

CalFresh Handbook :.63- 02.01

Work Incentive Nutritional Supplement (WINS)

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Summary:

Senate Bill (SB) 1041 mandates a new food benefit, Work Incentive Nutritional Supplement. This handbook is being published to provide the regulation for WINS.

I. General:

Work Incentive Nutritional Supplement (WINS) is a mandatory food benefit which applies to Non-Assistance CalFresh (NACF) households only, including California Food Assistance Program (CFAP) recipients. WINS is a 100 percent state funded food supplement which adds a ten dollar (\$10) food benefit each month to a CalFresh recipient's Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card.

The goal of WINS is to promote self-sufficiency through work by providing additional support to eligible working families and to increase the state's Work Participation Rate (WPR).

The household must have at least one child who is under 18 years old and does not receive California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) or Tribal Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) benefits.

WINS is not a public charge. It is a food supplemental benefit; not a CalFresh benefit or cash payment. It is a separate program created and funded by the State of California and is not bound by federal rules.

The following terminologies are used in WINS:

- **Unsubsidized Employment**: Full or part-time employment, including self-employment, in the public or private sector that is not subsidized by TANF or any other public program.
- **Subsidized Employment**: Employment in the private and public sectors for which the employer receives a subsidy from TANF or other public funds to offset some or all of the wages and costs of employing a work-eligible individual.
- **Work-Eligible Individual (WEI)**: An adult (or minor child who is a head-of-household) receiving assistance under TANF or a separate State program or a non-recipient parent living with a child receiving such assistance.

II. WINS Eligibility Factors

The following criteria must be met in order for a NACF household to qualify for a WINS benefit. A

WINS eligible household:

- Must be a household receiving CalFresh, but not receiving CalWORKs or Tribal TANF;
- Must have a child in the home under age 18, or under the age of 19 who is expected to graduate from high school or complete a GED before his or her 19th birthday;

Note: A child includes a biological, adopted, or step child, an SSI child, or any other child that is related to the caretaker and meets the relationship criteria for CalWORKs.

- Must have at least one parent/caretaker who is receiving CalFresh and that meets the federal TANF definition of a “Work-Eligible Individual” (WEI);
- Must have the WEI participating in a sufficient number of hours in work activities that meet federal TANF work participation hours requirements for subsidized and unsubsidized employment, which are as follows:
 - o 20 hours per week for single custodial parents/caretakers with a child under the age of six;
 - o 30 hours per week for single parent/caretakers with children age six or older;
 - o 35 hours per week for two-parent/caretaker families; and
- Must provide acceptable documentation when requested that the household met the federal work requirements for subsidized or unsubsidized employment.

Note: A CalFresh recipient in a household who is also receiving assistance from programs other than CalWORKs or Tribal TANF, such as Kin-GAP, Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA), General Assistance (GA), and Foster Care, is eligible to receive WINS benefits as long as they meet all other WINS eligibility criteria.

The following individuals are **ineligible** for WINS because a condition of eligibility is that the parent/caretaker relative must be receiving CalFresh benefits.

A. SSI Parent/Caretaker Relative

A household with one parent/caretaker relative in which that individual is receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI). However, if there is more than one parent/caretaker relative in the household, and the other parent/caretaker relative does not receive SSI and is otherwise eligible for WINS, the household may receive WINS benefits based on the eligibility of the non-SSI WEI.

B. Excluded Members (undocumented, drug felon, or opt-out individuals)

As long as the excluded member is not the only WEI in the household and the household meets other WINS requirements, the household is eligible for the WINS benefit.

III. Eligibility Determination

A. Approvals:

WINS eligibility is determined for NACF households at an initial application, recertification, and SAR7 reporting. WINS will be certified and issued at the same time as CalFresh benefits. CalWIN is programmed to auto determine the eligibility for WINS and the functionality will be available on May 18, 2014. WINS eligible NACF cases will convert to one of the WINS aid codes (See Section VI). CalWIN will use work hours entered in the Collect Employment History Detail window for WINS eligibility. If work hours information is not available (e.g., hours worked are not listed on the paystub or otherwise verified), then CalWIN will use the household’s wages and divide it by the sum of state minimum wage plus fifty cents (\$0.50) to determine the hours worked. If the hours and other eligibility criteria (e.g. a child in the house) are met, CalWIN will issue the WINS benefit to the household's EBT card.

