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900 OBJECTIVE

It is the responsibility of the Department to ensure appropriate provision of its programs and services to qualified individuals and maintain a record of the process used to determine benefit eligibility. In addition, the Department deals with numerous forms, many of which once completed and signed become legal documents. This chapter also is written to ensure the integrity of these documents.

This chapter states the Department's intent to:

1. Protect the applicant or recipient of services by:
 - a. Assuring the signatures to documents are preserved as originally provided.
 - b. Eliminating the possibility of inconsistency between copies and the original document.
 - c. Avoiding acts of non-compliance with Department policy.
2. Develop trust between the signatory and the Department through consistent application of policy.
3. Ensure compliance with pertinent state and federal law and to preserve program integrity.

920 MAINTAINING PROGRAM INTEGRITY

It is the responsibility of every employee of the Department to minimize the opportunity for misrepresentation by performing his or her duties as outlined in the Department's operating manuals. It is essential that employees understand the policies and procedures by which the Department operates. All employees, regardless of function, must report and keep the appropriate staff advised of any changes in the client's circumstances of which they become aware. The primary burden for the prevention of misrepresentation rests on the employee(s) assigned to a particular case or client. Employee(s) must ensure all forms required to be completed by the applicant or client have been fully completed, properly signed, dated, and that any conflicting or missing information be brought to the attention of the client for clarification or completion. Reviewing the case record prior to interviewing the client will aid the employee(s) in reducing errors and preventing misrepresentation.

Applicants and recipients of the Department's assistance services and programs can be expected to give information only in relation to their understanding of the requirements. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance that the client fully

understands his or her rights and responsibilities and that this fact be documented in the case record. Great care should be taken to ensure that the applicant or recipient understands all forms provided to him or her, that he or she is aware of his or her responsibility to report any changes in circumstances and that efforts to obtain assistance through misrepresentation are subject to legal penalties.

The rapid identification of potential resources minimizes the opportunity for misrepresentation. The Department's employee must fully explore the possibility of resources with the client, promptly follow up to identify all resources and appropriately adjust the benefit payment. Although the client is the primary source of information, and is fully responsible for it, an employee should not hesitate to verify questionable or inconsistent information any time he or she is in doubt about a client's situation. These steps carried out will greatly reduce the opportunity for misrepresentation and honest error and will allow the Department to maintain a high degree of integrity in its programs.

930 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Failure to take proper action to preserve the integrity of Department document may be considered a criminal offense and, upon conviction, a person may be confined to jail and/or fined.