

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
744 P Street, Sacramento, CA 95814



January 8, 1991

ALL-COUNTY INFORMATION NOTICE NO. I-02-91

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS

SUBJECT: RESULTS OF THE HOMELESS ASSISTANCE SURVEY

The Accuracy Improvement Bureau surveyed Counties in September to gather information about different approaches used by Counties to administer Homeless Assistance (HA) payments. The purpose of the survey was to obtain effective strategies that would be transferable to other Counties. Specifically, we were interested in techniques to prevent fraud, tools that would make HA easier for workers to administer, and methods of organizing the workload to make HA less disruptive/more acceptable to workers.

We appreciate the good response from Counties on this important issue. A summary of responses received from Counties is attached. In addition to their narrative responses, most Counties also submitted forms they have developed; these forms have been added to the Corrective Action Clearinghouse and are available to other Counties upon request.

If you would like further information about the survey, please contact Linda Patterson of my staff at (916) 324-1996 or ATSS 454-1996. Again, thank you for your cooperation in this effort.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "L.S. McMahon".

LINDA S. McMAHON
Director

Attachment

cc: CWDA

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES TO THE HOMELESS ASSISTANCE SURVEY

- o Survey responses were received from 37 of 58 Counties.
- o Although most Counties were willing to share their ideas and strategies, they did not want their strategies to be specifically identified as originating from their County.
- o Homeless Assistance (HA) contact persons were provided by each County.
- o It appears that almost all Counties employ similar techniques to administer the HA payment.
- o **Responses as to whether Counties had information to indicate that fraud was more prevalent in regard to HA payments than for regular AFDC payments were as follows:**
 - Most Counties had no data to support their belief that fraud is more prevalent in HA payments than in the overall AFDC Program.
 - Two Counties provided statistics on fraud in regard to HA payments.

One County stated that of all AFDC cases referred for fraud investigation, 51 percent were fraudulent as compared with 62 percent of the HA payment cases.

Another County stated that they reviewed 100 cases which had received HA payments to cover utility deposits; 38 of the 100 did not, in fact, pay the deposit.

- o **Techniques Counties use to prevent fraud were fairly consistent throughout the State. They include:**
 - Accessing County property records in the Assessor's office via computer matches to identify legal property owners.
 - Checking HAPI/IEVS for verification of prior receipt of HA payments.
 - Requiring receipts/statements that indicate the landlord's address and phone number and verifying reported information with the landlord.
 - Utilizing the Early Fraud Prevention Program to determine if fraud exists.
 - Referring suspicious HA requests to fraud investigator(s).
 - Encouraging clients to utilize vendor payments.

- Having clients maintain a log of contacts made in the search for permanent housing.
- Using the Haines directory to check the actual existence of a residence. The Haines directory lists all addresses in the County.
- Obtaining supervisory approval prior to issuance of HA payments.
- Less common fraud prevention techniques include:

Placer County cross-checks the address of the proposed rental with casefile records (using the WADR feature of CDS) to see if the client is moving in with another client and not reporting they are sharing housing.

Referring clients threatened with eviction to Legal Aid.

Having the client sign an "Important Information About the Homeless Assistance Program" form which explains the client's responsibility to seek permanent housing and need for certain verifications.

o **Responses as to techniques Counties employ to make HA easier for workers to manage/accept include:**

- Using forms such as verification of housing expense from the landlord, HA tracking calendars, HA budget worksheets, client information sheets, and logs to document the client's search for permanent housing. Most Counties sent in forms that they had developed to help workers with the HA process.
- Using vouchers (when permitted).
- Issuing HA policies and procedures to workers to guide them through the process and the requirements.
- Increased accessibility to fraud investigators.
- Use of unit meetings to "vent".

o **Responses as to how Counties organized the workload to minimize the impact of HA on workers were divided into two categories.**

- Most Counties had the worker who would routinely handle the case determine the eligibility and issue the HA payment.
- Some Counties, typically the larger ones, used specialized workers to process HA requests.
- Some Counties assign workers "duty days" when they are responsible for processing all HA requests. This duty is rotated among workers.