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Welfare Fraud Prevention and Investigation (WFP&I)

INVESTIGATIVE OPERATIONS

WFP&I has a number of innovative programs, all designed to discover, investigate, and prosecute welfare fraud:

Early Fraud Program

1. Early Fraud Investigators detect and prevent welfare fraud before benefits are issued.
2. About half of WFP&I's investigative staff are outstationed in 31 DPSS district offices for the Early Fraud Detection Program (EFDP).
3. Referrals to Early Fraud come from district Eligibility Workers, the Central Fraud Reporting Line (CFRL), We Tip, and computer matches for fingerprints and addresses.
4. Early Fraud Investigators are also responsible for handling Statewide Fingerprint Imaging System (SFIS) matches.
 - o In February 2000, this new State-sponsored fingerprint imaging system replaced the Department's AFIRM system.
 - o In addition to capturing fingerprint images, SFIS also captures a photo image of all CalWORKs and Food Stamp applicants in California, as well as, General Relief applicants in Los Angeles and most other counties.

Field/Prosecution Units

1. Approximately 110 Field Investigators are stationed at WFP&I headquarters to investigate fraud on both active and closed cases.
2. Referrals to field investigators come from:
 - a. district Eligibility Workers,
 - b. the Central Fraud Reporting Line (CFRL),
 - c. We Tip,
 - d. computer matches such as wage and asset matches,
 - e. direct calls from the public, and
 - f. referrals from other public and private agencies.

Field Investigators assigned to WFP&I Headquarters do not investigate new applications.

3. On average, Field investigators housed at WFP&I headquarters:
 - a. investigate from 30,000 to 40,000 investigations annually;
 - b. find fraud on 5,000 to 8,000 cases annually;
 - c. send about 1,000 cases to the DA for potential prosecution each year, with most accepted for prosecution; and
 - d. convictions are obtained on 95% of these cases, with court-ordered restitution on most.

Criminal Courts Building

A unit of WFP&I staff is stationed at the Criminal Courts Building in Los Angeles as Court Liaisons. Their duties include processing surrender letters, issuing subpoenas, "booking" (fingerprinting and photographing) clients prior to arraignment, and completing the paperwork necessary to establish a criminal record.

General Statistics

During Fiscal Year 2004/2005, WFP&I:

- Received more than 60,634 fraud referrals,
- Completed more than 52,930 investigations.

As a result of these investigations:

- Fraud/misrepresentation was found on 10,789 cases,
- More than 4,624 cases were denied or terminated,
- 425 persons were convicted of welfare fraud,
- \$10 million in fraud overpayments was detected and stopped,
- \$ 6.7 million in overpayments was collected; and
- Savings through cost avoidance was \$49 million, primarily as the result of Early Fraud activities.

FRAUD HOTLINES

WFP&I maintains three telephone hotlines that provide a streamlined means of reporting welfare fraud.

Central Fraud Reporting Line (800) 349-9970

The County-operated CFRL began operation in 1978 under a mandate by the County Board of Supervisors.

We Tip Hotline (800)782-7463

In March 1988, the County entered into a contract with We Tip, Inc., to receive reports of possible welfare fraud.

These hotlines are available for anonymous use by the public. WFP&I receives thousands of calls reporting fraud each year through these two hotlines. WFP&I staff checks computer records to determine whether there is a case record for each call, and if so, its status. When a record of a welfare case is found, the referral is assigned to an investigator for follow-up.

STAFFING

Approximately 330 employees are assigned to WFP&I. Of these, more than two-thirds are investigative staff.

1. Investigators are selected from the ranks of experienced eligibility workers and supervisors, to ensure a thorough knowledge of program eligibility and DPSS policies and procedures.
2. They complete one year as a Trainee, during which they receive intensive training in investigative techniques, report writing, and field officer safety.
3. All Welfare Fraud Investigators (WFIs) must pass a Peace Officer Standard Training (POST). Additionally, in 2000, the State legislature passed AB 2059 to standardize the training for all Welfare Fraud Investigators in California. As a result, all Welfare Fraud Investigators hired after January 1, 2001, are required to attend and pass a 4-month Specialized Investigator Basic Course (SIBC) in addition to their DPSS investigator training. Although the SIBC course includes training in the use of firearms, Welfare Fraud Investigators in Los Angeles County are not armed.
4. Through an interagency agreement, DPSS contracts with the District Attorney's (DAs) office for specialized investigative services and a prosecution unit that handles only welfare fraud cases. The DA units work with WFP&I to detect and prosecute welfare fraud. The special unit of 32 DA Investigators (DAIs) and support staff is supervised by a DA Lieutenant, who heads the Investigations Section.
5. The DAI's full peace officer status empowers them to engage in searches, seizures, and arrests, which significantly enhances DPSS's welfare fraud investigation program.

DPSS Central Help line (562)908-6603.
This number is for all other DPSS related inquiries.

Services Locator

Find the LA County services and facilities that serve your area...



Enter Address, City, or Zip Code

Social Services

Hotline Numbers

- [Child Abuse](#) 1-800-540-4000
- [Civil Rights](#) Complaint (562) 908-8501
- [Domestic Violence](#) 1-800-978-3600
- [Elder Abuse](#) 1-877-477-3646
- [Mental Health](#) 1-800-854-7771
- [Safely Surrender Baby](#) 1-877-222-9723
- [Substance Abuse](#) 1-800-564-6600
- [Welfare Fraud](#) 1-800-349-9970

