

September 20, 2022

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS LETTER

The purpose of this All County Welfare Directors Letter (ACWDL) is to provide County Welfare Departments (CWDs) with guidance regarding the Racial Equity Implicit Bias (REIB) Initiative focus group payments that will be distributed to California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) and CalFresh recipients who participate in the REIB focus groups pursuant to Assembly Bill (AB) 135 (Chapter 85, Statutes of 2021).



KIM JOHNSON
DIRECTOR

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DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
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GAVIN NEWSOM
GOVERNOR

September 20, 2022

ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS LETTER

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS

FROM: JENNIFER HERNANDEZ
FAMILY ENGAGEMENT AND EMPOWERMENT DIVISION

SUBJECT: CALWORKS AND CALFRESH TREATMENT OF THE RACIAL
EQUITY IMPLICIT BIAS INITIATIVE FOCUS GROUP PAYMENTS

REFERENCE: [ASSEMBLY BILL \(AB 135 \(CHAPTER 85, STATUTES OF 2021\);
MANUAL OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES \(MPP\) 42-209.2
MPP 44-111.3\(l\), and MPP 63-502.2\(j\); ALL COUNTY WELFARE
DIRECTORS LETTER, DATED JUNE 8, 2022; ALL COUNTY
INFORMATION NOTICE \(ACIN\) I-12-19; FOOD AND NUTRITION
SERVICE REVISED TREATMENT OF GIFT CARDS
MEMORANDUM](#)

The purpose of this All County Welfare Directors Letter (ACWDL) is to provide County Welfare Departments (CWDs) with guidance regarding the Racial Equity and Implicit Bias (REIB) Initiative focus group payments that will be distributed to California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) and CalFresh recipients for their participation in the REIB focus groups. These payments are intended to compensate individuals for their participation and contributions to the REIB initiative. The focus groups will provide the unique client perspective and equity challenges CalWORKs and/or CalFresh clients may experience while accessing CalWORKs and/or CalFresh services.

Pursuant to [Assembly Bill 135, Section 44 \(Chapter 85, Statutes of 2021\)](#), the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) remains committed to the Governor's vision of a "California for All." The CDSS is working with community partners to develop the REIB county training framework, which will promote a

trauma-informed, anti-racist, anti-stigma delivery of the CalWORKs and CalFresh programs. This framework builds upon the principles of CalWORKs 2.0 and the CalWORKs Outcomes and Accountability Review (Cal-OAR) to promote positive outcomes for child and family health and well-being.

To maximize the impact of the state investment, CDSS will convene a series of workgroups, surveys, interviews, focus groups, and webinars to help inform this framework and plan. The information obtained during these engagement opportunities will help inform the training, assess current trainings utilized by counties, and provide resources and technical assistance for county CalWORKs and CalFresh staff to expand their existing REIB efforts.

PARENT VOICES

A Community Advisory Committee (CAC) will convene to ensure that the REIB Initiative is responsive to the needs and challenges expressed by CalWORKs and CalFresh clients. Our community partner, Parent Voices (PV) is working with Anavo Solutions, our consulting partner, to convene a CAC (PV-CAC) comprised of nine community members. The community members will be engaged in this work between August 1, 2022 through October 15, 2022. They will each receive a one-time \$1000 stipend. It will be dispersed in a one-time lump-sum payment. The PV-CAC duties include:

- Attending four virtual 90-minute planning meetings
- Providing feedback for design of outreach flyer and registration link
- Providing recommendations on focus group questions and design of session
- Conducting outreach for focus groups, and
- Providing firsthand experiences and recommendations related to CalWORKs and CalFresh equitable access.

PV-CAC will support the design of and outreach to the focus groups, which will consist of former and current CalWORKs and CalFresh recipients. Focus group participants will receive a \$75 Visa gift card to compensate for out-of-pocket expenses incurred as a result of their participation.

CALWORKS INCOME EXEMPTION

Per Manual of Policies and Procedures (MPP) Sections [44-101\(I\)](#) and [44-111.44](#), the \$1,000 stipend received by participants in the PV-CAC shall be considered a one-time lump sum payment and shall not be considered income for the purposes of determining eligibility and/or grant amount for the CalWORKs program.

Nonrecurring lump sum payments shall be treated as property in the month of receipt and any subsequent months thereafter per [MPP 42-209.2](#). The \$75 gift card is exempt per [MPP 44-111.3\(i\)](#).

CALFRESH INCOME EXCLUSION

Per [MPP 63-502.2\(j\)](#) and [ACIN I-12-19](#), money received in the form of a nonrecurring lump-sum payment, such as the PV Focus Group \$75 Visa gift card and PV-CAC \$1,000 stipend, must be excluded from consideration as income. However, per the [Food and Nutrition Service Revised Treatment of Gift Cards Memorandum](#) and [MPP 63-501.11](#), the \$75 Visa gift card and \$1,000 stipend must be considered a resource in the month received when determining CalFresh eligibility for those households subject to a resource test. Please note most CalFresh households are conferred Categorically Eligible or Modified Categorically Eligible and are not subject to the resource test. For more information on Categorical Eligibility or Modified Categorical Eligibility see [ACL No. 14-56](#).

MEDI-CAL TREATMENT

Regarding Medi-Cal, the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) policy is the PV Focus Group \$75 Visa gift card is not countable as income for Modified Adjusted Gross Income (MAGI) Medi-Cal and Non-MAGI Medi-Cal.

For treatment of the \$1,000 stipend under MAGI Medi-Cal, treatment will depend if the stipend is considered federally taxable income. MAGI Medi-Cal follows IRS rules of taxable income as generally counting towards the Medi-Cal determination. This stipend appears to fall into the taxable income criteria, and would be counted in the month received as a one-time lump sum payment (DHCS [ACWDL 21-04](#)).

For Non-MAGI Medi-Cal, the payment would be counted as income in the month of receipt and as property in the month following the month of receipt.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Please visit the [CalWORKs and CalFresh REIB Statewide Initiative Website](#) for more information. If you have questions or need additional guidance regarding the information in this letter, please contact REIBInitiative@dss.ca.gov.