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GOVERNOR

December 18, 2013

ALL COUNTY LETTER (ACL) NO. 13-103

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS
ALL CALFRESH PROGRAM SPECIALISTS
ALL CaWORKs PROGRAM SPECIALISTS
ALL CONSORTIUM PROJECT MANAGERS
ALL QUALITY CONTROL SPECIALISTS

SUBJECT: PROCESSING CONSUMER REQUESTS FOR REFERRAL TO
THE CALFRESH OR CALIFORNIA WORK OPPORTUNITY AND
RESPONSIBILITY TO KIDS (CaWORKs) PROGRAMS UNDER THE
PATIENT PROTECTION AND AFFORDABLE CARE ACT (ACA)

REFERENCE: HORIZONTAL INTEGRATION, SECTION 1561 OF THE ACA of
2010; MANUAL OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES, SECTION 40-129; ALL COUNTY
INFORMATION NOTICES (ACIN) I-37-13; I-45-11; I-45-11E; I-53-13; and I-60-13

The ACA provides individuals who are interested in and seeking health insurance several avenues for obtaining health insurance for themselves and their families. It has created an environment in which interoperability between social services programs becomes critical in order to ensure the application process is seamless for the individual or family who may be eligible for multiple programs (e.g. CaWORKs and CalFresh). This coordinated effort, or interoperability, between the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) and the Department of Health Care Services is also known as “horizontal integration.” Under the ACA, individuals seeking health insurance are referred to as “consumers,” because they are shopping for a health plan.

The purpose of this All County Letter (ACL) is to transmit policy to County Welfare Departments (CWDs) on how to process consumer requests for a referral to the CalFresh or CaWORKs programs when they have applied for a health insurance affordability program (IAP). The IAP application can be through any of the channels offered by the California Healthcare Eligibility, Enrollment, and Retention System (CalHEERS) or the California Department of Health Care Services’ Single Streamlined Application (SSApp). The CWDs may receive requests for referrals in-person (walk-in

REASON FOR THIS TRANSMITTAL

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

or by appointment), by telephone, online, by mail, by fax, or through the CalHEERS interface with the Statewide Automated Welfare Systems (SAWS). Beginning

January 1, 2014, CWDs may receive these referrals electronically from Covered California, California's ACA marketplace for individuals and families to obtain health insurance, via CalHEERS. January 1, 2014 is when the CalHEERS and SAWS systems are slated to interface. The CWDs must implement this policy effective with ACA implementation on January 1, 2014.

The guiding principles of horizontal integration under the ACA include conducting eligibility determination and enrollment into the health care system as seamlessly as possible, and providing accurate and timely referrals to other programs to which the consumer may be eligible. As such, CDSS is establishing the following protocols on how CWDs/SAWS are to handle CalHEERS referrals. A referral alone, without the CWD making contact with the consumer and confirming their interest in applying for CalFresh or CalWORKs benefits does not constitute an application for benefits and does not establish an application filing date. Once the referral has been processed and a signature for an application has been obtained, all normal procedures for processing an application are to be utilized by the CWD.

Through ACA enrollment, the consumer will provide information required in order to determine eligibility for health insurance. The enrollment process will allow the consumer an opportunity to find out more about other programs, such as CalFresh and CalWORKs. The consumer is able to indicate interest in and may request a referral to other non-health care programs by checking a box on the health insurance application. By marking the box, the consumer is also agreeing to share the information they've already provided for the health care eligibility determination process with the CWD. Marking the box to express interest in another program will prompt CalHEERS to transmit the information provided by the consumer to the appropriate SAWS system used by the county in which the consumer resides. This transmittal of data which may include a request for a referral to CalFresh or CalWORKs from CalHEERS to SAWS is called electronic health information technology or "e-HIT." When contacting the consumer, it should be emphasized that they have already provided a majority of the necessary information, and you are contacting them to only gather missing information to complete an eligibility determination for the CalFresh or CalWORKs program.

For CalFresh:

Upon receipt of an e-HIT, the CWD shall attempt to contact the household (HH) by phone, e-mail, or mail within ten days of receiving notification of the consumer's interest in the CalFresh Program. The intent of the contact is to confirm that the consumer is interested in applying for CalFresh, and if so, to initiate the application process. Once

the CWD establishes that the consumer is interested in applying for benefits and obtains a signed application from the consumer, the CWD will process the application, using existing application processing protocols. CDSS strongly encourages CWDs to contact consumers through one of the following methods, listed in the order of priority and use the guidelines described here. The following guidelines are to facilitate an expeditious processing of these referrals while maintaining as seamless an experience for the consumer as possible.

