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GOVERNOR

February 9, 2019

ALL COUNTY LETTER (ACL) NO. 19-08

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS
ALL COUNTY CALFRESH SPECIALISTS
ALL CALWORKS PROGRAM SPECIALISTS
ALL WELFARE-TO-WORK COORDINATORS
ALL TRIBAL TANF ADMINISTRATORS
ALL CHILD CARE COORDINATORS
ALL COUNTY INCOME ELIGIBILITY AND VERIFICATION
SYSTEM COORDINATORS
ALL COUNTY SIU COORDINATORS
ALL COUNTY SIU CHIEFS

SUBJECT: USE OF THE WORK NUMBER FOR CALFRESH, ACROSS
CALWORKS PROGRAMS AND PROGRAM INTEGRITY

REFERENCE: [ALL COUNTY LETTER \(ACL\) NO. 16-118; ACL NO. 16-43; ACL NO. 13-89; ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS LETTER \(ACWDL\) RELEASED JANUARY 13, 2016, ALL COUNTY INFORMATION NOTICE \(ACIN\) I-41-14](#)

The purpose of this letter is to provide County Welfare Departments (CWDs) with additional guidance regarding the use of the Work Number® consumer credit report in determining initial and ongoing eligibility across multiple programs, including CalFresh, CalWORKs, Welfare-to-Work and Stage One Child Care. This letter also provides guidance regarding the use of the Work Number® for program integrity purposes when verifying information received through Applicant and Recipient Income and Eligibility Verification System (IEVS) matches.

The Work Number® is a consumer credit report that can be used by CWDs to secure verification of income and hours worked when necessary to determine initial and ongoing eligibility and/or program integrity. When utilizing the Work Number®, CWDs should apply the following program specific policy guidance.

CalFresh*General Policy*

Per the CalFresh Manual of Policy and Procedures ([MPP](#)) [Section 63-300.5\(e\)](#), the CalFresh household has primary responsibility for providing documentary evidence, such as wage stubs, to verify household information. If documentary evidence of income is unavailable, for example because a household member did not provide or does not have access to the necessary documentation at the time of application or interview, a consumer credit report, such as the Work Number®, can be used to verify income in real time at application, during the certification period, at recertification, or for purposes of completing a Quality Control (QC) review.

Per [ACL 16-118](#), the CWD must obtain written authorization from an applicant or recipient prior to obtaining information from a consumer credit report, including the Work Number®. The [CF 285 \(11/16\)](#) Application for CalFresh Benefits, [CF 37 \(11/16\)](#) Recertification for CalFresh Benefits, [SAWS 2 Plus \(4/15\)](#) Application For CalFresh, Cash Aid, and/or Medi-Cal/Health Care Programs, and [SAWS 1 \(8/13\)](#) Initial Application For CalFresh, Cash Aid, and/or Medi-Cal/Health Care Programs have all been revised to include language authorizing use of consumer credit reports. A signature on any of the above mentioned forms indicates that an applicant or recipient has provided authorization to obtain a consumer credit report for CalFresh. As is current CalFresh policy, a signature on any of the above forms can be obtained in writing or electronically. A signature on any of the forms mentioned also constitutes written authorization to obtain a consumer credit report for purposes of conducting a QC review.

The CWDs are reminded that information obtained through the Work Number® is not considered verified upon receipt (VUR). Therefore, the applicant or recipient must be consulted before using the information provided by the Work Number®. The CWD may consult with an applicant or recipient verbally regarding information provided by the Work Number®. The CWD must update the case file with notation regarding the outcome of the verbal consultation.

If the information provided by Work Number® is not discrepant with the written information provided by the applicant or recipient on the application, periodic report, recertification, or other form, verbal consultation is not necessary. The requirement to consult with the applicant or recipient has been fulfilled via the submission of the form.

If the household confirms that the information provided by the Work Number® is accurate or the information provided by the Work Number® is not discrepant with what was provided on the application, periodic report, recertification, or other form, the Work Number® can be used to verify income. If the household informs the CWD that the information provided by the Work Number® is inaccurate, alternative verification may be used.

If the information provided by the Work Number® is incomplete because the applicant or recipient is receiving additional income from another source or an employer not included in the Work Number®, the CWD may request additional documentation to be used in conjunction with the information provided by the Work Number® to secure complete verification of all income available to the household.

CWDs are also reminded that per [ACL 16-118](#), the Work Number® may be used in conjunction with, but not in lieu of, existing required income and eligibility sources, including Applicant and Recipient IEVS.

Under the provisions of [Senate Bill \(SB\) 1232 \(Chapter 308, Statutes of 2016\)](#), if the CWD and the household elect to use information obtained through the Work Number®, the CWD shall not require the household to submit additional documentary evidence that is duplicative of the information obtained through the Work Number®. As mentioned above, the CWD may request additional documentation only if the household informs the CWD that the information is inaccurate or the income information provided by the Work Number® does not provide verification of all income available to the household.

Per [ACL 16-118](#), if the CWD takes an adverse action based on information obtained through the Work Number®, the household must be provided timely notification (i.e. 10 days prior to action) via a Notice of Action (NOA) that includes the following information:

- The name, address, and telephone number of the Work Number® (including a toll-free telephone number);
- A statement that the Work Number® did not make the adverse decision and is not able to explain why the decision was made;
- A statement setting forth the consumer's right to obtain a free disclosure of the consumer's file from the Work Number® if the consumer makes a request within 60 days; and
- A statement setting forth the consumer's right to dispute directly with the Work Number® the accuracy or completeness of any information provided by the Work Number®.

When use of information obtained through a consumer credit report results in an adverse action, the CWD must provide the household with the [GEN 1390 \(3/17\)](#): Informing Notice – Regarding an Action Taken on Your Case in conjunction with existing NOAs. Please see [ACL 16-118](#) issued on December 30, 2016 for additional information on consumer credit report noticing requirements.

