

SB 225
Required Notification for Federal Mass Changes

Concept

SB 225 will align Oregon's notification standards to the federal minimum notification standards for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) when there is a federal mass change. This is a very narrow exception to the notice requirement.

Need for policy change

Due to the October 2013 federal government shutdown, Oregon had to plan for a mass change notification to be mailed to SNAP recipients. Oregon has a 10 day notice requirement—meaning we need to provide written notification no later than 10 working days prior to the effective date of a potential adverse action—and since SNAP benefits were expected to end on November 1st due to the shutdown, we needed to start mailing out notifications to SNAP recipients 10 working days before that. The federal government shutdown was resolved before November 1st, but it was not resolved before we started printing, translating, and processing all the SNAP notifications. Ultimately, we spent approximately \$150,000 to prepare the SNAP notifications, which we ended up not needing to mail out.

Impact if not approved

We could have a repeat situation where Oregon is spending time and resources on mass notifications that are not accurate and/or not needed. This is not a good use of resources nor of staff time, and it has the potential of confusing clients about the availability of services and programs.

Facts

- The federal entity that regulates SNAP, the Food and Nutrition Services (FNS), encouraged states not to send notices until all states were ready to

notify SNAP recipients together nationally. FNS did not want one state sending out notices and causing unnecessary confusion among recipients. However, due to our state statute, we were unable to avoid working on preparing the notice with the intent to send it out 10 working days before November 1st, 2013.

- The minimum federal requirements for notification of mass changes will require Oregon to publicize notifications through news media, posters in certification offices, issuance locations, or other sites frequented by certified households. We could also mail general notices to households.
- The minimum requirements do not include instructions for the timeframe associated with when the notification occurs.
- If Oregon followed these requirements for federal mass changes it would mean that we could notify clients of correct changes closer to the effective date of the change.

Other possible solutions

Continue with the current notice requirement and possibly repeat the same situation of expending resources on notifications that are inaccurate or not relevant.

Fiscal impact

By aligning state statute with minimum federal requirements, Oregon will be able to reduce costs and limit potential confusion for clients.