



CCWRO Welfare News

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County Client Abuse Report

County Stops Benefits For Failure To Complete The Annual Redetermination Because Los Angeles County Refused To Complete The Annual Redetermination - On March 2, 2015, Los Angeles County advised Ms. 2015085097 that her certification for CalFresh benefits would terminate effective April 30, 2015.

After Ms. 2015085097 received the letter dated March 2, 2015, she called her eligibility worker every day and the eligibility worker never answered her calls. She then asked for a state hearing.

The county hearing representative called her and told her she had an appointment on April 7, 2015 to complete her yearly review. Ms. 2015085097 picked up the paperwork from the county office before April 7, 2015, completed the paperwork, and returned to the county office on April 7, 2015. On April 7, 2015, a county worker told her that she did not have an appointment and they would not accept her paperwork because she had a pending state hearing. Thereafter she tried to contact the county hearing representative but she was unable to reach her after April 7, 2015.

On April 20, 2015, Los Angeles County issued a notice of action that Ms. 2015085097 CalWORKs and CalFresh benefits would discontinue effective April 30, 2015 because she did not complete the yearly redetermination.

County Stops CalFresh For Excess Income When There Was No Excess Income - Mr. 201512443 is a forty-year-old man who received CalFresh benefits from the county on behalf of himself, his adult daughter and one minor child. On April 9, 2015, the County issued a notice of action discontinuing CalFresh benefits to Mr. 201512443's household effective April 30, 2015, on the basis of excess gross income.

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Food Insecurity In California Lingers On

According to the CDSS website, The CalFresh Program “add[s] to your food budget to put healthy and nutritious food on the table. . . The CalFresh Program helps to improve the health and well-being of qualified households and individuals by providing them a means to meet their nutritional needs.” In truth, Californians are experiencing an increase in food insecurity in part, due to the failure to provide emergency food assistance to persons and families in dire need of food.

Previously known as the “Food Stamp Program” since beneficiaries received food coupons that were redeemable for food, the Program was never designed to pay for all food needs – it was just a supplemental food assistance program.

Effective Oct. 1, 2008, the federal government changed the name to “Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program” (SNAP) and after spending several millions of dollars California decided to call it “CalFresh” which says nothing about food. The idea of using the word “fresh” was to encourage beneficiaries to use their benefits to buy fresh food. In reality, CalFresh benefits rarely last through the month- they run out in the third week.

THE BENEFITS OF THE CALFRESH PROGRAM

- In September 2015 there were 2,075,773 households who received CalFresh benefits. These households constitute 4,380,389 individuals. The CalFresh benefits issued in September 2015 amounted to \$631,249,251. Annually, the CalFresh Program in California creates over 80,000 jobs through the economic activity that it triggers in California.

THE DARKSIDE OF THE CALFRESH PROGRAM

- There remains thousands of Californians who continue to endure food insecurity. During the 3rd quarter of 2015, 63% of CalFresh applicants who had less than \$100 in resources and less than \$150 income were denied emergency benefits. In human terms, this is 219,000 household or over 600,000 human beings. See **Table # 1**. The county reports the quarterly statistics to CDSS in the DFA 296X reports as mandated by Section 18913 of the Welfare and Institutions Code.

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TABLE #1

April, May and June of 2015	Applications Processed for CF-ES During the Quarter	Applications Approved for CF-ES	Percentage of Applications NOT Approved for CF-ES
Statewide	384,871	143,890	78%
Sacramento	22,967	4,967	73%
Santa Clara	4,774	1,300	73%
Sonoma	3,328	907	70%
Monterey	5,511	1,628	68%
San Diego	23,408	7,583	67%
Contra Costa	5,317	1,770	65%
San Joaquin	9,807	3,418	64%
Riverside	35,736	12,887	64%
Orange	16,528	5,964	63%
Alameda	11,441	4,221	63%
Kern	17,324	6,416	62%
Stanislaus	10,043	3,799	59%
Los Angeles	92,604	37,826	62%

In addition, there are monthly reports known as DFA 296 that report the number applications received and what happened to the applications. Although Orange and Placer Counties did not submit the July-September quarter, both counties still received their CalFresh single allocation funds.

In contrast, when Public Assistance-CalFresh recipient fails to turn in his or her report, they did not receive the same forgiveness from Placer and Orange Counties. Orange County terminated 178 cases and Placer County terminated 22 cases for not submitting reports.

TABLE #2

April, May and June of 2015	TOTAL Applications Received during the quarter	Applications Processed for CF-ES During the Quarter	Percentage of Applications NOT Reviewed for CF-ES
Santa Barbara	4,229	1,493	65%
Yolo	2,576	1,085	58%
San Luis Obispo	2,384	1,122	53%
Santa Clara	10,118	4,774	53%
Ventura	9,105	4,830	47%
Solano	4,547	2,605	43%
Los Angeles	156,660	92,604	41%
Contra Costa	8,758	5,317	39%
San Diego	33,531	23,408	30%
San Francisco	7,511	5,505	27%

Although the law requires that all CalFresh applications be reviewed for expedited services, during the third quarter, 85,210 households applying for CalFresh were not evaluated for food insecurity. **Table #2** reveals the top 10 counties violating state law.