Eligibility at Initial Application and Recertification

The CWDs may use the Work Number® to verify income information received at initial application and recertification. The Work Number® may be particularly useful in

providing households with “same day service” when documentary evidence is not available on the same day the initial application is submitted.

Continuing Eligibility During the Certification Period

The CWDs may use the Work Number® to verify a voluntary report of a change in income received during the certification period. CWDs may also use the Work Number® to verify income information provided at periodic report via the Eligibility Status Report (SAR 7).

Please note, the Work Number® should not be used to verify a mandatory report of income over the Income Reporting Threshold (IRT). Household reports of income received over the IRT are actionable when received and require no further verification.

Quality Control Reviews

When conducting a QC review, the CWD may use the Work Number® to substantiate case information if the household is unable to provide sufficient information to resolve the discrepancy or refuses to cooperate with the QC review. Note that the QC reviewer must first attempt to request income verification from the household prior to using the Work Number®. As mentioned above, the CalFresh household has primary responsibility for providing documentary evidence.

If the household is unable to provide sufficient information or refuses to cooperate with the QC review, the CWD may verify the household's income information using the Work Number® if available. The QC reviewer may use the income information verified using the Work Number® to support its findings. Any discrepancy between the Work Number® and other verification, such as a wage stub, must be clarified with the employer (refer to the FNS 310, Chapter 10, Section 1021-1021.1 for further guidance).

CalWORKs, Welfare-to-Work & Stage One Child Care

As with CalFresh, for CalWORKs, Welfare-to-Work and Stage One Child Care, the CWD must obtain written authorization from the household prior to utilizing household information obtained from a consumer credit report, including the Work Number®. As previously mentioned, the [SAWS 2 PLUS \(4/15\)](#) Application for CalFresh, Cash Aid, and/or Medi-Cal/Health Care Programs and the [SAWS 1 \(8/13\)](#) Initial Application for CalFresh, Cash Aid, and/or Medi-Cal/Health Care Programs, have been updated to include language authorizing use of consumer credit reports, such as the Work Number®. A signature on the SAWS 2 Plus or SAWS 1 constitutes authorization to obtain a consumer credit report across CalWORKs programs.

The CWDs may use the Work Number® to verify income and employment information at application, redetermination, and to determine ongoing eligibility for CalWORKs and Stage One Child Care. For Welfare-to-Work, the Work Number® may be used to verify

income and employment information for Work Participation Rate (WPR) purposes. The CWDs are permitted to use the Work Number® monthly, or as needed, to submit information for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) WPR data reporting purposes in the CalWORKs program. The CWDs may also use the Work Number® to verify income when transitioning clients from Stage One Child Care to Stage Two Child Care.

Per [ACL 16-118](#), the provisions of SB 1232 apply to CalWORKs. As mentioned, under SB 1232 the CWD shall not require the applicant or recipient to submit hard-copy documentation that is duplicative of the information obtained from a consumer credit report. Furthermore, the Work Number® may be used in conjunction with, but not in lieu of, existing required income and eligibility sources, including Applicant and Recipient IEVS. The CWDs are permitted to use the information obtained from the Work Number® in the same manner as they would use information provided by an employer.

CWDs are reminded that the Work Number® alone cannot be used to verify a missed mandatory report of income over the IRT for CalWORKs. Per [ACL 13-89](#), upon finding a possible error or reporting discrepancy, eligibility workers are tasked with reviewing an assistance unit's (AU) circumstances and contacting the AU to provide them with an opportunity to clarify or resolve any discrepancies or errors prior to taking any adverse action ([MPP Section 20-005](#)). Additionally, if the CWD does take an adverse action based on information obtained through the Work Number®, the AU must be notified timely using a GEN 1390 form in conjunction with existing NOAs.

Program Integrity

The CWD may use the Work Number® according to the following guidelines to substantiate Applicant and Recipient IEVS information when determining whether a household missed a required report of income over the household's IRT or any other CalFresh/CalWORKs required reporting requirements. The Work Number® must not be used as an income verification tool in response to receiving the New Hire Registry (NHR) match.

The CWD must verify the IEVS data by sending a client verification letter requesting the recipient respond within 10 days. Per [MPP 20-006.543](#), the client verification letter must not replace the required NOA to reduce or terminate benefits.

If the recipient does not respond to the client verification letter, or responds and is unable to provide sufficient information to resolve the discrepancy, the CWD shall contact the appropriate income or benefit source. If the appropriate income or benefit source is available via the Work Number®, the CWD must use the Work Number® as the independent verification source. If the appropriate income or benefit source is not available via the Work Number®, the CWD must request verification from the third party source/employer.

The Special Investigations Unit (SIU) is not required to send a written notice to the recipient informing him/her of the potential Applicant or Recipient IEVS discrepancy on an SIU referred case, per [MPP 20-006.543\(d\)](#). In these cases, the SIU may contact the appropriate income source, benefit source, resource, and/or utilize the Work Number® to verify the Applicant or Recipient IEVS information.

Counties are reminded that the Work Number® may only be used without prior authorization in conjunction with Applicant or Recipient IEVS information and/or SIU investigation for program integrity purposes.

Program Contacts

If you have any questions regarding this ACL, please contact the following:

CalFresh Policy Bureau
(916) 654-1896

CalWORKs Eligibility Bureau
(916) 654-1322

CalWORKs Employment Bureau
(916) 654-2137

Child Care Programs Bureau
(916) 657-2144

Automation, Integrity and Client Initiatives Branch
(916) 654-2125

Sincerely,

Original Document Signed By:

KIM JOHNSON
Deputy Director
Family Engagement and Empowerment Division