

# EXPEDITED SERVICE ENTITLEMENT AND APPLICATION PROCESSING FOR CALFRESH

## MAY 19, 2016 WEBINAR QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

**Question 1:** In reference to example 3, should the CWD deny the ES until the client makes contact with the CWD two weeks later?

**Answer 1:** There is no such thing as denying ES in the CalFresh Program. ES is an entitlement to the CalFresh Program and not a separate program. In example 3, the message we are trying to convey is that when the county receives an application that has been screened ES entitled, the county schedule an interview appointment within the 3 day ES timeframe and document in the case file. The appointment can be scheduled verbally, left on a voicemail, or by mailing an appointment letter. If the household misses the scheduled interview appointment, then the county would send the NOMI to the household. Once the NOMI is sent to the household, it is the household's responsibility to contact the county to reschedule a second interview. Counties should be making every attempt possible to schedule the initial interview appointment within the 3-day timeframe when the application is screened ES entitled.

**Question 2:** Can counties choose not to use a script?

**Answer 2:** CDSS has provided acceptable scripts for use in scheduling appointments more efficiently and to promote successful ES timeliness. Counties are not required to use these scripts, however, these scripts have been reviewed and approved by our legal counsel and are appropriate to ensure applicant's right to privacy and confidentiality.

**Question 3:** On slide 30, is it ALL adults or ANY adult household member is elderly/disabled?

**Answer 3:** Households consisting of ALL adult members who are elderly/disabled shall be given the maximum certification allowable which is twenty-four month certification period.

**Question 4:** So, if the agency is supposed to document the ES screening, results, and reasons in case narration, are they also supposed to document the client's request for an agency conference, the scheduled date (to ensure its within two days of the request) and the results of the conference (similar to the documentation requirements for the original screening process)?

**Answer 4:** Yes, counties are instructed to document in the case file the client's request for an agency conference, including the scheduled date and the results of the conference.

**Question 5:** Can counties route applications for normal processing when the applicant provides insufficient information to determine ES?

**Answer 5:** Yes, counties can route any application for normal processing that does not contain sufficient information for the eligibility worker (EW) to determine ES entitlement. Once the applicant shows for their interview appointment and provides enough information for the EW to

determine ES entitlement, the household is considered ES entitled. The county will make a late determination of ES and process the application under ES. If the household is found non-entitled for ES, then the EW will continue to process the application under normal processing.

**Question 6:** Was the statement of “group interviews are prohibited for interviews” related to expedited interviews only?

**Answer 6:** No, group interviews are prohibited whether the household is entitled for ES or normal processing.

**Question 7:** All County Letter (ACL) Section V Clarification: “ES at the time household files an application.” Is it okay to inform the client of ES but postpone screening until the client is seen by EW at the same day/next day appointment?

**Answer 7:** No, **all** applications must be screened for ES as they are filed with the county office. Applicants shall be orally informed of ES processing at the time they contact the office and request assistance. CWDs must orally inform at first contact, either verbally over the phone or face-to-face.

**Question 8:** Is there a particular form to be used for agency conference appointments?

**Answer 8:** No, there is no particular form. Counties are instructed to document in the case file the date and time of the scheduled appointment and the outcome of the agency conference.

**Question 9:** If the greeter gives out a half sheet flier to clients entering the lobby, and the half sheet contains the ES criteria and how to apply, does this constitute orally informing clients for ES?

**Answer 9:** No. Applicants shall be orally informed of ES processing at the time they contact the office and request assistance, when they file their application with the county office, or during their interview. CWDs must orally inform at first contact, either verbally over the phone or face-to-face.

**Question 10:** Please clarify if a second interview appointment is required prior to denying the application? Can the application be denied prior to the 30<sup>th</sup> day for missed interview?

**Answer 10:** If a household misses the initial scheduled interview appointment, the county must send a NOMI to the household. The NOMI informs the household that they are responsible to contact the county to schedule a second interview if they wish to participate in the program. The county must enter a date on the NOMI for when the household has to reschedule. This date is the 30<sup>th</sup> day from the date of application. If the household fails to contact the county by that date, then the county can deny the application. The household can reschedule as many times possible within the 30 days, but once the 30 days have lapsed, the county can deny the application. The county cannot deny an application prior to the 30<sup>th</sup> day for a missed interview.

**Question 11:** If the household did not request an agency conference, is there a requirement to document in the case comments?

**Answer 11:** There is no requirement, but it is beneficial for the county to document in the case file that the household did not request an agency conference if they were found non-entitled for ES.

**Question 12:** For sponsored non-citizens, do we include the sponsor's income in the total monthly income calculation for ES screening?

**Answer 12:** Yes, if the information is provided on the application by the applicant household.

**Question 13:** For ES determination, do we use the prorated income or the gross income for an opt-out individual?

**Answer 13:** For ES determination, you would use the gross income for an opt-out individual.

**Question 14:** Participant applies on 4/26/16 and an ES interview is scheduled for 4/28/16. The participant failed to keep his scheduled interview appointment. Can the ES be denied (and case forwarded for regular processing) on 4/28/16 or do we have to wait the 3<sup>rd</sup> day 4/29/16 to deny ES?

**Answer 14:** There is no such thing as denying ES in the CalFresh Program. ES is an entitlement to the CalFresh Program and not a separate program. The NOMI would be sent 4/28/16 and, we encourage the counties to try and meet the 7-day federal ES processing timeframe.

