Alliance to Transform CalFresh

California Association of Food Banks
California Family Resource Association
California Food Policy Advocates
Catholic Charities of California
Los Angeles Regional Food Bank
San Francisco and Marin Food Banks
Western Center on Law and Poverty

"One Stop" for Good Health and Nutrition for California Families:
The Affordable Care Act Opportunity for CalFresh
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California leads the nation in enrolling eligible families in health coverage. By contrast, California continues to lag behind other states in enrollment in CalFresh, the nation's first and best defense against hunger. But that's starting to change.

The need is critical. Families are struggling: recent cuts to CalFresh at the federal level, the lingering recession, the drought, and increasing income-inequality and poverty make better connections for families-in-need to food *urgent.*

It can be done. Building on the successes and lessons of California's roll-out of the Affordable Care Act, as well as recent CalFresh modernization efforts, California can provide families with "one stop" customer service for both health coverage and nutrition assistance.

The time is now. Through the end of 2015, California can draw down federal funds -- with a 90/10 state match -- to invest in technologies that provide integrated, modern, and efficient services for Californians who need them.

Governor Brown can lead California to meet the following achievable goals for family health coverage and nutrition by the end of 2015:

- **GOAL: More than 6 in 10 families enrolled in Medi-Cal are also enrolled in CalFresh.**
- **GOAL: More than 9 in 10 families enrolled in CalFresh are also enrolled in Medi-Cal.**

OUTCOMES: California's baseline status and progress towards reaching these goals can be tracked quarterly, both statewide and by county, at: www.cdsscounties.ca.gov/foodstamps/. Reaching these two goals will put California in a strong position to reach the overall goal set by the Alliance to Transform CalFresh's coalition of advocates: by 2016, California serves 75% of families eligible for nutrition assistance (up from 57% in 2011, according to the USDA) and is a top-five state for participation rates.

Why enroll eligible families in CalFresh? CalFresh provides critical resources for 4.2 million low-income Californians to purchase food, via a debit card issued by counties and used at grocery stores and farmers' markets. An additional 3.2 million Californians are likely eligible for CalFresh. CalFresh, known nationally as SNAP and formerly as food stamps, works on many levels:

- Fights hunger, poverty, and inequality, especially during our recent recession and continuing high unemployment;
- Promotes healthy eating, through increased purchasing power and nutrition education, which prevents disease and supports wellness;
- Helps children, who are the majority of participants, grow and thrive;
- Supports work, as most families participating have a worker in a low-wage job;

- Stimulates the economy, with an impact of $1.80 for every $1 spent, most directly in the food and farm sectors;
- Brings new federal dollars into California (federal dollars fund 100% of the food and 50% of administrative costs); and
- Helps farm workers, tourist-industry workers, and others hit hard by drought-related losses of income and by higher food prices.

The good news is that progress to integrate health coverage and nutrition assistance for Californians is beginning to be made. The Brown Administration, under the leadership of California Health & Human Services Agency Secretary and California Health Exchange Board Chair Diana S. Dooley, in close partnership with California's 58 counties, has recently implemented the following improvements to support one-stop customer service:

- *Express Lane Enrollment* in Medi-Cal, so families participating in CalFresh can easily sign-up for health coverage (by the Department of Health Care Services, DHCS, and the Counties). This connection works: in the first 6 weeks, over 169,000 CalFresh participants signed up for health coverage!
- *Automated Referral* to CalFresh for people applying for health coverage through Covered California and asking for more information on CalFresh (by Covered California and the Counties).
- *Customer Service "Revolution"* on the frontlines of county social services, including inter-county networking of call centers and databases, cross-training of workers in both health coverage and CalFresh, targeted in-reach across programs, and "culture change" initiatives (by the Counties).
- *Data Dashboard* to track California's progress in enrolling eligible families in health coverage and CalFresh, as well as an updated joint application, among other initiatives (by the California Department of Social Services, CDSS, and the Counties).

What's needed next? Leadership to prioritize action and measure progress in three key areas:

1. Technology and Business Process Improvements:
   - All consumer "doors" - including on-line, telephone, and paper applications, operated either by Covered California or by counties - should connect people to both health coverage and nutrition seamlessly.
   - Electronic verifications of eligibility requirements, such as income, that are available for health coverage should also become available for CalFresh.
2. Policy Alignment:
   - Reporting requirements for consumers of health coverage and CalFresh should be aligned to minimize duplicative paperwork and churning of eligible families - including SB 1002 (de León).
   - Customer service standards for health coverage and CalFresh that deliver real-time or "Same Day Service" should be developed and aligned for excellent, consistent, and one-stop service in every county - including SB 1147 (DeSaulnier).
3. Program Integration:
   - Community-based application assistance and outreach programs for health coverage and for CalFresh should be able to be combined so consumers seeking both receive seamless support.

For each area, it will be essential to involve all stakeholders, secure any required policy changes at both the federal and state levels, and identify any needed resources.

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