1. Telephone contact and interactive interview: Contact the consumer by phone and request their permission to complete an interactive interview. Use information from the health care application that may or may not have been pre-populated (depending on whether SAWS has this capacity), and if permission is granted, gather any missing information that is needed to make an eligibility determination. Obtain the HH's dated signature over the phone in accordance with ACIN I-60-13 to establish a filing date and beginning date of aid (BDOA). As stated in ACIN I-60-13, a telephonic signature is an electronic sound, symbol, or process attached to or logically associated with an electronic record and executed or adopted by a person with the intent to sign the electronic record. A telephonic signature may be considered an electronic signature. Since the HH is only applying for CalFresh, the CWD shall utilize the Rights and Responsibilities program rules, and the signature block of a CF 285 when obtaining the telephonic signature. Inform the HH of expedited service (ES) and screen for ES.
 - a. If the consumer is not able to complete an interactive interview that day but confirms their interest in applying for CalFresh, the CWD will inform the HH that an application with only the applicant's name, address, and signature is needed to establish the filing date and BDOA to begin the application process.
2. Telephone contact and schedule an interview: If the consumer is not able to complete an interactive interview that day but confirms their interest in applying for CalFresh, the CWD should schedule the interview (either by telephone or face-to-face at the consumer's option) at this initial contact. The CWD may utilize any of the following methods in a manner that is consistent with the CWD's normal business process when potential applicants phone the county expressing an interest in the program.
 - a. Collect a telephonic signature during the call. If the CWD has a pre-populated application, they should advise the HH of remaining information needed by the CWD to determine CalFresh eligibility. The CWD shall request only what is still needed to complete the eligibility determination.

- b. Direct the HH to the online application website to submit an e-signature.
 - c. Send an application (SAWS 1, CF 285, or SAWS 2 Plus) to the HH to sign and return to the CWD.
3. E-mail or mail contact: If the consumer indicated e-mail as a preferred contact method on their health care application, e-mail the consumer to request confirmation of the HH's interest in applying for CalFresh. If the consumer did not indicate e-mail as a preferred contact method or attempts at contacting the consumer by e-mail were not successful, use telephone (if a phone number was indicated on the health application) or regular mail to confirm the HH's interest in applying for CalFresh. CWDs can ease the burden for consumers who may initially not be inclined to apply due to a misconception about needing to complete another application in addition to the health care application if CWDs can print and mail a pre-populated paper application (SAWS 1, CF 285, or SAWS 2 Plus) to the consumer. This is solely a suggestion and is at CWD discretion. Additionally, preprinted applications or other documents with personal information should not be sent by e-mail. If the consumer responds and confirms the HH's interest in applying for CalFresh, the CWD shall proceed using standard CWD practices.

Once the intake process is completed with an established BDOA, CWD's must complete an eligibility determination following all existing CalFresh regulations, timeframes, and CWD business practices, including expedited processing. Since the consumer has already provided case information when applying for a health IAP, the CWD may only request additional information that is necessary to determine CalFresh eligibility.

For CalWORKs:

When a CWD has received a referral or e-HIT from CalHEERS indicating a consumer's interest in additional CalWORKs information, the CWD shall attempt to contact the consumer within ten days to ask the consumer whether (s)he is interested in applying for CalWORKs. Once the CWD establishes that the consumer is interested in applying for CalWORKs and obtains a completed and signed SAWS 1 from the consumer, the CWD will process the application, using existing application processing protocols. The CDSS strongly encourages CWDs to contact consumers using these processes in the following order of priority and use the guidelines described here to facilitate an expeditious processing of these referrals while maintaining as seamless an experience as possible.

1. Telephone contact and interview: Contact the consumer by phone and request their permission to complete the SAWS 1 interactive interview using information from the health care application that may or may not have been pre-populated (depending on whether the consortia has the ability to pre-populate the CalWORKs application), and gather other information that is needed to complete the initial CalWORKs application. For CalWORKs, the applicant must complete the entire SAWS 1 either over the phone or in person, and sign and date the form to establish an application filing date and the potential BDOA. Inform the applicant of the availability of Immediate Need (IN) for CalWORKs. Screen for ES as noted in the preceding CalFresh section, and if the applicant requests IN and meets the requirements for IN, the CWD shall schedule an appointment for the applicant to come in for a face-to-face interview within IN timeframes pursuant to Manual of Policies and Procedures (MPP) Section 40-129.

The applicant must be informed of the availability of IN and the criteria needed to be eligible for IN during the initial contact. If the CWD identifies the applicant as an appropriate IN candidate, the CWD must direct the applicant to come to the CWD as soon possible to complete the IN process which requires completion of the full SAWS 2 Plus so that the CWD can determine if the applicant is “apparently eligible” for CalWORKs pursuant to MPP Section 40-129.11. If the applicant does not answer “yes” to any of the IN questions on the SAWS 1, the CWD may then use any of the following methods to obtain a signed application in accordance with the CWD’s normal business process when potential applicants phone the CWD expressing an interest in applying for the CalWORKs program:

- a. Obtain a telephonic signature from the applicant during the initial call.
- b. Direct the consumer to the online application website to submit an e-signature;
or
- c. Send a SAWS 1 to the consumer to complete, sign and return to the CWD.

