



CDSS

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DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

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EDMUND G. BROWN JR.
GOVERNOR

September 19, 2013

ALL COUNTY LETTER 13-75

REASON FOR THIS TRANSMITTAL

- State Law Change
- Federal Law or Regulation Change
- Court Order
- Clarification Requested by One or More Counties
- Initiated by CDSS

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

SUBJECT: REVISED CALFRESH APPLICATION FORM

REFERENCE: MANUAL OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES SECTION 63-301.51, 7 CODES OF FEDERAL REGULATIONS 273.2(c) (1) AND 273.2(i) (2), ASSEMBLY BILL 1359 (CHAPTER 468, STATUTES OF 2012, DFA 285-A1 AND DFA 285-A2 (APPLICATION FOR CALFRESH AND STATEMENT OF FACTS), DFA 285-A3 QR (CALFRESH BENEFITS RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES), FS 22 QR (APPLYING FOR FOOD STAMP BENEFITS), TEMP 2215 (ELECTRONIC BENEFIT TRANSFER (EBT) IMPORTANT INFORMATION, FS 26 (FOOD STAMP PROGRAM QUALIFYING DRUG FELON ADDENDUM), DFA 285-C (FOOD STAMP SUPPLEMENTAL APPLICATION FOR SPECIAL MEDICAL DEDUCTIONS), AND ALL COUNTY LETTERS 02-06, 12-74, AND 13-61

The purpose of this letter is to transmit the revised CalFresh application form and the implementing instructions to county welfare departments (CWDs). Also included in this transmittal is a list of the forms that have been made obsolete due to the revision of the CalFresh application form.

BACKGROUND

CalFresh began the process of revising its application forms in January 2013 with the guidance of a workgroup consisting of key stakeholders (counties, consortia

representatives, and advocates). In developing the new application, the workgroup reviewed several other state applications for ideas. The workgroup was instructed to select the top three versions from state applications for each section of the application (income, program rules, etc.). Each item selected from each section of the application was tallied and the item with the highest number of votes was used for the new CalFresh application.

The CalFresh application was used as the starting point when work began on the combined multi-program form (SAWS 2 Plus) and is being released at the same time as it aligns with the changes that will be made in the programming of the SAWS 2 Plus application. It has also replaced a number of forms with the goal of reducing the application process to a single signature. In addition to reducing the number of required signatures, it was also developed to be a more user friendly application for applicants and County Welfare Department's (CWDs).

CHANGES MADE TO THE CALFRESH APPLICATION

The goal of the application workgroup was to have a shorter application than the current one and to simplify the questions. The main focus was to include only those questions that are federally required to be on the CalFresh application. The questions were also organized and placed under specific categories for an easier flow of information. The information included in the "Coversheet" and "Program Rules and Penalties" pages was also simplified and modified to meet federal requirements. This information was all moved to the beginning of the application to allow the applicant to tear off those pages and keep it for their records when submitting the application to the county office.

The "County Use Section" was deleted from the application with the exception of the Expedited Services (ES) section. This section was kept on the application for counties to document screening the application for ES entitlement. The CWDs are not required to use the screening tool, but must still document that the application was screened for ES entitlement for Quality Control (QC) and Management Evaluation purposes.

There are a few new elements that have been added to the CalFresh application, such as the question where it asks the applicant if they are interested in applying for Medi-Cal. If the applicant indicates that they are interested in applying for Medi-Cal, the information captured on the CalFresh application will be shared to assist in the completion of an eligibility determination for Medi-Cal. This was added in response to passage of AB X1 1(Chapter 3, Statutes of 2013) which required Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) to apply for a waiver that would make CalFresh recipients categorically eligible to Medi-Cal if they are not elderly or disabled.

Another new element that has been added to the CalFresh application asks the applicant if they wish to get notices about their case by e-mail. This new feature is now possible due to a waiver approved by United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food and Nutrition Service (FNS). This waiver allows households to receive an electronic notification, or e-notification, alert via e-mail of official correspondence via their secure personal online account in the CWD's automated system. CalFresh and CalWORKs clients may opt in or opt out of receiving e-notifications and receive traditional paper correspondence at any time. For more information on enrolling an applicant in e-notification, see All County Letter (ACL) 13-61.

In addition, the content of the CalFresh Supplemental Application for Special Medical Deductions (DFA 285-C) and the CalFresh Program Qualifying Drug Felon Addendum (FS 26) forms were added into the new application to reduce the number of separate required forms used at intake. These forms will be modified for CWDs to use when adding a person to an existing case.

Because the new application form was designed to help with outreach activities, we encourage all CWDs to ensure that the new applications are readily available in all local offices and to provide copies to community-based organizations (CBOs).

