

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES

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MAY 5, 2000

TO: All County Welfare Directors
All County Administrators Officers
All County Medi-Cal Program Specialists/Liaisons
All County Mental Health Directors
All County Public Health Directors
All County QMB/SLMB/QI Program Coordinators

Letter No.: 00-29

ADDENDUM TO REQUIREMENTS FOR DISTRIBUTING THE "NOTICE REGARDING STANDARDS FOR MEDI-CAL ELIGIBILITY" (FORM NUMBER DHS 7077)

Ref.: All County Welfare Directors Letter (ACWDL) Nos. 90-01, 98-08, 99-03, and 00-11

Counties recently received ACWDL No. 00-11 which included a copy of the "Notice Regarding Standards for Medi-Cal Eligibility" (DHS 7077) and instructions for its provisions. The DHS 7077 contains an error. The amount couples are allowed to retain is incorrectly listed on the notice as \$84,120. That amount should be \$86,120 after including the \$2,000 that the institutionalized spouse is allowed to retain. Therefore, counties are instructed to immediately do one of two things:

1. Instruct eligibility workers to change each place that the incorrect amount appears on the form (see enclosure) before it is provided or mailed; or
2. Attach an addendum to the form stating the following:

"The attached form incorrectly states that when one spouse lives in a nursing facility, and the other spouse does not, the Medi-Cal program will pay some or all of the nursing facility costs as long as the couple together does not have more than \$84,120. In each place where \$84,120 appears on the DHS 7077, that amount should be read as \$86,120."

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If you have any questions on this issue, please call Sharyl Shanen-Raya of my staff at (916) 657-2942.

Sincerely,

**ORIGINAL SIGNED BY
GLEND A ARELLANO**

Angeline Mrva, Chief
Medi-Cal Eligibility Branch

Enclosure

NOTICE REGARDING STANDARDS FOR MEDICAL ELIGIBILITY

If you or your spouse is in or is entering a nursing facility, read this important message!

You or your spouse do not have to use all your resources, such as savings, before Medi-Cal might help pay for all or some of the costs of a nursing facility.

You should be aware of the following to take advantage of these provisions of the law:

Unmarried Resident

An unmarried resident is financially eligible for Medi-Cal benefits if he or she has less than \$2,000 in available resources. A home is an exempt resource and is not considered against the resource limit, as long as the resident states on the Medi-Cal application that he or she intends to return home. Clothes, household furnishings, irrevocable burial plans, burial plots, and an automobile are examples of other exempt resources.

If an unmarried resident is financially eligible for Medi-Cal reimbursement, he or she is allowed to keep from his or her monthly income a personal allowance of \$35 plus the amount of health insurance premiums paid monthly. The remainder of the monthly income is paid to the nursing facility as a monthly deductible called the "Medi-Cal share of cost."

Married Resident

If one spouse lives in a nursing facility, and the other spouse does not live in a nursing facility, the Medi-Cal program will pay some or all of the nursing facility costs as long as the couple together does not have more than ~~\$84,120~~ in available assets. The couple's home will not be counted against this ~~\$84,120~~, as long as one spouse or a dependent relative, or both, lives in the home, or the spouse in the nursing facility states on the Medi-Cal application that he or she intends to return to the couple's home to live.

If a spouse is eligible for Medi-Cal payment of nursing facility costs, the spouse living at home is allowed to keep a monthly income of at least his or her individual monthly income or \$2,103, whichever is greater. Of the couple's remaining monthly income, the spouse

in the nursing facility is allowed to keep a personal allowance of \$35 plus the amount of health insurance premiums paid monthly. The remaining money, if any, generally must be paid to the nursing facility as the Medi-Cal share of cost. The Medi-Cal program will pay remaining nursing facility costs.

Under certain circumstances, an at-home spouse can obtain an order from an administrative law judge that will allow the at-home spouse to retain additional resources or income. Such an order can allow the couple to retain more than ~~\$84,120~~ in available resources. If the income that could be generated by the retained resources would not cause the total monthly income available to the at-home spouse to exceed \$2,103. Such an order also can allow the at-home spouse to retain more than \$2,103 in monthly income, if the extra income is necessary "due to exceptional circumstances resulting in significant financial duress."

An at-home spouse also may obtain a court order to increase the amount of income and resources that he or she is allowed to retain, or to transfer property from the spouse in the nursing facility to the at-home spouse. You should contact a knowledgeable attorney for further information regarding court orders.

The paragraphs above do not apply if both spouses live in a nursing facility and neither previously has been granted Medi-Cal eligibility. In this situation, the spouses may be able to hasten Medi-Cal eligibility by entering into an agreement that divides their community property. The advice of a knowledgeable attorney should be obtained prior to the signing of this type of agreement.

Note: For married couples, the resource limit (~~\$84,120~~ in 2000) and income limit (\$2,103 in 2000) generally increase a slight amount on January 1 of every year.

Transfer of Home for Both a Married and an Unmarried Resident

A transfer of a property interest in a resident's home will not cause ineligibility for Medi-Cal reimbursement if either of the following conditions is met:

- At the time of transfer, the recipient of the property interest states in writing that the resident would have been allowed to return to the home at the time of the transfer, if the resident's medical condition allowed him or her to leave the nursing facility. This provision shall only apply if the home has been

