

April 10, 2024

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ALL COUNTY LETTER NO. 24-25

This letter provides guidance to County Welfare Departments on new policy related to Personal Identification Number changes on Electronic Benefit Transfer cards performed in-person at a county welfare office.



KIM JOHNSON
DIRECTOR

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DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
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GAVIN NEWSOM
GOVERNOR

April 10, 2024

ALL COUNTY LETTER NO. 24-25

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS
ALL CALFRESH PROGRAM SPECIALISTS
ALL CALWORKS PROGRAM SPECIALISTS
ALL COUNTY ELIGIBILITY SUPERVISORS
ALL COUNTY ELECTRONIC BENEFIT TRANSFER
COORDINATORS
ALL COUNTY SPECIAL INVESTIGATIVE UNIT CHIEFS

SUBJECT: NEW POLICY FOR PERSONAL IDENTIFICATION NUMBER
CHANGES ON ELECTRONIC BENEFIT TRANSFER CARDS
PERFORMED IN-PERSON

REFERENCE: [TITLE 7 CODE OF FEDERAL REGULATIONS \(CFR\) SECTION 274.2, 7 CFR SECTION 274.6\(b\), 7 CFR SECTION 274.8\(a\)\(1\); WELFARE AND INSTITUTIONS CODE SECTION 10072; MANUAL OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES \(MPP\) SECTION 16-520, AND MPP SECTION 20-004](#)

The purpose of this All County Letter (ACL) is to provide guidance to the County Welfare Departments (CWDs) on policy related to Personal Identification Number (PIN) changes on Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards performed in-person at a county welfare office.

BACKGROUND

There has been a recent increase of in-person requests to change PINs on California EBT cards occurring at county welfare offices where an individual is using a fraudulently created, cloned, or copied card. These fraudulent cards are generated using information captured via illegal skimming activity by third party individuals not associated with the recipients whose card numbers are being used. In most cases, the compromised card numbers belong to cases outside of the county offices conducting the PIN changes. Once the PINs have been changed on the compromised cards, the

EBT cards are used to conduct the theft of cash and food benefits by unknown third-party individuals.

POLICY UPDATE FOR OUT OF COUNTY PIN CHANGE REQUESTS

To help combat the electronic theft of benefits occurring due to the fraudulent PIN change activity, the California Department of Social Services is implementing new policy. As of the release of this letter, in-person PIN changes at a county welfare office located outside of a cardholder's residence county of benefit issuance will not be allowed. If there is a pending Intercounty Transfer (ICT), counties must issue a new card to the recipient. In the event an ICT recipient still has remaining benefits on their EBT card from their previous county they must be allowed to change the PIN in their new county.

When an individual visits a county welfare office to change the PIN on an EBT card, and the benefits assigned to that card are issued by a different county, the CWD must deny the PIN change and direct the individual to one of the three options stated in this letter to change their PIN.

PERSONAL IDENTIFICATION NUMBER CHANGES

The CWDs are reminded that cardholders can change the PIN on their EBT card by calling the phone number on the back of the card to reach the Automated Response Unit (ARU), via the online ebtEDGE cardholder portal or mobile application, or in person at a designated county welfare office.

For in-person PIN changes at a county welfare office within the county of benefit issuance, the CWD must verify the identity of the individual asking to change the PIN on an EBT card. There have been many instances where the physical EBT card presented by an individual in a county office matches identification and case information provided by the individual. However, the case information embedded in the magnetic stripe on the card does not match the information on the physical card.

It is for this reason the identity information and the physical EBT card presented by the individual must match the case information in CalSAWS prior to any PIN change. The CWD must also check the PIN change receipt to make sure the last 4 digits of the card number match the physical card number.

The cardholder is the only person authorized to change the PIN on their own EBT card.

The CWD must use the following criteria to verify the cardholder's identity:

- 1) A photo ID (e.g., driver's license, State identification card, Permanent Residence card, Passport, Military card); or if the individual does not present a photo ID:

- 2) At a minimum verify two points of personal identifying information from the case:
 - a. Name any other persons and their relationship on the case
 - b. Date of birth
 - c. Last four digits of their social security number
 - d. Address on the case

If the individual is in a different county than their residence county of benefit issuance or if the person is in their own county and does not have proper identification or cannot verify any personally identifying information in their case, the worker must direct the individual to do the following to perform a PIN change:

- 1) Call the ARU phone number at (877) 328-9677,
- 2) Log into the [online ebtEDGE cardholder portal](#), or
- 3) Download and use the ebtEDGE mobile application.

By creating a statewide policy only allowing for in-person PIN changes on EBT cards at a county welfare office within the residence county associated with the case, the State can mitigate the electronic theft occurring due to the fraudulent activity, while still allowing for legitimate PIN changes by recipients pursuant to [MPP Section 16-520](#).

If the CWD suspects fraud at any time, they must make a fraud referral pursuant to [MPP Section 20-004](#).

If you have any questions or need additional guidance regarding the information in this letter, contact the Data Stewardship and Integrity Bureau at PIBPolicyUnit@dss.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Original Document Signed By

RYAN GILLETTE
Chief Data Officer
Research, Automation, and Data Division