



CDSS

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**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

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EDMUND G. BROWN JR.  
GOVERNOR

July 31, 2017

ALL COUNTY LETTER (ACL) NO. 17-80

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

SUBJECT: CALFRESH TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS

REFERENCES: [PUBLIC LAW \(P.L.\) 110-246](#), [FEDERAL REGISTER VOLUME 82, NO. 4](#); [ACL 09-62](#); [7 CFR 273.2\(e\)\(1\),\(e\)\(2\),\(e\)\(3\)](#); [7 CFR 273.14\(b\)\(3\)](#)

The purpose of this letter is to transmit implementation instructions to county welfare departments (CWDs) regarding regulation changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) recently issued a final rule implementing provisions of the Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008. The rule amends SNAP regulations at Title 7 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 273.2(e)(2) allowing state agencies the option to conduct telephone interviews at intake and recertification in lieu of face-to-face interviews. The new regulations were effective May 8, 2017. Effective immediately, California will take this option for all CalFresh households and will update California's state plan of operations to reflect this change.

## Background

In the past, SNAP regulations required CWDs to conduct face-to-face interviews at application and recertification, unless a determination of a household hardship was made. For several years, California applied and was approved to waive these regulations. The waiver allowed CWDs to conduct interviews over the telephone without the need to document hardship. Counties retained the option to conduct a face-to-face interview if requested by the household or if determined necessary. California's

### REASON FOR THIS TRANSMITTAL

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

last face-to-face interview waiver expired on May 31, 2017. With the implementation of new SNAP regulations this waiver becomes obsolete and will not be extended.

**New Regulations at 7 CFR 273.2(e)(2)**

As amended, the new SNAP regulations allow state agencies the option to routinely interview households by telephone in lieu of face-to-face interviews at application and recertification. California will adopt the option and provides the following implementing instructions to CWDs. Note that these instructions reflect instructions issued under previous waiver authority and should have limited impact on current CWD business processes.

- The CWDs will routinely conduct telephone interviews in lieu of face-to-face interviews at application and recertification for all CalFresh households regardless of the length of the household's certification period length.
- The CWDs may conduct a face-to-face interview if determined necessary. However, CWDs cannot require a household to attend an in-person office interview if attending the interview would be a hardship. In this case, the CWD is required to conduct the interview by telephone or a home visit.
- The CWDs must inform each applicant of the opportunity for a face-to-face interview at the time of application and recertification and grant a face-to-face interview if requested by the household or its authorized representative at any time.
- A notice of missed interview must be provided to the client if the telephone interview is missed, as required in 7 CFR 273.2(e)(3).
- The application process must not be negatively affected by a telephone interview. The same information should be requested during the interview and the same verification processes should be employed regardless of the type of interview conducted.

If you have any questions regarding this ACL, please contact the CalFresh Policy Bureau at (916) 651-8047.

Sincerely,

***Original Document Signed By:***

TODD R. BLAND  
Deputy Director  
Family Engagement and Empowerment Division