurred.

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Sacramento County - RN 509049 is a single, 18-year old female who had been deemed eligible for Expedited Service on 9/02/2014 and was approved for benefits on that date. At the time of certification, the participant was living at location "A", Sacramento CA. Shortly after being certified for benefits, the participant contacted the agency by telephone and reported that she had moved into her parent's home at location "B", Sacramento CA, effective 9/16/2014. The case was discontinued on 9/24/2014, but no case narration could be found to explain the reason for the discontinuance. State Quality Control (SQC) could find no evidence that a Notice of Action was ever generated or mailed to the participant informing her that benefits had been discontinued. SQC determined that Sacramento County did not properly document the reason for the change in eligibility and did not properly notify the participant of the negative action; SQC must cite an error. (MPP 63-300.5(j) and 63-504.26.)

Siskiyou County - RN 503S12 is a single adult female who submitted an application via the electronic portal C4Yourself on 2/18/2014. The applicant completed the telephone interview on 2/25/2014. On 3/07/2014 the Eligibility Worker (EW) received the income verification for the last week of February and approved the application for prorated benefits of \$74 for February. However, the EW used a statement from the employer to calculate projected income for the month of March. The information provided by the employer was inconsistent with the information provided by the participant with respect to the number of hours worked in a month. The EW discontinued the case on 3/07/2014 for exceeding the gross income limit. SQC found insufficient documentation to determine that the participant was being paid bi-weekly in order to validate the EW's income calculation as described in case narration. As such, it is possible that the income calculation by the EW was incorrect.

SQC found that the county's calculation method used to make the eligibility determination cannot be substantiated due to the inconsistencies between the statements from the participant and the employer; SQC must cite an error under MPP 63-300.5(j). A Notice of Action (NOA) for the discontinuance was mailed to the participant at the mailing address of record on the sampled action date of 3/07/2014. The NOA stated the effective date of the discontinuance was 2/28/2014, but this did not allow ten days between the date of the notice and the effective date of the discontinuance. This qualifies as an improper notification and SQC must cite an error. (MPP 63-504.252; 63-504.261)

2015 CalWORKs & CalFresh Bills

AB 233- Lopez - CalWORKs Child Care and Other Child Care Programs-This bill would provide for a 12 month child care certification period.

AB 294- Lackey- Health & Human Services Program - Requires all Health & Human Services program state plans and waivers by placed on the front page of the applicable department web page.

AB 371- Mullin-CalWORKs -This would repeal the 100-hour rule and simplify Cal-WORKs eligibility by eliminating the deprivation factor of eligibility.

AB 433 - Chu- CalWORKs - This bill would express the intent of the Legislature to provide a grieving period and appropriate referrals to services when a Cal-WORKs recipient miscarries or when a child in the home of a CalWORKs recipient dies, without interruption of services.

AB 702- Maienschein - CalWORKs - This bill would delete the requirement that the 16 days of temporary homeless assistance be limited to 16 consecutive days and allow recipients to have a choice of when they can use it.

AB 743 - Eggman - CalWORKs - This bill would exempt veteran educational benefits as income for CalWORKs and require that the county adopt the "satisfactory progress" definition of the secondary educational institution that the participant is attending.

SB 23- Mitchell - CalWORKs - This bill would repeal the Maximum Family Grant (MFG) rule.

SB 297- McGuire - CalWORKs - This bill would modernize the California safety net programs application process by making the system more effective and efficient.

SB 306- Hertzberg - CalWORKs - This bill would maximize participation in the CalFresh program to the extent permitted by federal law.

SB 312- Pan - give the county the option to do electronic application interviews.

SB 521- Liu - This bill would require human counties to provide employment services to CalFresh recipients for five (5) additional months; enhance CalFresh eligibility for students in employment and trainings courses and address CalFresh sanctions.