



CDSS

WILL LIGHTBOURNE
DIRECTOR

STATE OF CALIFORNIA—HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

744 P Street • Sacramento, CA 95814 • www.cdss.ca.gov



EDMUND G. BROWN JR.
GOVERNOR

July 24, 2013

ALL COUNTY LETTER NO.13-61

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS
ALL CALFRESH PROGRAM SPECIALISTS
ALL CaWORKs PROGRAM SPECIALISTS
ALL CONSORTIA REPRESENTATIVES
ALL QUALITY CONTROL COORDINATORS

SUBJECT: CALFRESH WAIVER TO SEND E-NOTIFICATIONS AND VIEW
NOTICES ELECTRONICALLY

REFERENCE: CALFRESH WAIVERS #2120045 AND #2120033

The purpose of this All County Letter (ACL) is to notify County Welfare Departments (CWDs) of the United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) approval of waivers that allow households to receive an electronic notification, or e-notification, of official correspondence. The waiver includes instructions for implementation and will become effective once programmed by statewide automated welfare systems (SAWS). E-notifications will alert households to view CWD correspondence via their secure personal online account in the CWD's automated system. CalFresh and CalWORKs clients may opt in or opt out of receiving e-notifications and receive traditional paper correspondence at **any** time.

MEDI-CAL

The Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) following on the work done by the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), and subject to federal approvals, will be working with stakeholders to leverage this development for purposes of the Medi-Cal program. Based on the outcomes of stakeholder engagement and federal approval, DHCS will issue separate guidance in an All County Welfare Director's Letter (ACWDL) concerning the use of electronic notification for Medi-Cal beneficiaries. In the interim, the programming of the SAWS that will take place for the purposes of electronic

REASON FOR THIS TRANSMITTAL

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

notifications for CalFresh and CalWORKs under this ACL may be utilized by the counties for the Medi-Cal program.

TYPES OF CORRESPONDENCE

Correspondence covered by this letter includes official written communication from the CWD, including, but not limited to, the Notice of Missed Interview, Notice of Denial, Notice of Required Verifications, Notice of Eligibility, Notice of Expiration of Certification, Notice of Adverse Action, Notices of Action regarding changes to the CalWORKs grant or CalFresh benefits including discontinuances or other changes to the case, and notices regarding Intentional Program Violations, claims, and disqualification.

Correspondence not covered by this letter includes any informal county contact not mandated by state or federal statute or regulation. Informal contact may be sent by email or text and does not require being officially sent to a secure personal online account but must not contain any client or case identifying information.

CLIENT OPT-IN

Before receiving e-notifications, households will be required to sign a notification agreement in which they agree to receive all correspondence from the CWD via e-notification (see enclosure 1). Clients shall be notified of the option to receive notices electronically at application and recertification. Households will also agree to read all correspondence sent to their online account as referenced in the electronic notification. The agreement will include a statement that the household agrees to check their email on a regular basis (we recommend at least every three days) to ensure that time-sensitive correspondence is viewed in a timely manner. The agreement will also include a statement informing the household that the CWD will revert to traditional paper correspondence if the e-notification(s) could not be received by the email address provided by the household.

After signing the notification agreement, the household will receive a traditional paper Notice of Confirmation (see enclosure 2) regarding the decision to receive e-notifications. The confirmation will direct the household to log-in to their secure personal online account to view all correspondence. A confirmation email must also be sent to the household. The CWD shall document, in the clients' case record, their decision to receive electronic notifications instead of traditional paper correspondence.

Lastly, the household will be informed of their option to get a paper copy of any document upon request, and to revert to traditional paper correspondence at any time. If a household elects to revert to paper correspondence the CWD shall document in the household's case record their decision to change back to paper correspondence.

GUIDELINES FOR CORRESPONDENCE

This waiver does not absolve CWDs of providing mandated notices. This letter does not apply to, nor absolve, CWDs from complying with regulations regarding the time frames of providing any required notices and information including, but not limited to, the 10-day noticing requirement or the Balderas contact when CalWORKs recipients fail to turn in a completed Eligibility Status Report (for example, the Quarterly Report 7 or Semi-Annual Report 7). Electronic notices shall provide the same information as hard copy notices within prescribed timeframes and include the most current NA Back 9. In addition, hard copy versions of correspondence will be available to households upon request. All households' state hearing rights will be preserved and Notices of State Hearings will not be sent electronically.

