

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

744 P Street, Sacramento, California 95814



June 20, 2000

ALL COUNTY INFORMATION NOTICE I-57-00

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS
 ALL WELFARE-TO-WORK COORDINATORS
 ALL FOOD STAMP COORDINATORS

REASON FOR THIS TRANSMITTAL

- State Law Change
- Federal Law or Regulation Change
- Court Order
- Clarification Requested by One or More Counties
- Initiated by CDSS

SUBJECT: CONTINUING FOOD STAMP (FS) BENEFITS

The California Department of Social Services CDSS is concerned that new welfare reform policy innovations in CalWORKs could inadvertently result in diminished access to nutrition assistance for those who still need assistance. In a recent telephone survey that contacted persons who had left the CalWORKs cash aid program, and had not returned, only 17 percent had received Food Stamps for some period of time after leaving CalWORKs.

The Food Stamp Program (FSP) can serve a vital role in helping families move toward self sufficiency. To insure that uninterrupted access to food stamp benefits is available to low-income households leaving the welfare rolls, county procedures should be reviewed to make certain that the food stamp portion of a public assistance case is not automatically or inadvertently discontinued if CalWORKs is discontinued.

The decline in FSP participation may be due to a lack of understanding on the part of recipients and counties regarding continuing eligibility for the program. In accordance with MPP 63-504.123(b), when a household's CalWORKs eligibility is terminated the same food stamp certification period is retained and benefits should continue unless there has been a change in circumstances that affects the food stamp allotment. It is essential that counties review their procedures, including automation systems, to confirm that they are complying with state and federal requirements in this regard, and to ensure eligible working poor families receive information regarding the continuation of food stamp benefits after leaving the cash assistance rolls.

The fact that families are moving out of CalWORKs due to employment and believing incorrectly that they are no longer eligible for Food Stamp benefits is particularly troubling since food stamps, coupled with Medi-Cal benefits, can be a critical work support for newly employed CalWORKs families. CDSS soon will identify discontinued CalWORKs cases and those that are not receiving FS benefits. We are eager to discuss with you ways in which this type of data could be used to assess FS access in counties.

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If families leaving CalWORKs understand they can work and still be eligible to FS benefits, we can improve access to these eligible low-income households. We have prepared a flyer for counties to copy and include with CalWORKs discontinuance notices of action or any other way the counties would like to use it. This flyer will help anyone leaving CalWORKs to understand that they could still be eligible for Food Stamp benefits. For camera ready copies in English and Spanish, please call forms management at (916) 657-1907 or CALNET 437-1907.

If you have any questions regarding the above information please contact Ms. Cindy MacDonald at (916) 654-1898 or Martha Ragas at (916) 654-1905.

Sincerely,

Original document signed by
GARY SWANSON, Chief
Food Stamp Branch

Enclosure

GOT A JOB?

No longer eligible for CalWORKs?

You may still be eligible for Food Stamps

Did you know

You can work and still receive food stamps?

**FOOD STAMPS IS A NUTRITIONAL
PROGRAM FOR
PEOPLE WITH LOW INCOME**

Ask your Eligibility Worker

There may be other benefits to help you as you move from welfare to work such as:

- Surplus Food Items
- Additional Employment Services
- Earned Income Tax Credit
- Child Support Information
- Child Care
- Transitional Medi-Cal

Your county may have even more services available to help you