

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

744 P Street, Sacramento, California 95814



December 9, 2002

TO: COUNTY WELFARE DEPARTMENT DIRECTORS
COUNTY WELFARE-TO-WORK COORDINATORS
COUNTY REFUGEE COORDINATORS

SUBJECT: SERVICES TO REFUGEE CALIFORNIA WORK OPPORTUNITY AND
RESPONSIBILITY TO KIDS (CalWORKs) RECIPIENTS

The purpose of this letter is to provide clarification on the provision of welfare-to-work (WTW) and supportive services to refugee CalWORKs clients.

Recently, advocates contacted the California Department of Social Services to express concerns that refugee CalWORKs clients are being referred directly to services funded by the Refugee Employment Social Services (RESS) or Targeted Assistance (TA) Programs on the basis of their status as a refugee, rather than being routed through the regular CalWORKs WTW program flow. Advocates are concerned that, given the smaller scope and different program rules and goals of the refugee programs, these recipients may not receive the same range and/or duration of service as those available to other CalWORKs WTW participants.

To ensure that a refugee CalWORKs recipient receives WTW and supportive services equivalent to those received by non-refugee CalWORKs WTW participants, counties must provide him/her with:

- An assessment that is as comprehensive as the one provided to other CalWORKs clients.
- Access to the full range of employment and training opportunities, including self-initiated programs (SIPs), available under the CalWORKs WTW program in the county, if the refugee CalWORKs recipient's individualized assessment indicates that participation in those programs is appropriate and there are no comparable programs funded under the county's RESS or TA program.
- Access to supportive services comparable to those offered to other CalWORKs WTW recipients.

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- Additional time in educational programs beyond the 12-month limitation on participation in educational activities under the RESS- and TA-funded programs, if the individualized assessment of the participant's educational needs indicates that more months of participation are warranted. CalWORKs WTW program requirements allow for up to 18 or 24 months of participation in educational activities, depending on the results of the assessment.

Refugee-impacted counties must review their CalWORKs, RESS, and TA program policies to ensure that refugee CalWORKs recipients who are participating in refugee programs are not being denied access to WTW and supportive services that they would otherwise receive under the CalWORKs WTW program. If a county finds that its policies limit participation and/or supportive services for refugee CalWORKs recipients in a manner inconsistent with State CalWORKs statutes, regulations, and policies, it must immediately amend the policy to conform to State requirements.

If your county has any questions regarding this letter, please contact May Otow, Employment Bureau, at (916) 654-1394 or may.otow@dss.ca.gov.

Sincerely

CHARR LEE METSKER, Chief
Employment and Eligibility Branch