When the CWD discovers that e-notifications can't be received by the household, the CWD will revert to traditional hard copy mail. The e-notification will be considered not received if the county gets a message that the e-notification was not deliverable, that the mailbox is full, or confirmation that the email used does not belong to the intended person. When this happens, the county shall send a mailed notification (see enclosure 3) to the last known address for the household advising them that the email was undeliverable, and that traditional paper correspondence will resume, and a hard copy of the notice that the undeliverable e-notification was pertaining to. The household will be informed that to resume receiving electronic notices, the household will need to complete the enrollment process again.

- Note: CWDs should ensure email addresses are entered correctly before an official notice is sent informing the client an email was undeliverable.

All electronic correspondence must be accessible to both Federal and State Quality Control reviewers. Cases must be identified as having opted for e-notifications in the Quality Control review process.

CWDs must establish security procedures to protect confidential client information sent electronically. CWDs will ensure that sufficient administrative and automation controls are in place to implement the terms of this waiver; confidential information will never be sent by email.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

As a condition of this waiver, FNS requires certain reporting conditions must be met for CalFresh cases. CWDs will report: a) any problems caused by the waiver or encountered during implementation; b) all client and advocate complaints related to this waiver; and c) all other relevant information. Reports must be submitted to CDSS at six

months, 12 months, and 18 months after implementation. Reporting instructions from the Data Systems and Survey Design Bureau will be issued under separate cover.

CWDs must provide the following data:

- Percentage of the total CalFresh caseload subject to this waiver;
- Percentage of CalFresh notices viewed within 3 days of receipt;
- Percentage of CalFresh notices viewed more than 3 days after receipt;
- Percentage of CalFresh notices that were undeliverable, requiring reinstating paper notifications; and,
- A narrative of any problems caused by the waiver or encountered during implementation, and all client and advocate complaints related to this waiver.

CAMERA READY COPIES AND TRANSLATIONS

For camera-ready copies in English, contact the Forms Management Unit at fmudss@dss.ca.gov. If your office has internet access you may obtain these forms from CDSS at http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/cdssweb/FormsandPu_271.htm.

When all translations are completed per MPP section 21-115.2, including Spanish forms, they are posted on an on-going basis on our web site. Copies of the translated forms can be obtained at http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/cdssweb/FormsandPu_274.htm.

For questions on translated materials, please contact Language Services at (916) 651-8876. Until translations are available, recipients who have elected to receive materials in languages other than English should be sent the English version of the form or notice along with the GEN 1365-Notice of Language Services and a local contact number.

For questions regarding CalFresh, please contact your county consultant or call the CalFresh Policy Bureau at (916) 654-1896. If you have any questions regarding CalWORKs, please contact your county consultant or call the CalWORKs Eligibility Bureau at (916) 654-1322.

Sincerely,

Original Document Signed by:

TODD R. BLAND
Deputy Director
Welfare to Work Division

ALL COUNTY LETTER NO. 13-61
Page Five

Enclosures:

1. Form NA 1273 Electronic Notification Agreement
2. Form NA 1274 Electronic Notification Notice
3. Form NA 1275 Electronic Notification Cancellation Notice
4. Waiver 2120045 Approval
5. Waiver 2120033 Approval

ELECTRONIC NOTIFICATION AGREEMENT

CASE NAME	CASE NUMBER
COUNTY WORKER NAME	WORKER NUMBER

Q: *What are electronic notifications?* **A:** *Electronic notifications, or e-notifications, are email alerts that let you know there is correspondence to be viewed in your secure personal online account.*

- I agree to get all correspondence from the County Welfare Department (CWD) by e-notification, except notices regarding state hearings, which will be sent by US mail.
- I agree to read all e-notifications sent to my email account and to view the documents through my secure personal online account.
- I agree to check my email account on a regular basis (we recommend at least every three days) to make sure that I view time sensitive correspondence in a timely manner.
- I agree to keep the CWD informed if my email address changes by filling out a new Electronic Notification Agreement within ten days of the change.
- I understand that notices sent to my personal secure online account are considered received by me when the e-notification is received by my email, even if I do not read them.
- I understand that the CWD must give me a paper copy of any document posted in my secure personal online account, if I ask for one.
- I understand that the CWD will go back to sending me traditional paper correspondence if the e-notifications sent to my email could not be received by the email address I have provided.
- I understand that, I can stop getting e-notifications at any time and go back to getting notices and forms by US mail. To do so I only need to contact my CWD at _____ and inform them of my decision to change back to paper correspondence.

THE EMAIL ADDRESS I WISH TO USE FOR ELECTRONIC NOTIFICATIONS

ADDITIONAL EMAIL ADDRESS I WISH TO USE FOR ELECTRONIC NOTIFICATIONS

SIGNATURE (OR MARK) OF ADULT HOUSEHOLD MEMBER OR AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE	DATE SIGNED
SIGNATURE (OR MARK) OF SPOUSE, REGISTERED DOMESTIC PARTNER, OR OTHER PARENT OF CASH AIDED CHILD(REN)	DATE SIGNED

ELECTRONIC NOTIFICATION NOTICE

CASE NAME	CASE NUMBER
COUNTY WORKER NAME	WORKER NUMBER

This notice confirms your decision to get correspondence by electronic notification. If you did not want electronic notices, please call your County Welfare Department (CWD) at _____ immediately.

As part of the agreement to get electronic notifications you agreed:

- To get correspondence from the CWD by electronic notification. Only households that sign the Electronic Notification Agreement will receive alerts to view correspondence in their secure personal online account.
- To read all electronic notifications sent to your email account and to view the documents through your secure personal online account.
- To check your email account on a regular basis (we recommend at least every three days) to make sure that you read time sensitive correspondence in a timely manner.
- To keep the CWD informed if your email address changes by filling out a new Electronic Notification Agreement within ten days of the change.
- That notices sent to your personal secure online account are considered received by you when the e-notification is received by your email, even if you do not read them.
- That the CWD must give you a paper copy of any document posted in your secure personal online account, if you ask for one.
- That the CWD will switch back to traditional paper correspondence if the electronic notifications could not be received by the email address you have provided.
- That you can stop receiving electronic notifications at any time. To do so you only have to call the CWD and tell them of your decision to switch back to paper correspondence.

ELECTRONIC NOTIFICATION CANCELLATION NOTICE

CASE NAME	CASE NUMBER
COUNTY WORKER NAME	WORKER NUMBER

This notice is to inform you that you are being switched back to traditional paper correspondence because:

- An email was undeliverable to the email address you provided the County Welfare Department (CWD). The email address on record is: _____.
- You contacted the CWD and told them you wanted to switch back to regular mail.
- Other _____.

In order to resume receiving electronic notices you will need to complete the e-notification enrollment process again. If you want to go back to electronic notifications please contact the CWD immediately at _____.



October 12, 2012
SNAP-10-6-CA-Waivers

United States
Department of
Agriculture

Food and
Nutrition
Service

Western Region

90 Seventh St.
Room 10-100
San Francisco, CA
94103

Ms. Linda Patterson, Chief
CalFresh Branch
Department of Social Services
744 P Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Ms. Patterson:

This is in response to the waiver request from the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to issue notices electronically to clients who elect to receive e-mail communication from the State agency. It is anticipated that the waiver will reduce postage costs for the State agency and allow clients to view time-sensitive notices more quickly. The Program Accountability and Administration Division (PAAD) of the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is approving CDSS's request for electronic notices pertaining to claims, intentional program violations (IPV's) and disqualifications. The Program Development Division (PDD) is reviewing CDSS's request for electronic notices pertaining to certification and we will be providing their response under separate cover.

The approval of this waiver is subject to all of the conditions listed in item 11 of the attached waiver response. This includes submitting an initial, interim and final report. The State must also send a confirmation by both e-mail and paper mail to clients who opt to receive electronic notices. Under CDSS's proposal, clients may "opt" to receive e-mail notification of electronically posted notices in their personal online account in the County Welfare Department's (CWD's) automated system. All households will be able to opt in, or out, at any time and the State agency must be able to provide hard copy notices to clients upon request. Electronic correspondence will provide the same information as traditional hard copy correspondence. The State agency must ensure that sufficient administrative and automation controls are in place for each county so that the terms of this waiver are implemented correctly throughout the State.

On August 30, 2012, the CDSS submitted a revision to their original request by withdrawing their request for electronic notifications of scheduled fair hearings and fair hearing decisions required by 7 CFR 273.15(c)(1) and 273.15(q). The California State Hearings Office will continue to mail these requisite fair hearing notices to households. Clients will be notified of their fair hearing rights and instructions for submitting a fair request via e-notices covered in this waiver approval since these notices are generated at the County level.

Based on CDSS's August 30, 2012, submission, FNS is approving the State's waiver request to issue electronic client notices and requests pertaining to client disqualifications, claims, and IPVs. This waiver is approved for 2 years, effective

October 3, 2012. If you have questions, please contact Hope Rios,
hope.rios@fns.usda.gov .

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dennis Stewart". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Dennis" and last name "Stewart" clearly distinguishable.

DENNIS STEWART
Division Director
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
Western Region

Attachment

cc: Hope Rios, POQCS I, SNAP, WRO
Ed Mars, POQCS I, SNAP, WRO
Lisa Kim, POQCS I, SNAP, WRO

WAIVER RESPONSE

1. **Waiver Serial Number:** 2120045
2. **Type of Request:** Initial
3. **Primary Regulation Citation:** 273.16(b)(13), 273.16(e)(3) and (9), 273.16(f)(1) and (3), 273.16(g)(3), 273.16(h)(3), 273.18(e)(3), (4), and (6)(ii) and 273.18(g)(2)
4. **Secondary regulation citation:** None
5. **State:** California
6. **Region:** Western Region
7. **Regulatory Requirements:** Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program regulations at 7CFR:
 - 273.16(b) (13) requires the State agency to notify the individual in writing once it is determined that he/she is to be disqualified.
 - (e) Disqualification hearings. (3) Advance notice of hearing. (i) The State agency shall provide written notice to the individual suspected of committing an intentional Program violation at least 30 days in advance of the date a disqualification hearing initiated by the State agency has been scheduled.
 - 9) Notification of hearing decision. (i) If the hearing official finds that the household member did not commit intentional Program violation, the State agency shall provide a written notice which informs the household member of the decision. (ii) If the hearing official finds that the household member committed intentional Program violation, the State agency shall provide written notice to the household member prior to disqualification.
 - (f) Waived hearings. (1) Advanced notification. (i) The State agency shall provide written notification to the household member suspected of intentional Program violation that the member can waive his/her right to an administrative disqualification hearing.
 - (3) Notification of disqualification. The State agency shall provide written notice to the household member prior to disqualification. The State agency shall also provide written notice to any remaining household members of the allotment they will receive during the period of disqualification or that they must reapply because the certification period has expired.

- (g) Court referrals. (3) Notification of disqualification. If the court finds that the household member committed intentional Program violation, the State agency shall provide written notice to the household member.
- (h) Deferred adjudication. (3) Notification of disqualification. If the household member suspected of intentional Program violation signs the disqualification consent agreement, the State agency shall provide written notice to the household member.
- 273.18(e)(3),(4) and (6)(ii) require the State agency to: provide notice to households of initiation of collection action on a claim, provide due dates or time frames for submission of payments for any repayment agreements, and re-notify households of a claim if a hearing official determines the existence of a claim.
- 273.18(g)(2) requires the State agency to receive permission and provide notification to the household of collection from EBT accounts.

8. Description of proposed alternative procedures:

Under the waiver, households will have the option to receive system-generated electronic notices via a secure personal online account in the County Welfare Department's (CWD) automated system. System generated notices approved under this cover include notices related to claims, disqualifications and intentional program violations (IPVs). The California State Hearings Office will continue to send fair hearing schedule notices and fair hearing decision notices via the U.S. Postal Service. Clients will be notified of their fair hearing rights via e-notices covered in this waiver approval since these notices are generated at the County level.

Households that elect to receive online notices will be required to sign a disclosure statement in which they agree to receive and read the online notices sent by the CWD's automated system on a regular basis. After signing the agreement the household will receive confirmation through both email and traditional paper mail with instructions on how to view the notices through the household's online account. After the system is implemented, each time a notice is available, the CWD will send an email to the client's email address informing the households to view correspondence within their electronic case file. The email will include a link to the login page for accessing their online account which will require the household to enter their user name and password to view the correspondence. Approved notices include Notice of Adverse Action, Notice of Disqualification, Notice of Collection Action including Permission and Notice of Collection from EBT accounts, and Notice of Intentional Program Violation.

Households that elect to receive their notices online may opt out at any time. If the CWD discovers the electronic messages could not be received by the household, the CWD would automatically modify the system so that the household will receive notices through traditional mail. To resume receiving the notices electronically, the household will have to repeat the enrollment process.

9. **Action and reason for approval or denial:** The FNS's Program Accountability and Administration Division (PAAD) is approving this waiver insofar as it applies to electronic notices and requests for claims, disqualifications, and intentional program violations (IPV's). The Program Development Division (PDD) will be providing review and response under separate cover for certification-related notices. Electronic notification will benefit households since clients who opt to receive electronic notices will be able to view time sensitive requests as well as other notices more quickly. The notifications will remain in the client's account for future retrieval and will result in the elimination of delays due to change of address or alternative pick up locations. The waiver will also benefit the State agency by reducing the costs of printing and postage associated with mail notification.
10. **Regulatory or legislative basis for action:** This waiver is approved pursuant to 7 CFR 272.3(c)(1)(ii), which allows FNS to approve waivers that would result in a more effective and efficient administration of the program.
11. **Conditions and reasons:** This waiver is approved under the following conditions:
 - The State agency must allow households that receive notices electronically the ability to opt-in or opt-out of receiving electronic notices, at any time;
 - The State agency must establish security procedures to protect confidential client information sent electronically;
 - The State agency must issue a notice of confirmation by e-mail and paper mail to all households that have opted to receive electronic notices;
 - Electronic notices should provide the same information as hard copy notices;
 - The State agency must be able to provide hard copy notices to clients upon request;
 - The State must automatically modify the system so that the household will receive notices through traditional mail if the State agency discovers the electronic messages could not be received by the household.
 - This waiver does not apply to nor absolve the State from complying with regulations regarding providing any required notices and information;
 - Electronic notices must be accessible to both Federal and State Quality Control reviewers, and the State must be able to identify waiver cases in connection with the Quality Control review process;
 - The State agency will ensure that sufficient administrative and automation controls are in place for each county so that the terms of this waiver are implemented correctly throughout the State;

- The State agency must have the capacity to provide the required evaluation data requested below;
 - The State agency must provide FNS with the following reports:
 - An initial report including data from the first 6 months of implementation, due no later than 45 days after the first 6 months of implementation;
 - An interim report showing data from the first year of implementation, due no later than 45 days after 1 year of implementation; and
 - A final report showing data from the first 18 months of implementation, due no later than 21 months after implementation; and
 - The initial, interim and final reports must include:
 - The percentage of the total caseload subject to this waiver;
 - The following information regarding the amount of time it takes clients to access their e-notices through their benefit account:
 - Percent of notices viewed within 3 days of receipt
 - Percent of notices viewed more than 3 days after receipt
 - Percent of notices that were undeliverable, requiring reinstating paper notifications;
 - Any problems caused by the waiver or encountered during implementation;
 - All client and advocate complaints related to this waiver; and
 - All other relevant information.
12. **Information needed for extension:** FNS will consider an extension of this waiver based upon the information reported in #11, above and whether there are any negative effects on program access or program integrity among the households that opt to receive electronic notices.
13. **Expiration date:** This waiver is approved for 2 years, effective October 3, 2012 and will expire October 3, 2014.
14. **Limitations, if any, on regional approval of like request:** This approval is limited to the California Department of Social Services.
15. **Quality control procedures:** The waiver does not affect QC policy. No special procedures are required for cases subject to the provisions of this waiver. Cases should be reviewed using standard review procedures contained in the FNS Handbook 310.
16. **Date of national office action: October 3, 2012**
17. **Date of State agency's request:** August 30, 2012
18. **Date of regional office transmittal of request to national office:** September 25, 2012.

