

County of Los Angeles
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES

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BRYCE YOKOMIZO
Director



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July 8, 2004

TO: Each Supervisor

FROM: Bryce Yokomizo, Director

SUBJECT: REPORT ON FEASIBILITY OF IMPLEMENTING USING FOOD STAMP BENEFITS TO PURCHASE RESTAURANT MEALS (BOARD ORDER #38 - FEBRUARY 4, 2003)

This is to provide you with a report on the feasibility of the use of food stamp benefits on EBT Cards to purchase restaurant meals by the homeless, disabled, and elderly.

The regulations needed to allow homeless, disabled, and elderly food stamp participants to purchase restaurant meals, using food stamp benefits on EBT cards, were released by the State on May 21, 2004.

The County's general responsibilities are as follows:

- Identifying households entitled to participate in the program for the use of food stamp benefits at authorized restaurants;
- Recruitment of restaurant vendors;
- Execution of MOUs with restaurant vendors;
- Informing eligible participants of the names and addresses of participating restaurants; and
- Certifying homeless, elderly, and disabled food stamp participants as eligible to purchase low-cost meals with food stamp benefits in restaurants, which have entered into MOU's with the County for this purpose.

The State's instructions designate the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) as a key component of the Restaurant Meals Program. The MOU is a non-financial agreement between the County and the Restaurant vendor that defines the County's and restaurant vendor's responsibilities. The MOU also allows the restaurant vendor to apply and receive certification to accept food stamp benefits from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS).

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Approval from the State to implement the program will require the submission of the following:

- A proposal requesting approval to implement the Restaurant Meals Program;
- A draft MOU detailing both the responsibilities of the County and the Restaurant vendor;
- A draft identification card; and
- Draft outreach materials targeting food stamp participants and restaurant vendors.

The State has 60 days to either approve or deny our proposal based on the documents provided.

San Francisco is still reporting great success with the Restaurant Meals Program. Currently, the homeless participants represent the largest component of their program. Twenty-two restaurant vendors are serving over 8,000 meals per month and have monthly sales of over \$60,000.

While we believe that it is feasible to implement the Restaurant Meals Program in Los Angeles County and that it would be a success, there will be some ongoing costs for the staff required to implement and maintain the program. Five additional staff will be needed to implement, maintain, and monitor the program.

We are preparing a proposal to submit to the State requesting to participate in the Restaurant Meals Program.

We estimate that the Restaurant Meals Program could be implemented in Los Angeles County as early as November 2004, if the State expedites the approval of our proposal.

BY:bs

c: Chief Administrative Officer
County Counsel
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors