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One-time assistance for low-income Californians Fact Sheet

The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) has been aggressive in efforts to draw down available American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funding. CDSS has received funding from the federal government for short-term, one-time benefits for low-income Californians – called Non-Recurrent Short-Term Benefits. The first application requested funding from October 2008 through March 2010. A second application for April 2010 through September 2010 is being finalized. CDSS estimates that total funding through September 2010 should approach \$110 million. At this time, this federal funding is set to end as of September 30, 2010.

What Are Non-Recurrent Short-Term Benefits?

These short-term, one-time benefits are designed for qualified low-income Californians and are intended to deal with a specific crisis situation or episode of need. These benefits are not intended to meet recurrent or ongoing needs and will not extend beyond 4 months.

Some examples of what counties are proposing to provide:

- Emergency food, vouchers to avoid shut-off of utilities, vouchers to assist with the purchase of school supplies and clothing, short-term housing assistance such as eviction prevention funding, emergency shelter or moving assistance, and services to support family reunification for eligible families such as purchases of items for the safe return of a child into the home.
- Housing benefits/services encompass the majority of these benefits statewide, followed by vouchers for clothing, school supplies and food.

Who is Eligible for Non-Recurrent Short-Term Benefits?

In addition to welfare to work program (CalWORKs) families, certain families who are not receiving CalWORKs may also qualify. To qualify, a family must have an annual income of less than 200 percent of the federal poverty level (less than \$44,100 a year for a family of 4). These families must meet certain criteria that include:

1. A family with a minor child
2. A non-custodial parent not residing with the minor child
3. A woman in her third trimester of pregnancy
4. A family in which a minor child has been temporarily absent (removed from the home due to abuse or neglect for less than 12 months) and parent(s) is participating in family reunification services.

Current Situation

The majority of California's counties plan to offer these types of benefits. Counties are working within their own departments, Food Banks, community based organizations, and local utility companies to add and expand these type of short-term benefits for CalWORKs and other low-income families.

CDSS Contact Information

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