19. **Date of regional office transmittal of response to State agency:** October 12, 2012

**OCT 31 2012****United States
Department of
Agriculture**Food and
Nutrition
Service3101 Park
Center DriveAlexandria, VA
22302-1500

Mr. Todd R. Bland
Deputy Director
California Department of Social Services
744 P Street
Sacramento, California 95814

RE: SNAP - California Request to Provide Electronic Notices - Initial - Approval

This is in response to the California Department of Social Services' (CDSS) request (#2120033) to waive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) regulations requiring client notices to be in a hard copy, written format. This waiver would allow households to receive notices electronically through a secured, automated electronic notification system. The client receives an e-mail when correspondence is sent electronically. Clients can then access the correspondence via their secure personal online account in the County Welfare Department's (CWD's) automated system. Households who apply online or access their online accounts will be offered the option. SNAP households may opt in or opt out of receiving electronic notices and receive traditional hard copy notifications at any time. Fair hearing rights will be preserved. California's request to include claims, intentional program violations, and disqualifications are addressed in waiver #2120045.

Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is approving this waiver request for 2 years, effective November 1, 2012 through October 31, 2014. The waiver will only be effective for 2 years and will not be extended for counties that implement the waiver late. The waiver will reduce postage costs for the State agency and allow clients to view time-sensitive requests more quickly. Because program clients will receive notices on a secure website instead of directly to their e-mail inboxes, there are fewer security concerns. E-mail notification will also assist homeless households. Because e-mail addresses are free and free e-mail access is widespread through public libraries, electronic notices may address some of the access issues associated with relying on a physical address to contact this population.

Because CDSS is still in the process of developing the necessary automation system modifications to support electronic notifications, CDSS must inform FNS of the actual date of waiver implementation. If the implementation dates differ from county to county, then FNS will need to be informed of the implementation date for each county. The approval of this waiver is subject to all of the conditions listed in item 11 of the attached waiver response, including submittal of an initial, interim and final report and sending a confirmation by both e-mail and paper mail to clients who opt to receive electronic notices. The State must have the technical and administrative capacity to implement this waiver and provide evaluation information as provided in Attachment 1.

Mr. Todd R. Bland
Page 2

If you have any questions pertaining to certification notices, please contact Hope Rios at Hope.Rios@fns.usda.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lizbeth Silberman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

Lizbeth Silberman
Director
Program Development Division

Attachment

Attachment

WAIVER RESPONSE

1. **Waiver Serial Number:** 2120033
2. **Type of Request:** Initial
3. **Primary Regulation Citation:** 7 CFR 273.2(c)(5); 273.2(e)(3); 273.10(g)(1)(i); 273.10(g)(1); 273.10(g)(2); 273.12(c)(3)(i); 273.13(a)(3); 273.14(b)(1)
4. **Secondary regulation citation:** None
5. **State:** California
6. **Region:** Western Region
7. **Regulatory Requirements:** The following regulations at 7 CFR require notices to be provided to households in written form:
 - 273.2(c)(5) requires that the State agency provide each household with a notice of required verification at the time of application;
 - 273.2(e)(3) requires the State notify each household that misses its interview appointment of the fact that it missed the scheduled interview, and is responsible for rescheduling;
 - 273.10(g)(1) and (2) require that the State agency provides households with a notice of eligibility or denial after initial applications and recertification;
 - 273.12(c)(3)(i) requires the State agency to notify a household of the verification required to clarify its circumstances;
 - 273.13(a)(3) requires the State agency to notify a household when its benefits will be reduced or terminated;
 - 273.14(b)(1) requires States to provide households certified for one month, or certified in the second month of a two-month certification period, a notice of expiration at the time of certification;
8. **Description of proposed alternative procedures:** The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) is requesting to waive SNAP regulations to allow households the option of receiving notices electronically. For the purposes of this request, correspondence refers to any and all written communication from the State agency, including the Notice of Missed Interview, Notice of Denial, Notice of Required Verifications, Notice of Eligibility, Notice of Expiration, and Notice of Request for Contact, and Notice of Adverse Action.

Households will not receive actual correspondence as an email, but rather an electronic notification that they can access the correspondence via their secure personal online account in the County Welfare Department's (CWD's) automated system. Households who apply online or access their online accounts will be offered this option. All households will be able to opt in, or out at any time. All electronic correspondence will provide the same information as traditional hard copy versions. The waiver request does not seek to absolve the State of providing mandated notices. All households' fair hearing rights will be preserved.