In order for CalWIN to determine WINS eligibility correctly based on federal WPR rules, the Eligibility Technician (ET) shall enter the number of work hours in the **“Estimated Average Hrs/Week”** field

on the **Collect Employment History Detail** window. Works hours shall be requested and entered as part of the initial application, mid period report, recertification or change reporting processes. Work hours shall be verified via wage stub or other written verification from the WEI's employer. Verification of work hours is not a mandatory requirement. In the absence of verification, CalWIN will use the household's wages entered on the **Collect Income Received Detail** window to determine WINS eligibility.

Note: An ET shall not deny or discontinue CalFresh benefits based on the applicant's/recipient's failure to submit verification of work hours.

B. Discontinuances

A household becomes ineligible for WINS whenever the eligibility criteria no longer exist, or when a household does not cooperate with a TANF QC reviewer. When a household becomes ineligible for WINS, CalWIN will automatically terminate the WINS benefit in most cases, and a 10 day notice of termination (WINS 1239) stating that WINS was discontinued and why it was discontinued must be issued. The discontinuance will become effective the month following the month of discovery. When a household becomes non-compliant with a TANF QC reviewer, the ET must terminate the WINS benefit as follows:

- **Go to “Individual Attributes Window”;**
- **Select individual who is non-cooperating;**
- **Check “NO” in “Work Incentive Program” field, then SAVE;**
- **Run EDBC, Authorize;**
- **Issue WINS discontinuance notice 1239**
- **Enter Case Comments**

C. Denials

A written denial notice is not required. However, the reason for a WINS denial must be noted in CalWIN Case Comments.

D. Mid-Period Reporting

WINS changes are not encouraged during mid-period. Any household that requests the WINS benefits mid-period should be advised that the mid-period report could negatively affect their CalFresh benefits if they are reporting increased or additional work hours and wages.

If mid-period WINS participation would lower the CF benefits, the ET shall not decrease benefits unless the mid-period report is considered “Verified Upon Receipt”.

IV. WINS Benefit Issuance

A. The WINS benefit will be issued to all eligible NACF household on the same date as their CalFresh benefits are issued. The WINS benefit will be issued prospectively and continues on a monthly basis until changes reported by the household determine them ineligible. The \$10 WINS benefit will be automatically added to the EBT card of any qualifying household each month and continues until the household becomes ineligible. WINS benefits can be used in any state or county just as CalFresh benefits.

- No specific member of the household receives the WINS benefit. Only one WEI in the household meeting the work requirement is needed in order for the CalFresh household to receive the benefit.
- Two different families that live together but are part of one CalFresh household can only receive one ten dollar (\$10) WINS benefit per month, regardless of how many families are eligible for WINS.
- If there are two or more CalFresh households living together in which each are separately receiving

CalFresh because they purchase and prepare their food separately, then each household is eligible for WINS and each household will receive a ten dollar (\$10) benefit.

- The WINS benefit will not be counted as income in the CalFresh benefit determination. The WINS food supplement benefit can only be used for the purchase of food as coded by EBT benefit type. Receipt of WINS benefits will not be counted toward the Federal TANF 60- month time limit on aid, or toward the state's CalWORKs 48-month or Welfare-to-Work 24-month time limits and will not trigger child support requirements.
- In the situation of a zero benefit CalFresh case, no WINS benefit would be issued.

B. Overpayments

Any payments to the household prior to the discovery that the household was not meeting the work hour requirement will NOT be pursued by the county as an overpayment. The WINS benefit will simply be taken off of the household's EBT card prospectively. The household would continue to receive the CalFresh portion of benefits.

C. Dormant/Expunged

WINS benefits are good for up to one year from issuance. Benefits become dormant when there has been no debit activity by the cardholder for 180 days. If the benefits are not used for a 12-month period they will be expunged. Once expunged, the WINS benefits cannot be reinstated. Unlike CalFresh benefits, the expunged WINS benefits cannot be used to cover the overissuances of any other program. They are strictly a "use-or-lose" benefit.

