

ASSEMBLY BILL

No. 959

Introduced by Assembly Member Jones

February 18, 2011

An act to amend Section 11265.1 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, relating to public social services.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 959, as introduced, Jones. CalWORKs and CalFresh: reporting.

Existing law requires each county to provide cash assistance and other social services to needy families through the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program using federal Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) block grant program, state, and county funds.

Existing law, in addition to annual redetermination of eligibility for CalWORKs benefits, requires counties to redetermine recipient eligibility and grant amounts on a quarterly basis, using prospective budgeting. Under existing law, if a recipient fails to submit a complete quarterly report form, as defined, by a specified time, the county is required to notify the recipient that benefits will be terminated at the end of the month, pursuant to specified notice procedures. Existing law requires the county to rescind a discontinuance notice if it receives a completed report by the first working day of the next reporting period, or if the county determines that the recipient had good cause, as defined, for failing to submit a complete report form, as specified.

Existing federal law provides for the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly the Food Stamp Program, under which nutrition assistance benefits, formerly referred to as food stamps, are allocated to each state by the federal government. Under existing

state law, pursuant to CalFresh, California’s federal allocation is distributed to eligible individuals by each county. Existing law requires the State Department of Social Services, to the extent permitted by federal law, regulations, waivers, and directives, to implement the prospective budgeting, quarterly reporting system provided for under the CalWORKs program for the administration of CalFresh benefits.

This bill would revise time periods applicable to rescinding a discontinuance notice for CalWORKs benefits, to allow a recipient, before the last day of the calendar month following the discontinuance, to submit a complete quarterly report, and to allow a county to determine the existence of good cause for the failure to submit a complete report. The bill would authorize the county to restore the recipient’s benefits if he or she submits a complete report within that designated time, as specified. This bill also would revise the definition of good cause for purposes of these provisions.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: yes.
 State-mandated local program: no.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Section 11265.1 of the Welfare and Institutions
 2 Code, as added by Section 30 of Chapter 1022 of the Statutes of
 3 2002, is amended to read:

4 11265.1. (a) In addition to the requirement for an annual
 5 redetermination of eligibility, counties shall redetermine recipient
 6 eligibility and grant amounts on a quarterly basis using prospective
 7 budgeting. Counties shall use the information reported on a
 8 recipient’s quarterly report form to prospectively determine
 9 eligibility and grant amount for the following quarterly reporting
 10 period.

11 (b) A quarterly reporting period shall be three consecutive
 12 calendar months. The recipient shall submit one quarterly report
 13 form for each quarterly reporting period. Counties shall provide a
 14 quarterly report form to recipients at the end of the second month
 15 of the quarterly reporting period, and recipients shall return the
 16 completed quarterly report form with required verification to the
 17 county by the 11th day of the third month of the quarterly reporting
 18 period.

1 (c) Counties may establish staggered quarterly reporting cycles
2 based on factors established or approved by the department,
3 including, but not limited to, application date or case number.

4 (d) The quarterly report form shall be signed under penalty of
5 perjury, and shall include only information necessary to determine
6 CalWORKs and ~~food stamp~~ CalFresh eligibility and calculate the
7 CalWORKs grant amount and ~~food stamp~~ CalFresh allotment, as
8 specified by the department. The form shall be as comprehensible
9 as possible for recipients and shall require recipients to provide
10 the following:

11 (1) Information about income received during the second month
12 of the quarterly reporting period.

13 (2) Information about income that the recipient anticipates
14 receiving during the following quarterly reporting period.

15 (3) Any other changes to facts required to be reported, together
16 with any changes to those facts that the recipient anticipates will
17 occur. The recipient shall provide verification as specified by the
18 department with the quarterly report form.

19 (e) A quarterly report form shall be considered complete if the
20 following requirements, as specified by the department, are met:

21 (1) The form is signed no earlier than the first day of the third
22 month of the quarterly reporting period by the persons specified
23 by the department.

24 (2) All questions and items pertaining to CalWORKs and ~~food~~
25 ~~stamp~~ CalFresh eligibility and grant amount are answered.

26 (3) Verification required by the department is provided.

27 (f) If a recipient fails to submit a complete quarterly report form,
28 as defined in subdivision (e), by the 11th day of the third month
29 of the quarterly reporting period, the county shall provide the
30 recipient with a notice that the county will terminate benefits at
31 the end of the month. Prior to terminating benefits, the county shall
32 attempt to make personal contact to remind the recipient that a
33 completed report is due, or, if contact is not made, shall send a
34 reminder notice to the recipient no later than five days prior to the
35 end of the month. Any discontinuance notice shall be rescinded if
36 a complete report is received ~~by the first working day of the first~~
37 ~~month of the following quarterly reporting period~~ *prior to the last*
38 *day of the calendar month following discontinuance.*

39 (g) The county may determine, at any time prior to the last day
40 of the calendar month following discontinuance for nonsubmission

1 of a quarterly report form, that a recipient had good cause for
2 failing to submit a complete quarterly report form, as defined in
3 subdivision (e), ~~by the first working day of the month following~~
4 ~~discontinuance.~~ If the county finds a recipient had good cause, as
5 defined by the department, it shall rescind the discontinuance
6 notice. ~~Good cause exists only when the recipient cannot~~
7 ~~reasonably be expected to fulfill his or her reporting responsibilities~~
8 ~~due to factors outside of the recipient's control.~~
9 *(h) If a recipient submits a complete quarterly report form before*
10 *the last day of the month following the discontinuance of benefits,*
11 *the county may restore benefits to the household, without requiring*
12 *a new application or interview.*