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DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES
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March 17, 2009

The Honorable Board of Supervisors
County of Los Angeles
383 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration
500 West Temple Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Supervisors:

RECOMMENDATION TO APPROVE STREAMLINING THE COUNTY ISSUANCE AND APPROVAL OPERATIONS (ALL SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICTS) (3-VOTES)

SUBJECT

Approve the Department of Public Social Services' (DPSS) request to streamline the County Issuance and Approval (CIA) process by reducing the current two-level process to one level and allowing the contracted case management supervisors to approve public transportation payments to CalWORKs Welfare-to-Work participants. The proposed model will expedite supportive services payments to participants to facilitate engagement in welfare-to-work activities, while continuing to protect program integrity.

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT YOUR BOARD:

1. Approve DPSS' recommendation to modify the GAIN Employment Activity And Reporting System (GEARS) computer system to allow contracted Greater Avenues For Independence (GAIN) case management supervisors, including Refugee Employment Provider agency supervisors, authority to approve public transportation payments; and

2. Approve the removal of the GAIN Services Worker (GSW) level of review from CIA operations.

PURPOSE/JUSTIFICATION OF RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

The existing staff-heavy CIA model has inadvertently resulted in significant delays of supportive services payments to participants with undesirable consequences on the affected participants' ability to remain actively engaged in welfare-to-work activities. The Department has developed an alternate, streamlined model that will greatly expedite the process and will just as effectively address program integrity considerations.

Allowing contracted case management supervisors to have final approval authority of public transportation payments will aid in expediting the timeliness of payment issuances to participants. Public transportation payments are more routine and less costly than mileage reimbursement for participants' use of private vehicles. In addition to the numerous automation safeguards built into GEARS, the Department will continue monitoring all issuances (i.e., public and private transportation payments) to ensure ongoing program integrity.

Currently, the CIA process requires a two-level review by DPSS staff, GSW and GAIN Services Supervisor (GSS), and in some instances a Human Services Administrator I (HSA I). There are 13 GSWs, four GSSs, three Intermediate Typist Clerks (ITC) and one HSA I for a total of 21 staff dedicated to the CIA process. The streamlining proposal will reduce the number of staff to 16, comprised of 12 GSSs, three ITCs and one HSA I. Removing the GSW level of review will enhance the overall efficiency of CIA operations by creating a less repetitive process for approving these payments. This will achieve a significant reduction in the number of County personnel engaged in this function, while maintaining quality and program integrity.

The implementation of the CIA system was a direct result of the Auditor-Controller's (A-C) recommendations to the Board of Supervisors in 2003 after identifying fraud in the Refugee Immigrant Training and Employment (RITE) program. DPSS did not renew the RITE provider agencies contracts and all RITE cases were returned to DPSS. Following the A-C's recommendations in 2003, DPSS implemented a series of edits to its GEARS computer system that promote payment accuracy and reduce the risk of fraud. Current monitoring procedures are used to supplement the GEARS edits, which maintain a zero tolerance for fraud. DPSS supervisors will continue to exercise authority for final approval of all mileage and employment and training related expenses, while public transportation payments will be approved by the contracted supervisor.

The streamlined model has been reviewed and approved by the A-C, the Audit Committee and has been cleared by the Chief Executive Office.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

The recommendations to streamline the CIA process will improve service excellence to participants as they will ensure that participants receive timely payment of all supportive services needed to assist them in their employment or training activities. In addition, efficiency will improve for CIA operations as the approval process will run more expeditiously with fewer staff, while maintaining fiscal integrity. The recommendation for streamlining CIA operations aligns with the County's Strategic Plan Goals 1 and 3, Service Excellence and Organizational Efficiency.

FISCAL IMPACT/FINANCING

The estimated annual staffing cost for the CIA process is $1.8 million. The recommended changes would reduce the yearly cost by 17% to $1.5 million. The recommended change will reduce the County's contract costs in the upcoming GAIN Case Management (GCM) Request for Proposals and will, therefore, impact the GCM Prop A analysis. There is no additional net County cost after the required CalWORKs Maintenance of Effort is met. Funding for future fiscal years will be included in the Department's annual budget request.

IMPACT ON CURRENT SERVICES (OR PROJECTS)

The streamlining recommendations will remove the County GSW level of review from the CIA process, while retaining the supervisory level as well as Human Services Administrator I review for high dollar or retroactive requests.

CONCLUSION

Upon Board approval, the Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors, is requested to return one adopted stamped Board letter to the Director of DPSS.

Respectfully submitted,

Philip L. Browning
Director

PLB:PA:st

c: Chief Executive Office
Auditor-Controller
County Counsel