

February 5, 2021

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ALL COUNTY LETTER NO. 21-15

The purpose of this All County Letter is to remind County Welfare Departments (CWDs) of CalFresh benefit replacement policies put forth by the United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Additionally, this letter also reminds CWDs of existing replacement policies, particularly policies relevant to the growing number of Public Safety Power Shutoff events in California, as well as policies relevant to households who request and receive multiple replacement issuances in the same month.



KIM JOHNSON
DIRECTOR

STATE OF CALIFORNIA—HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
744 P Street • Sacramento, CA 95814 • www.cdss.ca.gov



GAVIN NEWSOM
GOVERNOR

February 5, 2021

ALL COUNTY LETTER (ACL) NO. 21-15

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

SUBJECT: CALFRESH BENEFIT REPLACEMENT POLICIES FOR
INDIVIDUAL REPLACEMENTS AND AUTOMATIC/MASS
REPLACEMENTS

REFERENCES: [TITLE 7 CODE OF FEDERAL REGULATIONS \(CFR\) SECTION 274.6](#); [ALL COUNTY LETTER 18-125](#); [ALL COUNTY LETTER 19-95](#); [ALL COUNTY LETTER 19-95E](#)

The purpose of this letter is to remind County Welfare Departments (CWDs) of CalFresh benefit replacement policies (“benefit replacements” will hereafter be referred to as “replacements”) put forth by the United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service (FNS). Additionally, this letter reminds CWDs of existing replacement policies, particularly policies relevant to the growing number of Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) events in California, as well as policies relevant to households who request and receive multiple replacement issuances in the same month.

BACKGROUND

Individual and mass replacements are authorized under federal regulations at [7 Code of Federal Regulations \(CFR\) 274.6](#). Only ongoing CalFresh households qualify to receive individual and mass replacement benefits.

During 2019, several of the largest publicly owned utility companies in California proactively initiated widespread PSPS events in their respective coverage areas, impacting dozens of counties and hundreds of thousands of households statewide. As a result, CalFresh households suffered extensive food loss and subsequently sought CalFresh replacements. In October 2019, there were multiple PSPS events in the same

month which created scenarios where impacted households were seeking multiple replacement issuances in the same month. For many households, this meant requesting replacement amounts that, when combined cumulatively, would exceed their normal monthly CalFresh allotment.

Also, in the first week of October 2019, the first PSPS event was extensive enough that the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) was approved by FNS to issue automatic/mass replacements (hereafter referred to as “mass replacements”) to eligible, impacted households. When mass replacements are issued to households, specific rules apply to those same households if they subsequently seek individual replacements in the same month. Some of the rules are already addressed by state and federal regulations as outlined in [ACL 18-125](#) issued on October 18, 2018, and others will be addressed by this letter.

Because PSPS events have continued into 2020, there has been an evident increase in scenarios where multiple replacements are being requested in the same month. The CDSS is issuing this guidance to provide instruction for counties to be better equipped to address those scenarios.

CALFRESH INDIVIDUAL REPLACEMENT POLICIES

Requests for individual replacement must be submitted via a [Replacement Affidavit/Authorization \(CF 303\)](#). In accordance with [7 CFR 274.6\(a\)\(3\)\(ii\)](#), there are no limits on the number of individual replacements a household may request, or receive, in the same month if food purchased with CalFresh benefits is lost in a household misfortune. In accordance with [7 CFR 274.6\(a\)\(3\)\(iii\)](#), when a household requests multiple individual replacements in the same month, the maximum allotment that a household may receive is largely dependent on the number of household misfortunes that occurred in the same month. Counties are reminded that, in accordance with [7 CFR 274.6\(a\)\(4\)](#), a signed statement attesting the household’s loss is sufficient and verification of the food loss must be provided only if questionable.