Note: For CalWORKs, the application date will be the date that the signed and dated SAWS 1 is received by the CWD. Upon receipt, the CWD shall date stamp the SAWS 1 and save it in the case file. The application date may also establish the BDOA for the assistance unit if they are found to be otherwise eligible as of that date.

The CWD must also inform the applicant during the call that an appointment will be scheduled for the applicant and all potentially eligible adults and/or parents/step-parents of potentially eligible children who live in the home. For CalWORKs, the applicant must come into the office for an interview so that the CWD can obtain any additional information and verifications needed to determine CalWORKs eligibility. In addition, all adults who have requested cash aid must be fingerprinted/photo-imaged before aid can be granted.

2. Preferably, the consumer would be contacted by telephone, if the consumer provided a telephone number as part of the health care application that was transmitted to the CWD/SAWS via the e-HIT. If no telephone number was provided or if the CWD's resources would preclude calling consumers who have expressed interest in CalWORKs, the CWD should contact the consumer via United States Postal Service (USPS) mail.

CWDs may use the following sample language to contact the consumer via USPS mail or when sending a hard copy application to the household after the initial phone contact:

"In your recent for health care application, you marked a box that you were interested in getting information on the CalWORKs program and gave permission to use the information from your health care application to find out if you are eligible for CalWORKs. In order to begin the application process, we need you to fill in your name, address, and complete and sign the SAWS 1 application.

We will use the information from your health care application and gather any additional information during your eligibility interview. You can submit an application by:

- Answering questions one through five on the enclosed application, sign, date, and return to it the CWD at the address listed on this notice; or
- If you have computer access, fill out and submit the application online at <http://www.benefitscal.org/> (or county-specific web portal); or
- You can go in person to your county office at: [Address].

Once the county gets your application, an interview will be scheduled for you to gather any additional information that may be needed."

Once the application is received, CWDs must complete the intake process following all existing CalWORKs regulations, timeframes, and CWD business practices.

Other than completing the SAWS 1 to set the application date (if the consumer is not going to complete the entire eligibility determination in one setting), the applicant has already provided personal information when applying for a health IAP, so the CWD may only request additional information that is necessary to determine CalWORKs eligibility that was not already provided on the health care application. When conducting the eligibility interview, CWDs must not repeat questions on the SAWS 2 Plus that have

already been answered on the SSApp during the IAP process unless it is to clarify the answer given and assist in the determination of eligibility for CalWORKs.

For CalFresh and CalWORKs:

If the consumer asked for a referral to or expressed an interest in both CalFresh and CalWORKs, the CWD shall follow the process for CalWORKs with the exception that ES criteria must also be communicated along with the IN information during the initial contact and the consumer advised to indicate on the application that they meet one of the ES criteria.

Verification Requirements

This ACL does not change existing verification requirements under either the CalFresh or CalWORKs programs, including but not limited to, mandatory and optional verifications, timelines for providing verifications, assisting the applicant to obtain verifications, accepting sworn statements in lieu of reasonable documentary evidence, and the use of third party verifications when information is questionable. See ACIN I-45-11 and I-45-11E for a summary of CalFresh verification rules. The CDSS will provide a follow-up ACL should any of the verification rules change under the ACA.

In the event of a system failure in the interface between CalHEERS and SAWS, the CWDs will still be expected to act on referrals in the manner described above. CalHEERS will produce a document listing the names, SSApp Identification Number (ID), County/Zip Code of residence, phone number, case ID, status of SSApp and programs that the consumer has expressed an interest in and will identify who has checked the box for a referral to CalFresh or CalWORKs.

If the interface is not implemented timely, CWDs are to use the SSApp ID number from the CalHEERS document. This ID number can be entered into the CalHEERS system and matched to the consumer's case ID. The CWD can attempt to utilize the information from the health care application to the extent possible to avoid requesting duplicate information from the consumer and to minimize the burden on any individual who might be interested in applying for CalWORKs or CalFresh benefits.

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If you have any CalFresh questions related to this letter, please contact your CalFresh county contact or the CalFresh Policy Bureau at (916) 654-1896. For CalWORKs-related questions pertaining to this letter, please contact your CalWORKs County Consultant at (916) 654-1322.

Sincerely,

Original Document Signed By:

TODD R. BLAND
Deputy Director
Welfare to Work Division

C: CWDA
CSAC