STATE OF CALIFORNIA—HEALTH AND WELFARE AGENCY

GEORGE DEUKMEJIAN, Governor

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES
714/744 P STREET
SACRAMENTO, CA 95814

February 3, 1989

TO: All County Welfare Directors
All County Administrative Officers

Letter No.: 89-12

SUBJECT: MEDI-CAL ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION - PROMPTNESS REQUIREMENT

As you are aware, the importance of early prenatal care cannot be overemphasized. Early prenatal care increases the opportunity for healthy pregnancies and healthy infants while lowering the medical costs associated with pregnancy. By following the Promptness Requirement, the county has the opportunity to ensure that eligible pregnant women receive the full benefit of early prenatal care expeditiously.

The purpose of this letter is to remind you of the Promptness Requirement provided in Title 22, Section 50177 of the California Code of Regulations (CCR). This requirement, which is made specific in the Medi-Cal Procedures Manual Section 4-J, states in pertinent part..."if the applicant has an immediate medical need, the county shall expedite the eligibility determination within available resources. Women who are pregnant shall be considered to have an immediate medical need and shall automatically have their eligibility determination expedited."

Several advocate groups representing pregnant women have indicated that some eligibility workers are requiring verification of an emergency in order to expedite the eligibility determination for a pregnant woman under the Promptness Requirement. This is inappropriate. Pregnancy, in and by itself, constitutes an immediate medical need. Furthermore, the requirements of Title 22, Section 50167(a)(8) which state "Pregnancy of a medically, indigent person, age 21 years or older, shall be verified by obtaining a letter of verification from either a physician or a person certified as a nurse practitioner, midwife or physician's assistant" also do not require verification of an emergency.

For card issuance purposes, the Promptness Requirement (item b) specifies that if a person has a need for medical services prior to the anticipated receipt of a Department-issued card, the county shall issue a current month card. This requirement has been clarified for share-of-cost beneficiaries in All County Welfare Directors' Letter (ACWDL) 88-01. For beneficiaries without a share of cost Title 22, Section 50743(b) specifies the conditions under which the county may issue them a current Medi-Cal card. Therefore, once the county learns the conditions of Procedures Section 4J-b are met, the county shall issue an MC 110 to the beneficiary. Furthermore, neither Section 50753 nor the clarifications issued in ACWDL 88-01 allow counties to impose a requirement that an emergency situation be verified.

We would appreciate your cooperation in ensuring that all county welfare department staff involved in determining Medi-Cal eligibility for pregnant women are aware of the Promptness Requirement and that verification of an emergency is not to be requested nor required. If you have any questions, please contact Tony Plescia at (916) 324-4954.

Sincerely,

Original signed by

Frank S. Martucci, Chief
Medi-Cal Eligibility Branch

cc: Medi-Cal Liaisons
Medi-Cal Program Consultants

Expiration Date: December 15, 1989