

**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

744 P Street, Sacramento, California 95814



February 4, 2000

ALL COUNTY INFORMATION NOTICE I-06-00

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: INFORMING THE HOMELESS OF FOOD STAMP (FS) AVAILABILITY**

We are concerned that homeless people who are eligible for food stamps may not be getting them. The homeless are particularly vulnerable to hunger and malnutrition. For this reason it is imperative that county agencies make a special effort to ensure that this group has access to the nutritional assistance offered by the Food Stamp Program.

To accomplish this we are recommending counties take the following steps:

- Assure that FS applications are available at homeless shelters and nonprofit centers that serve the homeless.
- Review agency procedures to ensure FS program requirements are provided to all needy applicants including the homeless.
- Make the enclosed Fact Sheet available to local food banks, homeless shelters and organizations that homeless individuals may use. It provides the basic Food Stamp eligibility requirements and may help dispel misinformation about the program.

If you have any questions regarding these procedures, please contact Ms. Cindy MacDonald of the Food Stamp bureau at (916) 654-1898.

Sincerely,

***Original document signed***  
***By Charr Lee Metsker on 2/4/00***  
CHARR LEE METSKER, Chief  
Employment and Eligibility Branchbc

# FACTSHEET

## Food Stamps and the Homeless

***Getting a food stamp application form—and applying.*** Food stamp applications are available at local human service and food stamp offices. Everyone who comes to a food stamp office to ask about certification must be given an application, and be allowed to fill it out and submit it the same day.

***Authorized representatives.*** Any person who has difficulty getting around can ask a family member or friend to apply for food stamps on his or her behalf, to pick up the food stamp allotment, and to shop for food for him or her.

***Institutionalized persons.*** People who live in an institution, and who get most of their meals from the institution, are not eligible for food stamps. There are several exceptions to this rule. Residents of public or private nonprofit shelters for homeless persons are one of those excepted groups—they can qualify for food stamps.

***Fixed address—needed or not?*** Homeless persons generally don't have an address, and this has raised the question of whether one needs a fixed address to get food stamps. A fixed address is *not* necessary. In many States, homeless persons pick up their food stamps in the food stamp office. Or they can use an accommodation address, such as a shelter, church, or a friend's house.

***Verifying identity.*** All applicants have to verify identity. Usually documentation, such as a birth certificate, driver's license, and so on, is used. Persons who lack documentation can verify identity and residence by having someone vouch for them. Often shelter staff can provide this information.

***Shelter costs.*** In many States, homeless persons who have any shelter costs can be allowed a \$143 deduction for shelter costs, without verifying the actual amount of costs they have.

***Cooking facilities—needed to get food stamps?*** Years ago, people had to have cooking facilities to get food stamps. Since 1977, food stamp recipients have not had to have cooking facilities.

***ABAWDs.*** A provision of the 1996 welfare reform law limits food stamps to three months for able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs) unless they are working at least half-time. This can affect the homeless. However, States may request waivers of this provision and, in many urban areas, FNS has waived this requirement due to high unemployment rates; often, the waivers cover areas with both high unemployment rates

and large numbers of homeless. States can also provide work slots for people between jobs, and they can exempt up to an additional 15 percent of their caseload of ABAWDs when they find that particular groups of that population are hard to place in jobs.

***Waiting time to get food stamps.*** In many cases, the homeless meet the requirements for expedited service (less than \$150 in monthly gross income, and not more than \$100 in liquid resources). If they do, they can get benefits within 3 days. If their income and resources are too high for the expedited service screen, they will get benefits within 30 days.

***Using food stamps to get food.*** Once a homeless person is certified for food stamps, he or she can use food stamps to buy food in authorized stores. Most grocery stores are authorized. Also, a homeless person can use his or her food stamps to buy prepared meals from authorized homeless meal providers such as nonprofit soup kitchens. Some homeless persons can use food stamps to buy meals at certain communal dining facilities or from a meal delivery system. Local food stamp offices can generally advise homeless persons where they can use their food stamps.