

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
744 P Street, Sacramento, CA 95814



March 7, 2000

ALL-COUNTY LETTER NO. 00-19

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS
FOOD STAMP COORDINATORS

REASON FOR THIS TRANSMITTAL

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

SUBJECT: VERIFICATION OF HOUSEHOLD SHELTER COSTS AND UTILITY EXPENSES; AMENDS MPP 63-300.5, 63-504.3 And 63-505.4

REFERENCE: CODE OF FEDERAL REGULATIONS SECTION 273.2 (f) (1) (iii) AND SECTION 273.2 (f) (3) (i)

This letter is to provide implementation instructions to county welfare departments (CWD) on the amended Food Stamp regulations for verifying shelter costs. The revisions allow counties some flexibility in choosing whether or not to verify shelter costs and are effective January 1, 2000. These regulations were filed on an emergency basis and implement a state option provided in federal regulations. A complete copy of the regulations is attached.

Federal regulations allow states the option of mandating verification of any factors that affect household eligibility and benefit levels for which verification is not otherwise federally mandated. The option can be chosen on a statewide or project area basis, but cannot be imposed on a selective case-by-case basis. Until now, California did not exercise this federal option. However, the California Department of Social Services, in an effort to reduce the potential for error and enhance the speed with which counties process food stamp applications, monthly reports, and recertifications, has chosen to permit counties flexibility in the verification of certain shelter costs.

SHELTER COST VERIFICATION

Current Food Stamp Program regulations require the CWDs to verify shelter costs at application, when a change in residence by the household occurs, at recertification, and when the household wishes to claim expenses in excess of the Standard Utility Allowance (SUA). Under the revised regulations, routine verification of all shelter costs will no longer be required. However, counties may elect to continue a county policy of requiring verification of shelter costs.

Counties that choose the option of not verifying all shelter costs must continue to verify utility expenses when the household wishes to claim its actual utility expense in excess of the SUA, and to verify questionable items. Additionally, counties participating in the Eligibility Simplification Project (ESP) must continue to verify shelter expenses at re-certification.

Please provide our Department with a statement of your county's policy regarding verification of shelter costs no later than March 31,2000. The information may be sent by FAX to Ms. Cindy MacDonald at (916) 657-1806, or by e-mail to Cindy.MacDonald@dss.ca.gov

FORMS/NOTICES OF ACTION (NOAs)

We intend to revise the CW 7/SAWS 7 to change the language regarding proof of shelter costs. Until the CW 7/SAWS 7 is revised counties have discretion on how they handle CW 7/SAWS 7s received after the effective date of these regulations that do not include verification of shelter costs. As the revised form will not strictly require proof of shelter costs, counties electing to continue requiring verification of these costs will need to inform applicants/recipients of the county requirement. There will be no revisions to current NOAs as a result of this regulatory change.

If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact Ms. Cindy MacDonald of the Food Stamp Bureau at (916) 654-1898.

Sincerely,

*Original document signed
By Bruce Wagstaff on 3/7/00*

BRUCE WAGSTAFF
Deputy Director
Welfare to Work Division