

## UPDATED INFORMATIVE DIGEST

New federal regulations provide states with the option of operating a publicly administered Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA)/Entrant Cash Assistance (ECA) program consistent with the provisions of each state's Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) Program with regard to determination of eligibility, treatment of income and resources, benefit levels and budgeting methods. This will allow California counties to operate their RCA programs in accordance with the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program instead of the obsolete Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program. California counties have been and are forced to maintain and apply two separate and distinctly different sets of program policies and procedures for their RCA and CalWORKs clients even though RCA eligibility and grants are determined across the state by TANF/CalWORKs workers and automated systems.

Current regulations allow persons granted asylum the same resettlement and medical assistance granted to refugees admitted for resettlement. However, very few asylees have ever been able to take advantage of this assistance because up to now the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement began the eligibility clock from the time the asylee entered the U.S. These emergency regulations change the eligibility starting date for asylees to the date they are granted asylum rather than the date they entered the U.S. making it possible for persons granted asylum to more readily access refugee resettlement assistance and benefits.

Current internal Social Security Administration (SSA) procedures for RCA clients, asylees and Cuban and Haitian entrants often deter these individuals from applying for and receiving social security numbers for several months after they receive their status. These regulations ensure that CWD's cannot deny RCA and services to asylees and Cuban and Haitian entrants.

Currently, prior to the CWD approving aid for refugees, the CWD must contact the responsible voluntary resettlement agency and inquire as to what assistance, if any, was provided to the refugee. This assistance is then counted against the eligibility determination of the cash assistance payment. These regulations change this process. The CWD may no longer consider any cash grant provided to the applicant by a voluntary resettlement agency reception and placement program in determining income eligibility for RCA.

Also, since regulations relating to refugee services programs are not amended regularly, obsolete program references and current terminology are being amended at this time. These amendments include updating the term "Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC)" to "California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs)" as a result of AB 1542, Chapter 270, Statutes of 1997 and updating the Department's acronym from "DSS" to "CDSS." In addition, nonsubstantive renumbering and reformatting is being done for clarity and to make the regulations more user friendly.

There was only one item of favorable written testimony received and no oral testimony presented at either the March 12, or March 13, 2002 public hearing. Minor grammatical and technical corrections are made, but a 15-day renote is not required.