

# Metro

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## County lags in child support pay

By Diane Divoky  
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It's only \$50, but that's a lot when you're on your last dime and you want to take your kid to the zoo, said Kimberly Scheppmann.

The 25-year-old mother, a nursing student at Sacramento City College, is just one of some 2,000 Sacramento County welfare recipients who have had to wait several months to receive some of their child support payment coming to them under a 1984 federal law.

Under the law, the first \$50 of the monthly child support for a child on welfare goes to the child. The rest goes into the county's coffers, to offset the welfare costs of the custodial parent.

In Scheppmann's case, the \$50 is part of \$150 in support that her ex-husband, Lloyd, a construction worker, pays to the county. The county provides \$498 in a monthly Aid for Families with Dependent Children grant for Kimberly and her 2-year-old daughter — plus the \$50.

That stipend was intended under the law as an incentive both for the parent on welfare to identify the child's other parent and the parent ordered to pay support to know that some of the money goes to the child.

Michael E. Barber, the deputy district attorney who heads the county's Domestic Relations Unit, said glitches in the system have put the distribution of the \$50 stipends several months behind schedule.

"We're trying to clean up the delay," he said.

Scheppmann said she received her January check on July 24.

Barber said the distribution sys-

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tem now is just four months behind and that his unit has just sent the April child-support collections to the welfare department for distribution of the \$50 checks.

"It's outrageous," said Kevin Aslanian, spokesman for the Coalition of California Welfare Rights Organizations. "In some cases the county is six or seven months behind in providing the payments. We're preparing a lawsuit on this very issue."

"More than any other county in the state, Sacramento really has struggled with this process," said Bob Horel, deputy director of welfare programs for the state Department of Social Services.

Horel said the county "now seems to be cleaning up the problem."

He said his department had received a number of complaints about the time lags in Sacramento. "I'd like them to get the money out the same month, although that's probably impossible," Horel said.

Barber said distribution problems in the county's system had led to a reorganization that puts more of the processing work in his unit and less in the welfare department.

A new federal regulation requires that the checks go out to the families within about two months of the support coming into the county, and Barber said the county expects to catch up to meet those deadlines by October. The federal regulation must be met by next January.

Barber said the county now is mailing \$98,000 from April child-support collections to welfare recipients in some 2,000 county households. He said the interest earned by the county during the time it holds the funds amounts to less than \$10,000 annually, a sum that wouldn't cover the cost of administering the program.

