

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
744 P Street, Sacramento, CA 95814



October 5, 2000

ALL-COUNTY INFORMATION NOTICE NO. I-96-00

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS
ALL FOOD STAMP COORDINATORS

REASON FOR THIS TRANSMITTAL

- | | |
|-----|---|
| [] | State Law Change |
| [] | Federal Law or Regulation Change |
| [] | Court Order or Settlement Agreement |
| [] | Clarification Requested by One or More Counties |
| [x] | Initiated by CDSS |

SUBJECT: FOOD STAMP COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND EDUCATION PLAN

There have been many reports and studies of late, pointing out marked decreases in food stamp participation. For example, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service found that nationwide, the food stamp participation rate fell by nine percentage points – from 71 percent to 62 percent – between September of 1994 and September of 1997. The Western Region had the lowest participation rate at 56 percent. A study conducted by Mathematica Policy Research found that three-quarters of potentially eligible non-participants surveyed reported that they were not aware of their eligibility. There are many contributing factors to the low food stamp participation rate, nonetheless, lack of awareness is a prominent reason.

The California Legislature has voiced its concern over the low participation rates by enacting legislation that requires the development of "...a community outreach and education campaign to help families learn about, and apply for, the federal Food Stamp Program and the California Food Assistance Program". As specified in Assembly Bill 2876, (budget trailer bill) signed by the Governor July 10, 2000, the outreach plan shall include, at a minimum, the following:

- " (a) Specific milestones and objectives proposed to be completed for the upcoming year and their anticipated costs.
- (b) A general description of each strategy or method to be used for outreach.
- (c) Geographic areas and special populations to be targeted, if any, and why the special targeting is needed.
- (d) Coordination with other state or county education and outreach efforts.
- (e) The results of previous years' outreach efforts."

In order to prepare a comprehensive *community* outreach and education plan, we need county participation. Please provide us copies of your outreach plan or projects. Please also provide any information you may have regarding the plan elements mentioned on the previous page. The proposed outreach activities planned by counties for this year, as well as last year's activities, will be included, as appropriate, in the food stamp community outreach and education plan to be submitted to the Legislature.

It would be greatly appreciated if this information could be provided to CDSS no later than October 26, 2000. This can be done by e-mail, fax, or U.S. mail. The contact person in the Food Stamp Branch is:

Martha Ragas
Department of Social Services
Food Stamp Branch
744 P Street, MS 16-32
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 654-1905
(916) 657-1806 (fax)
Martha.Ragas@dss.ca.gov

Not only will this information be used in the outreach plan; it will also give the Department the opportunity to share county best practices on a statewide basis. Working together, we can break down barriers by increasing the awareness of the Food Stamp Program, making it more accessible, and by changing the attitude connected with food stamps to one of nutritional assistance not welfare among low-income families and individuals.

Thank you in advance for your assistance with the outreach plan.

Sincerely,

original document signed by
GARY SWANSON, Chief
Food Stamp Branch