



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 29, 2005

Contact: Jonah Weinberg (619) 515-6535

WELFARE CHECKS WON'T BE IN THE MAIL ANY LONGER

County Transitions Aid Payments to Electronic Benefits Transfer Cards

The welfare check will be a thing of the past in San Diego County after May 1, when the Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) converts the majority of public assistance benefit payments over to Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards.

“This new system will allow the County to save money on postage and printing checks, as well as providing a way to better control the disbursement of aid,” said HHSA Director, Jean Shepard. “We want to improve customer service, while reducing overhead and time spent by our staff.”

The new card, which looks like an ATM card, delivers both cash assistance and Food Stamps benefits to clients. Funds will be automatically deposited to the client's EBT account on the same day each month, and can be accessed as needed. Clients who do not wish to use EBT for cash benefits can opt to have their cash benefits directly deposited into their bank account.

San Diego County had been a pilot site for EBT cards for Food Stamps for about ten years. The new EBT card, called the “Golden State Advantage” card, will replace the old cards that had been used by Food Stamps recipients, and for the first time add cash benefits as one of its features.

With EBT, Food Stamp benefits will still be available at all grocery stores that currently accept Food Stamps, and there is never a charge to use a grocer's Point of Sale (POS) terminal for Food Stamps. To access cash benefits, the EBT card can be used at any ATM or store POS terminal that displays the “Quest” symbol.

###