LOS ANGELES COUNTY LEADS THE STATE WITH COUNTY-CAUSED OVERDUE CALFRESH RECERTIFICATIONS

Los Angeles County, which reports hardly any churning, leads the State of California in overdue recertifications. During September 2015, LA County had 2,035 cases that were not recertified because of county-caused delays. We thought that this might simply be an aberration. After a review of the DFA 296 reports, we learned that it is not an aberration.

TABLE #3 reveals the number of Los Angeles County Caused Overdue CalFresh Recertifications. In most CalWIN counties, thousands of redeterminations result in termination of CalFresh benefits. This means the household must reapply for benefits.

Counties generally mail the beneficiary a 45-day advance notice with an appointment, and sometimes with the SAWS-2 application. The county then says that they will call. Sometimes the beneficiary never gets a call from the county at the designated date and time. Many counties provides the beneficiary with a call-in window, like from 8-12 noon. This is very “beneficiary unfriendly” in that many beneficiaries take their kids to school and bring them home. Some may be working. Beneficiary unavailability is rarely a factor that the county uses to schedule the telephonic appointment for a redetermination. Certainly, this type of recertification process is “provider” friendly at the expense of the CalFresh program beneficiaries.

TABLE #3

Month/Year	Overdue recertifications (CWD caused) during the month in Los Angeles County
January, 2015	820
February, 2015	1202
March, 2015	1495
April, 2015	1200
May, 2015	1729
June, 2015	1566
July, 2015	1343
August, 2015	1754
September, 2015	2035

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The county records show that the reason for the proposed discontinuance was not that Mr. 201512443's household had excess gross income but that he had allegedly failed to provide income verification when requested. Los Angeles County admitted that the Case Comments established that the Claimant complied with the verification request but a "glitch" in communications occurred between the case-carrying eligibility worker and the Income and Eligibility Verification System (IEVS) eligibility worker. The County did not rescind the discontinuance even though it was correct for the County to have done so. The County found that a review of the income verification established that the Claimant's household has ongoing eligibility for CalFresh. Mr. 201512443 had to ask for a state hearing and actually go to the hearing before Los Angeles County took corrective action.

Los Angeles County Erroneously Stops CalFresh July 1, 2013 and Refuses to Restore Benefits Back to July-

Ms. 2015140282 received a notice of action on June 2013 stopping her benefits effective July 1, 2013. The county record revealed that Ms. 2015140282 completed her recertification in May 2013, but the County still incorrectly discontinued Ms. 2015140282's CalFresh benefits in May 2013.

Los Angeles County also failed to give Ms. 2015140282 an adequate notice of the discontinuance. Ms. 2015140282 discovered this unlawful termination of her benefits in May 2015. Because CalFresh law limits restoration of lost benefits to 12 months but county collection of overpayments to years, Ms. 2015140282 would only be made whole for 12 of the 24 months that her benefits were unlawfully withheld.

Los Angeles County Causes A Five-Month Cal-Fresh Overissuance And Recoups From the Household Who is in Dire Need.

– On April 16, 2015, Ms. 2015162254 submitted all necessary verification for Los Angeles County to compute the correct CalFresh benefits. Los Angeles County failed to do their job and caused a \$609 CalFresh overissuance. Although Ms. 2015162254's expenses exceed her income, her family had to survive on reduced CalFresh benefits to recoup a CalFresh overpayment caused by Los Angeles County.

Los Angeles County Stops CalFresh For Not Submitting the SAR 7.

– Mr. 2015160067 did not get his CalFresh benefits on May 1, 2015. He asked for a state hearing which was held on August 11, 2015. Mr. 2015 2015160067 testified under oath that he took the completed SAR 7 to the County on

April 1, 2015. He also testified that he called the County welfare office and left messages on April 6, 9, and 13 to make sure that the County got the SAR-7. Los Angeles County said that they did not get the SAR 7 which had nothing new to report. Notwithstanding Mr. 2015160067's testimony under oath that he turned in the SAR and called the county three times and no one called him back, ALJ Korson ruled that the County was right to stop his food stamp and let him endure hunger.

Santa Clara County Terminated CalFresh Benefits Without Using the Mandatory Form, CW 2200, to Request Verification

– On April 17, 2015, Mr. 2015156295 received a notice of action terminating his benefits for failure to provide verification. The notice apparently did not specify the verification he failed to provide. Moreover, it appears that Santa Clara refused to use the correct process of requesting verification – the CW 2200. Rather the county used a Request For Information (RFI).

Mr. 2015156295 applied for CalFresh benefits in January 2015. He asserts that he had an incompetent County worker as well as an incompetent County worker supervisor. He said that neither the County worker nor the supervisor contacted him to schedule an appointment, and he was given his paper work in a piece meal fashion.

The Claimant said that he received the County's March 25, 2015 letter requesting that he provide verification/proof of his current address. He said that he also received the County's April 17, 2015 notice of action informing him that his CalFresh benefits would be discontinued effective April 30, 2015 due to the fact that he did not provide all necessary verification. The Claimant testified that he does not recall when he received the notices but he did not have time to provide the necessary verification to the County, and as a result, when he re-applied for CalFresh benefits on June 5, 2015, he also filed a hearing request to dispute the County's discontinuance of his CalFresh benefits.

Santa Clara County erroneously believes that in order to receive CalFresh, the household must have an address. Wrong. MPP §63-401.5 states:

63-401.5 The CWD shall not require an otherwise eligible household to reside in a permanent dwelling or have a fixed mailing address as a condition of eligibility.