

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

744 P Street, Sacramento, California 95814



August 24, 2001

ALL COUNTY LETTER NO: 01-57

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS
ALL WELFARE-TO-WORK COORDINATORS
ALL CALWORKS PROGRAM MANAGERS
ALL FOOD STAMPS PROGRAM MANAGERS

REASON FOR THIS TRANSMITTAL

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

SUBJECT: SAFE AT HOME CALIFORNIA CONFIDENTIAL ADDRESS PROGRAM

REFERENCE: ACIN I-11-00, WELFARE AND INSTITUTIONS CODE SECTION 11495-11495.40

The purpose of this letter is to provide counties with information regarding the Safe at Home California Confidential Address Program (Safe at Home) for victims of domestic abuse or stalking who have escaped or are escaping an abusive environment to avoid further victimization.

BACKGROUND

On July 1, 1999, the Secretary of State implemented the confidential Safe at Home Program to help survivors of domestic abuse remain safe once they have escaped an abusive situation. Under the Safe at Home Program, established by state legislation (Senate Bill 489, Chapter 1005/98-Alpert), each certified participant is assigned a substitute Post Office (P.O.) address to use in place of a home, work or school address, which becomes confidential upon enrollment in the Safe at Home program. State and local agencies that maintain public records are required to accept the Safe at Home substitute address. The County Welfare Departments (CWD) do not create public records as identified in Section 6205 through 6211 of Chapter 3.1, Division 7 of Title 1 of the Government Code, and therefore, are not required to participate in the Safe at Home Program. However, the California Department of Social Services strongly supports and encourages counties to participate in this program to the extent necessary to ensure domestic abuse victims remain safe.

ELIGIBILITY FOR THE SAFE AT HOME PROGRAM

In order to qualify for the Safe at Home Program, applicants must enroll and provide specified information regarding being a victim of domestic abuse or stalking to the local agency operating the program, designated by the Secretary of State.

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Specific requirements can be acquired from the local agency. A county listing of agencies is attached.

The application process includes a requirement that the applicant meet with a victims' assistance counselor and receive orientation information about the program. Individuals who are applying for California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) cash assistance and who are interested in obtaining a confidential address may be provided information about Safe at Home and should be referred to a designated agency or the Secretary of State's toll free number 1-877-322-5227. Applications for a confidential address are forwarded by the designated agencies to the Secretary of State's office for certification.

IMPACT ON FOOD STAMPS ELIGIBILITY

The address shown on the Safe at Home Program card can be accepted as the substitute address for applicants and recipients of food stamps. Proof of residence is not a condition of eligibility, and food stamps cannot be denied if an applicant does not have a fixed mailing address. County residency must be verified, but this can be accomplished through documentary evidence or collateral contact. If the CWD agrees to use the Safe at Home address, the recipient should be advised of the possible delay in receipt of his/her food stamps or Authorizations to Purchase because of the time required to forward mail to another address.

IMPACT ON CalWORKs ELIGIBILITY

As stated above, under the Safe at Home Program, the individual is provided with a substitute P.O. Box mailing address and a substitute (fictitious) street address. Participating counties can accept Safe at Home substitute addresses for applicants and recipients of CalWORKs. An exception to this rule occurs when factors affecting eligibility or apparent eligibility, such as in cases of immediate need, diversion or suspected fraud, cannot be satisfactorily determined without a home visit. In these instances, the applicant/recipient is required to provide the actual residence address.

Counties must use every safeguard measure to ensure that cases identified as a Safe at Home case are unavailable to the general employee population within the CWD. All case records within a CWD are considered confidential, but when it is necessary to obtain the actual residence address, this information is to be maintained in the case file only or in some other secure manner, and is not to be entered on any computer/automated system. Continue to use the Safe at Home P.O. Box and fictitious street address on all computer generated documents.

If your county is interested in obtaining more information and/or brochures about the Safe at Home Program, please contact the Safe at Home Confidential Address Program

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Manager or Analyst at (916) 653-1769, or visit the website at www.ss.ca.gov/safeathome.
For other questions contact the following:

- Regarding CalWORKs cooperation requirements - Linda Lattimore at (916) 653-5830.
- Regarding general CalWORKs confidentiality requirements – Eden-Marie Eulinbough at (916) 653-4992.
- Regarding Food Stamps eligibility – Frederick Hodges at (916) 653-7973.
- Regarding CalWORKs Domestic Abuse Services – CDSS Work Support Services County Analyst at (916) 654-1424.

Sincerely,

Original document signed by
Bruce Wagstaff
On 8/24/01

BRUCE WAGSTAFF
Deputy Director
Welfare to Work Division

Attachment