



CDSS

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STATE OF CALIFORNIA—HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

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EDMUND G. BROWN JR.
GOVERNOR

December 11, 2014

ALL COUNTY INFORMATION NOTICE NO. I-69-14

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS
ALL CalWORKs PROGRAM SPECIALISTS
ALL CalFresh PROGRAM SPECIALISTS
ALL COUNTY REFUGEE PROGRAM COORDINATORS
ALL QUALITY CONTROL SUPERVISORS
ALL CONSORTIUM PROJECT MANAGERS

SUBJECT: SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION (SSA) COST OF
LIVING ADJUSTMENT (COLA) – EFFECTIVE
JANUARY 1, 2015

REFERENCE: MANUAL OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES (MPP)
SECTIONS 22-071, 22-072, 44-315.311,
44-316.331(r), 63-504.261, 63-504.46, AND
63-509(h)(1), ALL COUNTY LETTER (ACL) 12-49

Social Security recipients will receive a 1.7 percent COLA increase in their Social Security benefits effective December 31, 2014, which is payable January 2015. This increase will affect California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) cash aid and CalFresh allotment amounts for those applicants and recipients who also receive Social Security benefits. When cash aid or CalFresh allotment amounts are adjusted due to the Social Security COLA benefit increase, the requirements for a timely and adequate Notice of Action shall apply pursuant to CalFresh MPP Section 63-504.261 and CalWORKs MPP Sections 22-071 and 22-072.

NEW APPLICANTS

For new applicants in both the CalWORKs and CalFresh programs, the actual amount of the Social Security benefit, including the increase, shall be used for eligibility and budgeting purposes beginning with the month of January 2015.

REASON FOR THIS TRANSMITTAL

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

TREATMENT OF THE SSA COLA IN THE CURRENT SAR PAYMENT PERIOD

For CalWORKs and CalFresh households currently in the final month of a the Semi-Annual Reporting (SAR) payment period, the County Welfare Department (CWD) will reasonably anticipate the increase in the Social Security income in accordance with MPP Sections 44-315.311(SAR) and 63-509(a)(2) for the future SAR payment period. The amount of the SSA COLA will be considered "known to the county," per MPP Sections 63-509(h)(3) and 44-316.33(r), upon receipt of this All County Information Notice (ACIN) and will be reasonably anticipated to be received by recipients of Social Security benefits beginning in January 2015 and thereafter.

COUNTY-INITIATED MID-PERIOD CHANGES FOR ALL OTHER CalWORKs AND CalFresh SAR HOUSEHOLDS

MPP Sections 44-316.33(r) and 63-509(h) provide that CWDs shall take mid-period actions at the end of the month in which the change occurred. Since the SSA COLA is effective December 31, 2014 and payable in January 2015, CWDs must take a mid-period county-initiated action to decrease benefits effective January 1, 2015 for all cases in which Social Security benefits are being used to determine CalFresh allotments or CalWORKs cash grant amounts.

TREATMENT OF THE SSA COLA FOR CalWORKs ANNUAL REPORTING/CHILD ONLY (AR/CO) CASES

For CalWORKs cases subject to AR/CO rules, the amount of the SSA COLA will also be considered "known to the county" and acted upon mid-period, pursuant to ACL 12-49, page 20, example (n). Action shall be taken by the CWD, effective January 2015, upon receipt of this ACIN for those CalWORKs AR/CO recipients in receipt of Social Security income. The only cases where this action will not be considered "mid-period" are those AR/CO cases with a December 2014 redetermination (RD). For AR/CO cases that have SSA income and a December 2014 RD, the CWD will include the SSA COLA amount in budgeting for the upcoming AR/CO period. As with any adverse action, and as stated in the first paragraph of this letter, timely and adequate notice is required when decreasing benefit amounts based on the SSA COLA increase.

CalFresh CHANGE REPORTING HOUSEHOLDS

Pursuant to MPP Section 63-504.46, CWDs are required to automatically adjust CalFresh benefits to reflect the SSA COLA no later than the second allotment issued after the effective date of the Social Security benefit payment change.

FOR ALL CASES

If CWDs are unable to change CalWORKs cash aid or CalFresh allotment amounts as a result of the increased January SSA payment, they must take the appropriate action to decrease benefits the first of the following month after timely, adequate notice can be provided. January benefits will need to be recalculated using the new SSA payment amount, and if the calculation results in a decrease, the CWD will need to establish an overpayment or overissuance as appropriate.

PAYMENT VERIFICATION SYSTEM (PVS) COLA NOTIFICATION

The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) will not be providing additional notification of the SSA COLA through the PVS. However, upon request, a cost-of-living report will be provided to the counties through Secure File Transfer (SFT). The COLA printouts will be subject to the 45-day timeliness requirements of the Income and Eligibility Verification System (IEVS). CWDs were contacted by the CDSS Fraud Bureau in December 2014 through email communication to inform them that requests for individual county reports were to have been submitted by December 15, 2014.

ACCESSING INFORMATION ON SSA COLAS

CWDs may obtain annual updates on SSA COLAs through the following web link:
<http://www.ssa.gov/cola>.

CONTACTS

If you have any questions regarding this ACIN, please contact your CalWORKs County Consultant at (916) 654-1322 or your CalFresh County Consultant at (916) 654-1896.

Sincerely,

Original Document Signed By:

Original Document Signed By:

LINDA PATTERSON, Chief
CalFresh Branch

KÄREN DICKERSON, Chief
Employment and Eligibility Branch