



CDSS

WILL LIGHTBOURNE
DIRECTOR

STATE OF CALIFORNIA—HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
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EDMUND G. BROWN JR.
GOVERNOR

December 20, 2016

ALL COUNTY INFORMATION NOTICE NO. I-92-16

REASON FOR THIS TRANSMITTAL

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

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS
ALL COUNTY CALWORKS PROGRAM SPECIALISTS
ALL COUNTY CALFRESH PROGRAM SPECIALISTS
ALL COUNTY REFUGEE PROGRAM COORDINATORS
ALL CONSORTIUM PROJECT MANAGERS
ALL QUALITY CONTROL SUPERVISORS

SUBJECT: **SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION (SSA) COST OF LIVING ADJUSTMENT (COLA) – EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1, 2017**

REFERENCE: MANUAL OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES (MPP) SECTIONS [22-071](#), [22-072](#), [44-315.311](#), [44-316.331 \(r\)](#), [63.504.261](#), [63-504.46](#), AND [63-509\(h\)\(1\)](#)

Social Security recipients will receive a 0.3 percent COLA increase in their Social Security benefits effective December 30, 2016, which is payable January 2017. This increase will affect California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) cash aid and CalFresh allotment amounts for those applicants and recipients who also receive Social Security benefits. When cash aid or CalFresh allotment amounts are adjusted due to the Social Security COLA benefit increase, the requirements for a timely and adequate Notice of Action shall apply pursuant to CalFresh MPP Section 63-504.261 and CalWORKs MPP Sections 22-071 and 22-072.

NEW APPLICANTS

For new applicants in both the CalWORKs and CalFresh programs, the actual amount of the Social Security benefit, including the increase, shall be used for eligibility and budgeting purposes beginning with the month of January 2017.

TREATMENT OF THE SSA COLA IN THE CURRENT SAR PAYMENT PERIOD

For CalWORKs and CalFresh households currently in the final month of a the Semi-Annual Reporting (SAR) payment period, the County Welfare Department (CWD) will reasonably anticipate the increase in the Social Security income in accordance with MPP Sections 44-315.311(SAR) and 63-509(a)(2) for the upcoming SAR payment period. The amount of the SSA COLA will be considered “known to the county” and shall be acted upon mid-period, per MPP Sections 63-509(h)(3) and 44-316.33(r). The increased Social Security benefits shall be reasonably anticipated to be received by recipients beginning in January 2017 and thereafter.

COUNTY-INITIATED MID-PERIOD CHANGES FOR ALL OTHER CalWORKs AND CalFresh SAR HOUSEHOLDS

MPP Sections 44-316.33(r) and 63-509(h) provide that CWDs shall take mid-period actions at the end of the month in which the change occurred. Since the SSA COLA is effective December 30, 2016, and payable in January 2017, CWDs must take a mid-period county-initiated action to adjust benefits effective January 1, 2017, for all cases in which Social Security benefits are being used to determine cash aid or CalFresh allotment amounts.

TREATMENT OF THE SSA COLA FOR CalWORKs ANNUAL REPORTING/CHILD ONLY (AR/CO) CASES

For CalWORKs cases subject to AR/CO rules, the amount of the SSA COLA will also be considered “known to the county” and acted upon mid-period, pursuant to MPP section 44-316.33(r). Action shall be taken by the CWD, effective January 2017, upon receipt of this ACIN for those CalWORKs AR/CO recipients in receipt of Social Security income. The only cases where this action will not be considered “mid-period” are those AR/CO cases with a December 2016 redetermination (RD). For AR/CO cases that have SSA income and a December 2016 RD, the CWD will include the SSA COLA amount in budgeting for the upcoming AR/CO period. As with any adverse action, and as stated in the first paragraph of this letter, timely and adequate notice is required when decreasing benefit amounts based on the SSA COLA increase.

FOR ALL CASES

If CWDs are unable to change cash aid or CalFresh allotment amounts as a result of the increased January SSA payment, they must take the appropriate action to decrease benefits the first of the following month after timely, adequate notice can be provided. January benefits will need to be recalculated using the new SSA payment amount, and if the calculation results in a decrease, the CWD will need to establish an overpayment or overissuance as appropriate.

PAYMENT VERIFICATION SYSTEM (PVS) COLA NOTIFICATION

The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) will not be providing additional notification of the SSA COLA through the PVS. However, upon request, a cost-of-living report will be provided to the counties through Secure File Transfer (SFT). The COLA printouts will be subject to the 45-day timeliness requirements of the Income and Eligibility Verification System (IEVS). If you wish to receive your county's reports, please contact CDSS Fraud Bureau IEVS Coordinator, Suzanna Ledesma at Suzanna.Ledesma@dss.ca.gov or by phone at (916) 651-3981, no later than December 14, 2016.

ACCESSING INFORMATION ON SSA COLAS

The CWDs may obtain annual updates on SSA COLAs through the following web link: <http://www.ssa.gov/cola>

CONTACTS

If you have any questions regarding this ACIN, please contact your CalWORKs County Consultant at (916) 654-1322 or your CalFresh County Consultant at (916) 654-1896.

Sincerely,

Original Document Signed By:

KIM MCCOY-WADE, Chief
CalFresh Branch

Original Document Signed By:

ELAINE WARD, for
KAREN DICKERSON, Chief
Employment and Eligibility Branch

c: CWDA