

APPENDIX A:

Myths & Facts About CalFresh for Older Adults (ages 60 and over)

MYTH: CalFresh is welfare.

FACT: CalFresh is a nutrition assistance program. It helps low-income people buy nutritious foods. It is not welfare. In fact, using CalFresh helps your community. Every \$1 of CalFresh money spent returns \$1.79 to your local economy and can lead to an increase in the number of jobs.

MYTH: Older adults only receive \$16 a month in CalFresh.

FACT: Sixteen dollars is the smallest amount you can receive. The average amount of CalFresh for older adults is much higher. And even \$16/month equals almost \$200/year, which can really help stretch your household budget.

MYTH: Older adults cannot own or be buying a home. If they own or are buying a home, the government will take it.

FACT: You can own or buy a home and have cars and still get CalFresh. The CalFresh Program does not require a person to sign away their home.

MYTH: Older adults must go to the CalFresh office for an interview.

FACT: If you are not able to go to the CalFresh office, you may request a telephone interview. You may also ask a relative, pastor,

neighbor, etc., to attend the interview as an authorized representative. If everyone in your CalFresh case is older than 60 years of age or is a person with a disability, then the county is required to waive the face-to-face interview. The interview can be conducted by phone or, in some cases, the county can do a home visit.

MYTH: You have to go to the CalFresh office every few months to keep getting benefits.

FACT: Households in which all adult members are seniors may only have to recertify every 24 months, and counties must provide the option to waive the face-to-face interview if all household members are 60 or older, or have a disability. You may want to ask for a telephone interview. Or a friend or family member can go for you.

MYTH: Older adults are only allowed \$3,250 in resources.

FACT: In most cases, there is no resource limit for CalFresh. You may be eligible even if you have money in savings and retirement accounts.

MYTH: Older adults do not receive credit for medical and prescription drug bills.

FACT: Certain medical expenses are deducted from the household's gross income to help older adults receive a greater amount of CalFresh benefits. Out-of-pocket medical expenses that exceed \$35 a month may be deducted unless an insurance company or someone who is not a household member pays for them. Only the amount over \$35 can be deducted.

MYTH: Older adults must stand in line at a crowded office to apply.

FACT: Older adults can apply online, request that an application be mailed to them, or download, mail, or fax in an application.

MYTH: CalFresh is only for families with children.

FACT: CalFresh is for eligible individuals and families, including older adults.

MYTH: I do not want to ask for help from the government and take CalFresh from someone else who needs it more.

FACT: By receiving CalFresh benefits, you are not taking benefits away from another person. Everyone who applies and is determined to be eligible will get CalFresh benefits. The USDA sets aside funds for the program, and when people who are eligible don't participate in the program, millions of dollars go unused. This is money that can help stimulate your local economy and help create jobs in your community.

MYTH: Senior households who receive CalFresh will not be able to receive meals-on-wheels.

FACT: Households can receive CalFresh and still get meals-on-wheels. You can use CalFresh to purchase food at the store. This means you will have extra food in addition to your meals-on-wheels.

MYTH: If I am receiving Social Security Retirement or Disability benefits, I am not eligible for CalFresh.

FACT: Both Social Security (SSA) and Disability (SSDI and SDI) recipients are eligible to apply for CalFresh. In fact, most older adults or people with disabilities don't have to pass the gross income test. Also, various expenses such as medicine, mortgage, home insurance, and electricity costs are taken into account before checking for eligibility. [Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients also get a State Supplemental Payment (SSP) and are NOT eligible for CalFresh because the benefit amount they receive already includes money for food. However, other household members who are not receiving SSI/SSP might still be eligible. Additionally, if the recipient recently moved to California and is not yet receiving SSP, they may be eligible for CalFresh until they begin receiving SSP.]

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service. "10 Myths and Facts About Food Stamp Benefits and the Elderly." July 2007. Online at www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/pdfs/myths-elderly.pdf