

December 19, 2024

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS LETTER

The purpose of this errata is to provide County Welfare Departments with updated information regarding efforts to secure Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards. First, this letter provides the revised go-live date for local over-the-counter card printing services and mass card replacement of magnetic-stripe EBT cards with Chip/Europay, Mastercard, and Visa (EMV) and Tap (Chip EMV/Tap) enabled EBT cards. Go-live will be in early 2025. Second, this letter provides the revised timeframe for the deactivation of the old magnetic-stripe EBT cards. Cardholders will have approximately 180 days after issuance to activate the Chip EMV/Tap replacement card.

December 19, 2024

ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS LETTER

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS

FROM: RYAN GILLETTE, DEPUTY DIRECTOR
RESEARCH, AUTOMATION, AND DATA DIVISION

SUBJECT: ERRATA TO EBT COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE EQUIPMENT
REPLACEMENT AND MASS EBT CARD REPLACEMENT WITH
CHIP EMV/TAP PAY EBT

REFERENCE: [ASSEMBLY BILL 120](#); [ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS
LETTER \(ACWDL\) DATED JUNE 6, 2022](#); [ACWDL 06-24-24](#)

The purpose of this errata is to provide updates to the All County Welfare Directors Letter (ACWDL) published on June 6, 2022, on the activities related to two Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) efforts, the replacement of County Administrative Equipment and mass replacement of all current EBT cards, with Chip/Europay, Mastercard, and Visa (EMV) and Tap (Chip EMV/Tap) EBT cards. EBT cardholders who receive benefits through California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids, CalFresh, inclusive of any cash benefit program such as General Assistance or General Relief, Refugee Cash Assistance, Trafficking and Crime Victim Assistance Program, Entrant Cash Assistance, Cash Assistance Program for Immigrants, and Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, will receive a replacement card by mail commencing early 2025. EBT cardholders will continue to have access to their benefits on their current EBT card until they receive and activate their new Chip EMV/Tap EBT card.

Note: Pandemic EBT (P-EBT), SUN Bucks, and Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) EBT cards are excluded from this work effort.

BACKGROUND

The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) has identified the need to upgrade conventional magnetic stripe-only EBT cards with Chip EMV/Tap EBT cards to

reduce electronic theft of EBT benefits and safeguard eligible cardholder benefits. The first effort, replacement of EBT County Administrative Equipment was successfully completed in Summer 2024. The second effort, mass replacement of all current EBT cards with Chip EMV/Tap EBT cards is anticipated to begin early 2025.

RETAILER AND FINANCIAL INSTITUTION READINESS

CDSS, in partnership with the Office of Technology and Solutions Integration (OTSI) and the EBT processor, Fidelity Information Services (FIS), completed the infrastructure needed to support mass card replacement of Chip EMV/Tap enabled EBT cards on June 20, 2024. To ensure Chip/Tap cards function, the retailer and financial institution community must update the code supporting their ATMs and point-of-sale terminals. This code is developed by Third-Party Processors (TPPs), which are the entities that process transactions on behalf of merchants, ATMs, and any other point of sale provider. This process of developing and deploying code updates is taking longer than originally planned, resulting in the need to adjust the go-live date for local over-the-counter card printing services and mass card replacement of EBT cards. Go-live will begin early 2025.

COUNTY IMPACT

Counties are to continue to order the current magnetic stripe-only cardstock, printer ribbons and cleaning kits, ensuring that your county offices remain fully stocked to support your county needs until deployment. We also want to remind you to keep the new Chip EMV/Tap cardstock and printers that were tested in June in the boxes and locked away.

Prior to card mass mailing, counties will be provided with a list of unhoused cardholders who have their mailing address listed as the CWD. This list is intended to support triage for cardholders experiencing housing insecurity. Counties are advised to frequently check their mail services, if used, and to not dispose of mail during the card replacement effort to avoid erroneously discarding replacement cards.

During either the Semi-Annual Report or Recertification/Redetermination interviews, county eligibility workers are advised to urge cardholders to promptly activate their replacement EBT card. A successful transaction using the new card will activate it and automatically deactivate the old card. Cardholders will have approximately 180 days after issuance to activate the replacement card before the magnetic stripe-only card becomes unusable. If a cardholder did not receive their new card or is otherwise in need of a new card replacement, counties are advised to follow the established over-the-counter card replacement process.

Cardholders who have inactive benefit cases and did not receive a replacement card can request a Chip EMV/Tap card through EBT Customer Service or their county office. Remaining benefits will be expunged in accordance with established program rules.

Counties are advised to refer cardholders to the EBT Customer Service Center when receiving calls regarding changes or concerns with their EBT card. The EBT Customer Service Representatives are prepared for this change and anticipate an increase in customer questions regarding the new Chip EMV/Tap EBT card.

CARDHOLDER OUTREACH

CDSS will publish fliers for CWDs and community-based organizations to display in their offices that provides instructions for how to activate and use the new Chip EMV/Tap card. In addition, CDSS will work with FIS to provide retailers with labels to place at their POS terminals to encourage EBT cardholders to use the new security features.

Informational banners on [BenefitsCal](#) and [ebtEDGE](#) will soon be displayed to prepare cardholders of the change.

Following go-live, CDSS will monitor card activation data and conduct targeted cardholder outreach. Identified cardholders who have not yet activated their new cards will be sent a text message to encourage them to do so.

STATE MONITORING

Promptly following go-live, CDSS will monitor card activation data and conduct outreach to clients accordingly. In addition, CDSS and OTSI will monitor replacement card activation rates and returned undeliverable cards frequently to determine if additional outreach or action is needed.

County staff can view updated card information in the “Card Details” screen on their [ebtEDGE WebADMIN](#) account. Host-to-host messaging will be updated with our California Statewide Automated Welfare System partners shortly following Chip EMV/Tap card go-live.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

If you have any questions or need additional guidance regarding the information in this letter, contact the CDSS EBT Modernization and Automation Support Unit by email at DAI@dss.ca.gov.