**Question 15:** Confirming, we are not submitting any reports for July, August and September?

**Answer 15:** Counties are instructed to submit their data for July, August and September 2016 on the new CF 296 reporting form due October 20, 2016. If the consortium does not have the form completely programmed into the system, the counties are to provide whatever data they have available for these months. Please list in the "General Comment" section the reason for incomplete data. The counties can submit revisions once the CF 296 is fully programmed.

**Question 16:** Can you please talk a bit more regarding the three day versus seven days?

**Answer 16:** The 3-day ES timeframe is what California is mandated to meet and the 7-day ES timeframe is what QC staff is required to collect for USDA reporting. This data is what FNS uses to measure ES compliance. CDSS encourages counties to try and meet the 7-day ES timeframe when the 3-day timeframe has lapsed.

**Question 17:** Can you repeat your statement on "bench mark wait time?"

**Answer 17:** The bench mark wait time was from a recommendation/best practice the workgroup established. The slide stated that it is recommended to establish a bench mark wait of 20 minute or less when people come into the office for an appointment.

**Question 18:** Slide 11 – Screened ES Non-entitled – is there a follow up phone call from the county to the household to screen for ES? Or is it just routed for normal processing?

**Answer 18:** When the application is filed with the county, the county will screen the application for ES. If the application does not have enough information to have the household be screened ES entitled, the application is routed for normal processing with no follow up phone call.

**Question 19:** How is MEDS used to verify identity?

**Answer 19:** When information about a brand new applicant (name, date of birth, SSN, etc.) is entered into the MEDS environment, a sub-system of MEDS called the Statewide Client Index (SCI) assigns a unique Client Index Number (CIN). The CIN belongs to only that person indefinitely. It is used in the MEDS environment to tie clients into other MEDS sub-systems such as the Statewide Fingerprint Imaging System (SFIS) or the Income and Eligibility Verification System (IEVS). These and other sub-systems actually do the work using the CIN to cross check identity, verify income, or to assist county workers in determining eligibility for programs and services.

The CIN ties the client into all programs indefinitely through time, regardless of county of residence. As such it is very useful as a statewide client identity tracking tool.

**Question 20:** If a customer receives ES with postponed verifications, and they do not follow through and are denied, then they re-apply two years later, do they still need to provide the same postponed verifications?

**Answer 20:** No. If the customer reapplies two years later and is found ES entitled, the county would inform the household that because they failed to provide the postponed verification the last time when they were ES entitled that they must have their application processed through normal processing before they can be processed again under ES. The county would document in the case file the reason the application was processed under normal processing for QC purposes.

**Question 21:** Does the online pop-up mentioned to inform customers about ES count as the oral contact requirement?

**Answer 21:** No, the online pop-up window informing the customers about ES is one method of informing the customer of ES. However, CWDs must orally inform at first contact, either verbally over the phone or face-to-face.

**Question 22:** Slide #26, it said that a missed interview went to normal processing. Since California has a waiver to discontinue if the interview is missed, are we required to schedule a second interview? Or is this just when the client reaches out to schedule again?

**Answer 22:** To clarify, California does not have a waiver to discontinue/deny an application when an interview is missed. California had a waiver which expired on April 30, 2016 (an extension has been requested) that if the household fails to provide the needed verification and

the county assisted the household in getting the missing verification, the county can deny the application on the 30<sup>th</sup> day following the date of application.

The county cannot deny the application just because the household missed their initial scheduled interview. The county must send a NOMI when the household missed their scheduled interview and inform them that they are now responsible to contact the county to reschedule another interview appointment within the 30 day timeframe if they are still interested in participating in the CalFresh program. At this point, the application can be forwarded for normal processing. Counties must hold the application until the 30<sup>th</sup> day before denying the household for a missed interview.

**Question 23:** When we are determining income for ES do we use actual or factored income?

**Answer 23:** When counties are determining income for ES, the county must use actual income for the month of application and factored income for the remaining months of the certification period.

**Question 24:** To confirm, we are submitting the DFA 296 and DFA 296X in July 2016 for the prior month of June (DFA 296) and for April – June (DFA 296X). The next time we are to report ES standards would be in October 2016 for the months of July, August, and September and use the CF 296 for each month. Thereafter, we're reporting monthly. Please confirm.

**Answer 24:** That is correct.

**Question 25:** Slide 11 Screened ES Non-Entitled: Can insufficient information to determine ES be considered "minimum information?" If the application contains name, address, and signature but does not provide sufficient information for ES, can the county route the application for normal processing?

**Answer 25:** Yes, an application with just the minimum required information (name, address, and signature) does not contain sufficient information to make an ES entitlement determination and can be routed for normal processing.

**Question 26:** Slide 33 ES Timeliness Standards: It is being understood that mailing time for EBT is not counted for the ES timeline. If not, please specify that the exclusion for mailing time is when an application is mailed for signature after interview in accordance with 7 CFR 273.2(i)(3(iii)).

**Answer 26:** Slide 33 ES Timeliness Standards: Under both ES and normal processing, the mail time counts when issuing the EBT card and PIN number to the household (MPP Section 63-301.2 and .531). The only time the mail time does not count is when the application must be sent to the household for signature and returned back to the county office (MPP Section 63-301.532) or when the county's business process is to have their clients pick up their EBT cards and PIN numbers in the office and the client calls to inform they can't make it in to the office and would prefer to have their EBT card and PIN number mailed instead.