

March 16, 2020

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS LETTER

This letter provides guidance on existing policy and flexibilities available to Tribal TANF Administrators, as well as recommendations for serving communities affected by the statewide outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19 or novel coronavirus).



KIM JOHNSON
DIRECTOR

STATE OF CALIFORNIA—HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
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GAVIN NEWSOM
GOVERNOR

March 16, 2020

ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS LETTER

TO: ALL TRIBAL TANF ADMINISTRATORS

FROM: JENNIFER HERNANDEZ, Deputy Director
Family Engagement and Empowerment Division

SUBJECT: GUIDANCE REGARDING THE STATEWIDE OUTBREAK OF
CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 (COVID-19 OR NOVEL
CORONAVIRUS)

The purpose of this letter is to provide guidance on existing policy and flexibilities available to Tribal TANF programs, as well as recommendations for serving communities affected by the statewide outbreak of COVID-19, or novel coronavirus. On March 4, 2020, Governor Newsom proclaimed a [State of Emergency](#) in California in response to the global COVID-19 outbreak and the increase in the number of positive cases across the state.

This information is based on what is currently known about the transmission and severity of COVID-19. The Department will update this guidance as needed and as additional information becomes available.

Planning and Preparedness

It is recommended that Tribal TANF programs begin assessing their organizational needs and make any necessary changes to ensure readiness for any severe pandemic conditions that could arise. It is also recommended that Tribal TANF programs assess their business processes and technology to ensure that systems are capable of functioning under those conditions. Tribal TANF Administrators are advised to work within their programs and with county- and state-level pandemic planning authorities to update their relevant emergency response plans.

Tribal TANF programs should ensure the continuity of and safe access to services during pandemic conditions or periods of social distancing. Should a pandemic be severe or prolonged, there may be an increase in demand for Tribal TANF benefits and services due to income loss related to illness or unemployment resulting from the

pandemic. Consistent with applicable public health guidance, Tribal TANF programs may also wish to or need to operate with reduced or no face-to-face contact in order to minimize disease transmission.

Gatherings and Social Distancing

On March 11, 2020, the Office of the Governor issued the following [guidance](#) on gathering to help slow the spread of COVID-19:

- Gatherings should be postponed or cancelled across the state until at least the end of March.
- The state's updated policy defines a "gathering" as any event or convening that brings together people in a single room or single space at the same time, such as an auditorium, stadium, arena, large conference room, meeting hall, cafeteria, or any other indoor or outdoor space.
- Large gatherings of 250 people or more should be postponed or cancelled.
- Smaller gatherings that do not allow social distancing of six feet per person should be postponed or cancelled.
- Gatherings of individuals who are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19 should be limited to no more than 10 people, while also following social distancing guidelines.

The California Department of Public Health's (CDPH) guidance on social distancing emphasizes the creation of space between individuals who have come together on a one-time or rare basis and who have different travel patterns, such as those coming from multiple countries, states, or counties. For more information on gathering and social distancing, go to the CDPH [website](#).

Mitigation Strategies

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) has shared the following guidance on efforts to mitigate COVID-19 transmission among communities across the country:

- [Implementation of Mitigation Strategies for Communities for Local COVID-19 Transmission](#) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which identifies readily available nonpharmaceutical interventions to help slow the transmission of the virus.
- [Guidance for Preparing Workplaces](#) from the Department of Labor, which provides information to workers and employers on COVID-19.
- [Interim Guidance for Homeless Shelters](#) from the CDC to help plan, prepare and respond to COVID-19.
- [General Preparation Information](#) from the White House Coronavirus Task Force.

Federal Guidance

The Office of Family Assistance issued program instruction [TANF-ACF-PI-2007-08](#), dated November 28, 2007, which describes in detail the flexibilities available in areas covered by a federal or state disaster declaration. Key provisions of this policy instruction were summarized in the Administration for Children and Families' [Emergency and Disaster Waivers and Flexibilities Frequently Asked Questions](#), updated on October 5, 2017.

One key provision states that Tribes may provide “non-recurrent, short term benefits” as outlined in [45 CFR 260.31\(b\)\(1\)](#) and [45 CFR 286.10\(b\)\(1\)](#), to deal with a specific crisis situation or episode of need, not intended to meet recurrent or ongoing needs, and not to extend beyond four months. Tribes may consider offering a wider range of services or benefits to address a crisis than those currently offered in the Tribal TANF plan.

CalFresh

CalFresh benefits will continue to be available to households in need. For additional information and guidance for the CalFresh program, please refer to the [All County Directors Letter](#) released March 13, 2020, entitled: California Work Opportunity And Responsibility To Kids (CalWORKs), CalFresh, Housing And Homelessness Programs, And Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA)/Refugee Support Services (RSS): Guidance Regarding The Statewide Outbreak Of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (Covid-19 Or Novel Coronavirus).

Homeless Service Providers

Counties providing homeless services should reference the guidance released by the [Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency \(BCSH\)](#) and the [National Alliance to End Homelessness \(NAEH\)](#) on steps that should be taken to address the transmission of COVID-19.

Additional Sources of Information

For updated information on COVID-19, please visit the [CDPH website](#), where the CDPH continues to post [updated guidance](#).

If you have any questions or need additional guidance regarding the information in this letter, the Tribal TANF Unit of the CalWORKs and Family Resilience Branch at (916) 654-1322. For questions pertaining to the policy instruction or flexibilities, please reach out to your respective ACF Region IX Program Specialist.

All County Welfare Directors Letter
Page Four

Sincerely,

Original Document Signed By:

JENNIFER HERNANDEZ, Deputy Director
Family Engagement and Empowerment Division