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February 12, 2019

ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS LETTER

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS

FROM: KIM MCCOY WADE, Chief
CalFresh and Nutrition Branch

SUBJECT: CALFRESH BENEFITS FOR MARCH 2019: PLAN FOR SINGLE DAY
ISSUANCE ON MARCH 1, 2019

The purpose of this letter is to inform County Welfare Departments (CWDs) that **CalFresh benefits for March will be issued on a single day, Friday, March 1, 2019**, rather than the normal staggered issuance cycle of the first through the tenth of the month. This change will mitigate the effects of the early issuance of February benefits and the resulting gap in food assistance. Counties shall continue all other CalFresh operations as usual.

Due to the Federal shutdown that began on December 22, 2018, the United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) instructed States, in a letter dated January 8, 2019, to provide early issuance of February 2019 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) (known in California as CalFresh) benefits to most participants by January 20, 2019, in order to provide households with food benefits during the lapse in appropriations for SNAP. As a result, an All County Welfare Directors Letter ([ACWDL](#)) was issued on January 11, 2019, informing County Welfare Directors of the early issuance of February benefits between January 16, 2019 and January 20, 2019. Most continuing CalFresh households received their February benefits between January 15, 2019 and January 16, 2019. Households were advised through mass change communication procedures that no additional food benefits would be provided through the end of February 2019.

In order to mitigate the impact and shorten the interval between the early issuance of February benefits and March benefits, FNS requested on February 1, 2019 that States submit mitigation plans by February 6, 2019. In addition, FNS issued on February 9, 2019 an amended blanket waiver for March benefits to the [Food and Nutrition Act of 2008, Section 7\(g\)\(2\)](#) requirement that no household experience an

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interval between benefit issuances of more than 40 days. The CDSS, in partnership with stakeholders, decided on a plan to issue all March benefits on Friday, March 1, 2019, rather than the normal staggered issuance cycle of the first through the tenth of each month. When March benefits are issued on March 1, 2019, the longest gap in benefits will be 45 days; if the normal staggered issuance cycle were followed, the longest gap in benefits would be 54 days (January 15, 2019 to March 10, 2019).

The CWDs must implement client noticing of the single-day March 1, 2019 issuance as they would for a mass change. Counties may use existing communication channels to inform clients about the single-day issuance, such as, but not limited to, county websites, posters in county offices, county telephone systems, press, and social media. Counties are also encouraged to work with CalFresh Outreach providers and emergency food organizations in their community. There is no individual household noticing requirement. However, counties are encouraged to contact individual households as feasible, using communication channels such as, but not limited to, text messaging, email, and prerecorded phone messages.

The CDSS recognizes the change to a single-day, rather than staggered issuance, may cause some client and retailer confusion, as well as administrative workload. The CDSS greatly appreciates the efforts of counties, advocates, retailers, and all stakeholders to mitigate this gap in food assistance for CalFresh households.

At this time, the plan is to issue April benefits per the usual staggered issuance cycle of the first through the tenth of the month. If direction is otherwise provided by FNS to States -- for example in the event of another federal shutdown -- CDSS will provide updated guidance to counties.

If you have any questions about this ACWDL, please contact the CalFresh Policy Bureau at 916-651-8047.