Before receiving electronic correspondence, households will be required to sign a disclosure statement in which they agree to receive all correspondence from the CWD via electronic notification. They will also agree to read all electronic notifications sent to their email account and access their online account to view the correspondence referenced in their electronic notification. The disclosure will include a statement that the household agrees to check their email account on a regular basis (e.g. once a week) to ensure that time sensitive correspondence are viewed in a timely manner. The disclosure will also include a statement informing the household that the State will revert to traditional paper correspondence if the electronic notifications could not be received by the email address provided by the household. The disclosure statement will be reviewed and approved by our legal department prior to implementation.

After signing the disclosure statement, the household will receive a hard copy correspondence confirming the decision to receive electronic correspondence. The confirmation will direct the household to login to their electronic case file to view all correspondence. Electronic notification will be sent informing households to view correspondence within their electronic case file.

Through the State's automated system, households will receive an email notifying them to access their electronic case file in order to view the correspondence. The email will include a link to the login page for accessing their online account in the automated system which will require the household to enter their user name and password to view the correspondence. Confidential information will never be sent by email.

Households who have chosen to receive electronic notifications may rescind the option at any time. The household will be able to opt out and choose to receive hard copy correspondence. In addition, hard copy versions of correspondence will be available to households upon request.

9. **Action and reason for approval or denial:** FNS is approving this waiver because e-mail notification will allow clients who opt to receive electronic notices to view time sensitive requests and other notices more quickly.

10. **Regulatory or legislative basis for action:** This waiver is approved pursuant to 7 CFR 272.3(c)(1)(ii), which allows FNS to approve waivers that would result in a more effective and efficient administration of the program.

11. **Conditions and reasons:** This waiver is approved under the following conditions:
 - The State agency must allow households that receive notices electronically the ability to opt-in or opt-out of receiving electronic notices, at any time;
 - The State agency must establish security procedures to protect confidential client information sent electronically;
 - The State agency must issue a confirmation by e-mail and paper mail to all households that opt to receive electronic notices;
 - Electronic notices should provide the same information as hard copy notices;
 - The State agency must be able to provide hard copy notices to clients upon request;
 - This waiver does not apply to nor absolve the State from complying with regulations regarding providing any required notices and information;
 - The waiver excludes Treasury Offset Program (TOP) notices;
 - Electronic notices must be accessible to both Federal and State Quality Control reviewers, and the State must be able to identify waiver cases in connection with the Quality Control review process;
 - The State agency will ensure that sufficient administrative and automation controls are in place to implement the terms of this waiver correctly;
 - The State agency must have the capacity to provide the required evaluation data requested below;
 - The State agency must provide FNS with the following reports:
 - o An initial report including data from the first 6 months of implementation, due no later than 45 days after the first 6 months of implementation;
 - o An interim report showing data from the first year of implementation, due no later than 45 days after I-year of implementation; and
 - o A final report showing data from the first 18 months of implementation, due no later than 21 months after implementation; and
 - The initial, interim and final reports must include:
 - The percentage of the total caseload subject to this waiver;
 - The following information regarding the amount of time it takes clients to access their e-notices through their benefit account:
 - Percentage of notices viewed within 3 days of receipt
 - Percentage of notices viewed more than 3 days after receipt
 - Percent of notices that were undeliverable, requiring reinstating paper notifications
 - Any problems caused by the waiver or encountered during implementation
 - All client and advocate complaints related to this waiver
 - All other relevant information

12. **Information needed for extension:** FNS will consider an extension of this waiver based upon the data reported in #11, above and whether there are any negative effects on program access or program integrity among the households that opt to receive electronic notices.
13. **Expiration date:** This waiver is approved for 2 years, effective November 1, 2012, and will expire October 31, 2014.
14. **Limitations, if any, on regional approval of like request:** This approval is limited to the California Department of Social Services.
15. **Quality control procedures:** No special QC procedures are required for cases subject to the provisions of this waiver. Cases should be reviewed using standard review procedures contained in the FNS Handbook 310.
16. Date of national office action: **OCT 3 1 2012**
17. Date of State agency's request: April 27, 2012
18. Date of regional office transmittal of request to national office: May 10, 2012
19. Date of regional office transmittal of response to State agency:
20. State agency contact: Linda Patterson / 916-651-8047 /
linda.patterson@dss.ca.gov
21. FNS Regional Office contact: Hope Rios / 415-645-1932 / hope.rios@fns.usda.gov