V. Transitional CalFresh (TCF)

Households who are eligible to or are receiving TCF are also eligible for WINS, as long as they meet all of the eligibility criteria and do not have income that exceeds 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) for the household size. When a household leaves CalWORKs and receives TCF and no recent documentation of work hours is on file, the ET should request the household's work hours to verify that they are eligible for WINS. If the work hours are sufficient and all other WINS criteria is met, WINS shall be issued for the duration of the five months.

Once issued, the WINS benefits shall continue for the entire TCF period unless the household reports and verifies a change in status which causes them to be ineligible for WINS, or their income exceeds 200% of the FPL, at which time WINS must be discontinued. Unlike regular TCF rules, this mid-TCF WINS change is permissible because the WINS program is state funded and not bound by federal rules.

If a TCF recipient requests to add WINS to their benefits because the household's situation has changed, the ET must inform the recipient that they may either:

1. Wait until the TCF period is over and then recertify for CalFresh, or
2. Recertify at the time of the request so that they may be enrolled in CalFresh for regular benefits.

VI. CalFresh WINS Aid Codes

When a household qualifies for WINS, the participating CalFresh household's aid code will be changed to a new WINS aid code. Only one WINS aid code will be assigned per CalFresh household. These aid codes are identified as both CalFresh and WINS.

The following new aid codes have been programmed into MEDS and will become effective June 1, 2014 with the implementation of WINS.

- **R4** – Work Incentive Nutritional Supplement for single parent/caretaker relative households receiving Non-Assistance CalFresh.
- **R5** – Work Incentive Nutritional Supplement for two parent/caretaker relative households receiving Non-Assistance CalFresh.
- **R6** – Work Incentive Nutritional Supplement for single or two parent caretaker relative households receiving California Food Assistance Program (CFAP) benefits.
- **R7** – Work Incentive Nutritional Supplement for single parent/caretaker relative households receiving Transitional CalFresh (TCF) benefits.
- **R8** – Work Incentive Nutritional Supplement for two parent/caretaker relative households receiving Transitional CalFresh (TCF) benefits.
- **R9** – Work Incentive Nutritional Supplement for single or two parent/caretaker relative households receiving Transitional California Food Assistance Program (TCFAP) benefits.

For the purpose of WINS, A CFAP household is defined as any household which contains at least one CFAP recipient. Whether they are an adult or a child, the entire household is considered CFAP; therefore, in a situation of mixed CFAP and Federal household the aid code would be the CFAP code **R6** or **R9**. CFAP cases are not distinguished as either single parent or two-parent.

VII. Forms and Notices

WINS 1 –The **WINS 1** provides CalFresh applicant/recipient households with information regarding the ten dollar (\$10) food benefit provided on their EBT account. The WINS 1 Form will be available in the waiting room area for public view.

WINS 1239 – “**CalFresh Notice of Approval/Denial/termination Work Incentive Nutritional Supplement (WINS) Benefits**” must be used when approving or terminating WINS benefit. It may be used to deny WINS benefits when a household makes a request.

- Approval portion of this notice must be issued to any household that meets the WINS criteria and is given the WINS benefit.
- Termination portion of this notice must be issued when a household whenever a household no longer meets the WINS criteria.
- The denial portion of this notice can be used when a household specifically requests the WINS benefit (such as during mid-period) but does not qualify for it. The denial notice is not required, a verbal notification is sufficient.

Exception:

All CalFresh applicant households will be auto screened for WINS eligibility. A WINS denial notice should NOT be issued for an approved CalFresh case that is evaluated for WINS but not approved. In this case a verbal notification is sufficient; however the verbal notification should be entered in Case Comments.

CF215 - A checkbox has been added to the “**CalFresh Notification of Inter-County Transfer**” form to indicate when a transferring household is receiving WINS benefits.

References:

ACIN I-14-14

ACIN I-14-14E

Lori Cox, Director

Social Services Agency