SIGNATURE PAGE

The current DFA 285 CalFresh application form is divided into three separate parts and requires a signature and date in all three parts of the application in order for it to be considered complete when submitted to the CWD. The signature pages are also located at the end of each section of the application. The revised CalFresh application will only require one signature for the entire application including any additional information that may be added or changed to the application.

The CWDs will no longer be required to mail the application and/or required forms to the household for signature after conducting a telephone interview. This alleviates the issue of mailing the application forms to the household when a telephone interview was conducted and having to wait for the household to return the application forms in order to make their eligibility determination and issue benefits timely. The signature page is located on the first page of the application to capture the application filing date, applicant's name, address, and signature for households who wish to file an incomplete application in accordance with 7 CFR 273.2(c)(1).

The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) found that the one signature page application is more likely to increase CalFresh participation due to the ease of completion for applicants. This application was developed to be shorter (10 pages) and

simpler than the current application. The CWDs are reminded that when the revised application is released to the public that they encourage the applicants to complete as much as possible before filing it with the county for faster determination and benefit issuance. The more complete the application is when submitted to the county the faster the CWD can determine entitlement for expedited service processing, eligibility, and benefit levels.

EXPEDITED SERVICE

The current DFA 285-A1 was specifically developed to capture the application date and request for emergency CalFresh benefits. Questions on this application form were identified with a check mark in front of the question and organized and placed under specific categories. CWDs were only required to screen the application if the applicant requested ES by answering the identifiable questions pertaining to ES. If the applicant did not attempt to answer these questions, the CWD was not required to screen the application.

With the enactment of state legislation, Assembly Bill 1359 (Chapter 468, Statutes of 2012), which was implemented on January 1, 2013, CWDs are required to screen all CalFresh applications to determine if applicants meet the criteria for (ES) as defined in 7 CFR 273.2(i) (2) and Manual of Policies and Procedures (MPP) Section 63-301.51. With the new CalFresh application it is no longer necessary to identify such questions on the application because all applications must be screened for ES.

As previously stated, the screening for ES may be documented using the screening tool in the new CF 285 or through a county developed procedure for documentation at the time the application is screened. The county must process the application under the ES timeframe (3 days following the day the application was filed with the county) if:

- 1) The applicant checked the "Yes" box for any of the ES criteria questions under Question 1 of the CF 285; or
- 2) The applicant provided sufficient information in answering the questions relevant to making a determination of ES entitlement in the CF 285.
- 3) If the above criteria are not met then the application is to be processed under the normal processing timeframe (30 days from the date the application was filed).

AVAILABILITY OF THE REVISED CALFRESH APPLICATION FORM

Counties are strongly encouraged to have the [CalFresh only application \(CF 285\)](#) in place by October 1, 2013 and must have it in place no later than January 1, 2014. It is a "No Substitute Permitted" form. The CF 285 will replace the DFA 285-A1, DFA- A2 and DFA 285-A3 QR, FS 22 QR and TEMP 2215 forms. Please destroy any remaining FS 22 QR and TEMP 2215 forms by October 1, 2013 as it refers to quarterly reporting and/or is no longer needed. Please destroy any remaining supplies of previous versions of the DFA 285-A1, A2 and A3 QR by no later than January 1, 2014.

Camera Ready Copies and Translations

For camera-ready copies in English, contact the Forms Management Unit at fmudss@dss.ca.gov. If your office has internet access you may obtain this form from the CDSS webpage at: http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/cdssweb/FormsandPu_271.htm. When all translations are completed per MPP section 21-115.2, including Spanish form, they are posted on an on-going basis on our web site. Copies of the translated forms can be obtained at: http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/cdssweb/FormsandPu_274.htm.

For questions on translated materials, please contact Language Services at (916) 651-8876. Until translations are available, recipients who have elected to receive materials in languages other than English should be sent the English version of the form or notice along with the [GEN 1365-Notice of Language Services](#) and a local contact number.

CWDs shall ensure that effective bilingual services are provided. This requirement may be met through utilization of paid interpreters, qualified bilingual employees, and qualified employees of other agencies or community resources. These services shall be provided free of charge to the applicant/recipient.

In the event that CDSS does not provide translations of a form, it is the county's responsibility to provide the translation if an applicant or recipient requests it. More information regarding translations can be found in MPP Section 21-115.

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This ACL and other CDSS Letters and Notices are available on the internet at:
<http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/lettersnotices/default.htm>.

If you have any questions regarding this ACL, please contact the CalFresh Policy Bureau at (916) 654-1896.

Sincerely,

Original Document Signed By:

TODD R. BLAND
Deputy Director
Welfare to Work Division