Single Household Misfortune

For multiple replacements resulting from the same household misfortune, the cumulative issuance cannot exceed the household’s regular monthly CalFresh allotment, if the reports are considered timely. For example, a household experiences a total loss of food purchased with CalFresh benefits at the beginning of the month. The next day, the household reports the food loss and receives a replacement of 50 percent of their monthly CalFresh allotment. Three days later, the household requests an additional replacement to fully cover the loss of food that occurred from the misfortune. The household receives a replacement for the remaining 50 percent of their monthly

CalFresh allotment. Since both requests are considered timely, and the cumulative amount of benefits replaced does not exceed the household's maximum monthly allotment, the household may receive both replacements.

Multiple Household Misfortunes in the Same Month

For multiple replacements resulting from separate household misfortunes that occurred in the same month, each replacement must be assessed independently. The cumulative total of the multiple replacements may exceed the household's regular monthly CalFresh allotment. For example, a household reports a loss of food purchased with CalFresh benefits at the beginning of the month. The household receives a replacement of 60 percent of their monthly CalFresh allotment. Near the end of the month, the household experiences another separate household misfortune and losses of food purchased with CalFresh benefits including some of the food purchased with the original replacement. The household receives a replacement of 70 percent of their monthly CalFresh allotment. Since there were multiple misfortunes and an individual request for each event, the cumulative total of the multiple replacements for that month may exceed the maximum monthly allotment for that household. There is no timeframe that households must wait between the individual requests for replacement, but each individual request must be completed timely.

CALFRESH MASS REPLACEMENT POLICIES

Mass replacements allow for the automatic replacement of a certain percentage of household benefit allotments, depending on the time of the month and the issuance cycle, without the need for individual households to submit an individual request for replacement via a CF 303.

To issue mass replacements, the CDSS must submit a waiver request to FNS for approval. Once the waiver request has been approved, the CDSS works together with the impacted CWDs and consortia to schedule the issuance of mass replacements. Mass replacements are typically issued for impacted ZIP codes, and each ZIP code must meet the FNS criterion outlined below.

- Data provided to the CDSS by the responsible utility company must indicate that at least half of the households in the impacted ZIP code (i.e., 50 percent or more) were without power for four hours or more.

Current federal guidance specifies a ZIP code can only be approved for one mass replacement per month, regardless of how many disasters or emergency events resulting in assumed food loss occur in a single month. That said, when requested by the household, CWDs may issue a subsequent individual replacement if the household

can verify that the mass replacement did not fully cover what was lost in a misfortune, or if there was a second household misfortune in the same month.

Mass Replacements and Individual Replacements

In accordance with ACL 18-125, any household who has already received an individual replacement in the same benefit month **cannot**, for the same incident that a mass replacement was also approved, receive a mass replacement; there are no exceptions. However, if a household receives a mass replacement before they request an individual replacement (in the same benefit month, for the same incident), CWDs are permitted to issue a subsequent individual replacement, *if requested by the household*, to more accurately reflect the actual loss of food experienced by the household.

Once a mass replacement is approved, there may be a scenario when the *percentage* of a household's monthly benefits that were automatically replaced do not accurately reflect the actual food loss experienced by a household. When this happens, and if requested by the household, the CWD is permitted to issue a replacement amount that, when combined with the mass replacement, reflects the actual amount of the household's loss. For example, if a mass replacement is approved by FNS at 30 percent of each households' monthly benefit allotment, but a household can verify they lost food valued at 60 percent of their monthly allotment, the CWD may issue an additional 30 percent of individual replacement bringing the requesting household's total replacement amount up to 60 percent. Again, for this to happen, a household *must* make the request themselves, CWDs are not permitted to proactively issue individual replacements in such scenarios.

QUALITY CONTROL

No special quality control procedures are required for cases that are subject to the provisions of individual replacements and the mass replacement waivers. Cases should be reviewed using standard review procedures contained in the FNS Handbook 310.

This letter and other CDSS Letters and Notices are available on the internet at:
<http://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/Letters-and-Notices>.

All County Letter No. 21-15
Page Five

For CalFresh program questions, or inquiries related to this guidance, please contact the CalFresh Policy and Employment Bureau at CalFreshPolicy@dss.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Original Document Signed By:

JENNIFER HERNANDEZ
Deputy Director
Family Engagement and Empowerment Division