STATE OF CALIFORNIA—HEALTH AND WELFARE AGENCY

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
744 P Street, Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 322-1019

December 23, 1985

ALL-COUNTY LETTER NO. 85-128

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS

SUBJECT: VOLUNTARY RESETTLEMENT AGENCY (VOLAG) ASSISTANCE

REFERENCE:

The purpose of this letter is to clarify policy regarding the effect on the refugee's eligibility for cash assistance if he/she refuses to accept assistance from the Voluntary Resettlement Agency (VOLAG) and whether the VOLAG payment should be considered income or a "windfall" exempt from consideration as income. Several counties have been denying cash assistance to refugees on the basis of their refusal to accept assistance (either through the matching grant program or resettlement monies) from VOLAGs.

Conditional/Unconditional Available Income

The VOLAGs are responsible for meeting the basic needs for food, clothing, shelter, and transportation to job interviews and training during the refugee's first 90 days in the United States. Ultimately, a number of refugees end up applying for aid during the first 90 days in the United States either because the refugee chose not to accept the VOLAGs assistance, or because the VOLAG assistance they accepted did not meet all of the refugee's needs. A refugee is not required to accept VOLAG assistance. As part of the eligibility determination, the county will contact the VOLAG and inquire what assistance the VOLAG is providing to the refugee and whether the refugee must meet certain conditions in order to receive the assistance. If the refugee must meet certain conditions in order to receive the assistance, the assistance is considered conditionally available income. Unconditionally available income is assistance provided to the refugee with no limitations imposed by the VOLAG.

If VOLAG assistance was accepted by the refugee, the cash or in-kind income is considered when making the income eligibility determination. If the refugee has refused to accept unconditionally available income from the VOLAG, refusal to accept such assistance would make the refugee ineligible for cash assistance. The County Welfare Department shall deny aid per Manual of Policies and Procedures Section 44-103.23 which states that only the applicant or recipient

who does not apply for or accept unconditionally available income shall be rendered ineligible. However, if the refugee has refused to accept assistance from the VOLAG and the assistance provided by the VOLAG was conditionally available income to the refugee, refusal to accept such assistance would not make the refugee ineligible for cash assistance.

Income vs. Windfall

Counties have asked for clarification on whether the VOLAG payment should be considered income or a "windfall" exempt from consideration as income. VOLAG payment should be considered income and not a "windfall" payment. VOLAG payments are intended to meet the needs of the refugee for food, rent, utilities and such. As a sponsored alien, the funds are neither unexpected nor a replacement for lost property. The payments do not fall within any other provisions which would exempt them from income. Therefore, the payments should be considered income in the month received.

The effective date for applying this policy will begin with VOLAG payments received in the November 1985, budget month to be applied to the January 1986, payment month.

Should you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact Ms. Laura Williams, Chief, Refugee Support Management Bureau at (916) 322-3141.

Carl B. Williams

CARL B. WILLIAMS
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cc: CWDA
ORR-SF