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The hungry have to wait for county help Offices can't handle pleas

By Joel Achenbach
Staff Writer

Shortly after 6 a.m. Wednesday, Harvey Parker and Rosetta McAdams left the East Side garage that serves as their home and began the three-mile trek to the welfare office.

In their arms they carried their two infant children, 19-month-old Randa and 2-month-old Riva. The younger girl has been sick since the first night in the garage, when the family had no covers to ward off the cold.

Although the family arrived at the East Valley Department of Social Services office 15 minutes before the doors opened, they were greeted with the same bleak sight that had greeted them the previous day and the day before that: a line of about two dozen welfare-seekers.

These were the "standbys," individuals who queue up at the East Valley office as early as 6 a.m. in hopes of stepping into someone else's unkept eligibility appointment at the East Valley welfare office.

Backlogs have increased dramatically in July. The wait at East Valley for standbys can last several days, as the couple

found out to their great dismay and frustration.

"We told them that Riva was sick, that she needed medical attention. . . . They don't seem to care," Parker said as he cradled his child in his arms.

In addition to service of the standbys who need immediate assistance, the regular scheduling of appointments also has shown signs of strain in recent weeks.

Despite standards established in March requiring that welfare offices schedule eligibility appointments within 15 working days of an application, four of the county's 10 offices have failed to meet that standard in the month of July, according to Social Service Department data.

In addition, a routine procedure for handling emergency hardship cases has been virtually non-existent at the East Valley office, department records show.

During the month of June, records show, only four of the 151 standbys at East Valley were given a CA-4 immediate need determination request form to fill out.

After confirming the lack of CA-4 processing at East Valley and confirming it with her own records, Katherine Mason, department assistant director of pro-

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Harvey Parker and Rosetta McAdams with children at East Valley welfare office