

Chapter Four: Promoting CalFresh to Older Adults

Every dollar in CalFresh benefits generates \$1.79 in local economic activity.¹⁹

When talking with older adults about CalFresh, it is helpful to discuss the benefits of the program. The following talking points are especially effective with older adults:

- CalFresh (the new name for the Food Stamp Program) is a nutrition assistance program, *not* a welfare program. CalFresh can help you and your family to buy the food you need for good health.²⁰
- Using CalFresh puts money into your state and local economy. This can lead to an increase in the number of jobs. If everyone who is eligible for CalFresh participated in the program, approximately \$4.9 billion in additional federal nutrition assistance dollars would come into California each year. This federal money would generate approximately \$8.7 billion in additional economic activity statewide per year.²¹
- CalFresh is easy to use. Each month CalFresh benefits are issued on an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card – like an ATM card. The EBT card can be used at most grocery stores, discount chains, farmers’ markets, and neighborhood stores.
- Special rules make it easier for adults aged 60 and older to get CalFresh (e.g., no gross income test, face-to-face interview waiver). Also, if all adults in the household are aged 60 and older or have a disability, recertification may only be required every two years, and no quarterly/semi-annual reporting is required. Instead, reporting is only required when changes occur to household composition, income, or address.
- If you feel you are not mobile enough to get to the store, you may choose someone to go shopping for you, using your CalFresh benefits. This person is considered your “authorized representative.” It could be a friend, a relative, a caretaker, someone who works for an agency, or anyone else you choose to “represent” you.²²
- Recent changes in program regulations may make you eligible, even if you weren’t eligible in the past (e.g., no resource limits).
- Even if you do receive SSI, others who live in your home may still be eligible – your children or grandchildren, for instance.

¹⁹ Hanson, K. *The Food Assistance National Input-Output Multiplier (FANIOM) Model and Stimulus Effects of SNAP*. ERR-103, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Econ. Res. Serv., October 2010. Accessed March 9, 2012. http://www.ers.usda.gov/media/134117/err103_1_.pdf

²⁰ U.S. Department of Agriculture, “Common SNAP Myths.” SNAP Community Outreach Toolkit, August 2011. Accessed March 9, 2012, <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/tool-kits.htm>

²¹ Shimada T. *Lost Dollars, Empty Plates: The Impact of CalFresh Participation on State and Local Economies*, California Food Policy Advocates, February 2012. Accessed March 9, 2012, <http://cfpa.net/lost-dollars-empty-plates-2012>

²² U.S. Department of Agriculture, “Community Partner Outreach Toolkit, Engaging Special Populations, Senior Outreach,” SNAP. Accessed March 9, 2012, <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/tool-kits.htm>

- Sixteen dollars is the *minimum* benefit for one person on CalFresh. Even with just \$16/month, that person would receive \$192/year. Would you throw away a monthly coupon for \$16?²³

Addressing Myths

Despite the benefits of the program, older adults are often reluctant to apply for CalFresh benefits due to misconceptions. This section provides examples of concerns that older adults may have about CalFresh and provides suggested responses that may be helpful.

Myth

CalFresh is only for families with children.

Fact

- CalFresh is for eligible individuals and families, including older adults.
- CalFresh can help you purchase healthy foods for you and your family.

Myth

CalFresh is welfare.

Fact

- CalFresh is designed to help people when money is tight. Sometimes people need a little extra help. You've worked hard and paid for this benefit.²⁴



- Receiving extra food dollars from CalFresh allows you to have more money to purchase other necessities like medicine, utilities, and personal items.²⁵

Myth

It's hard and cumbersome to apply.

Fact

- Special regulations make it easier for individuals 60 years and older to apply for and maintain CalFresh benefits.
- You don't even need to step foot into a CalFresh office. The application can be provided via mail, phone, fax, or the Internet, and the interview can be conducted over the phone in most counties.²⁶

²³ Barber, L & N. Dowd Eisenhower, "SNAP and the Aging Network," Webinar March 2012. National Council on Aging, slides 22 and 26.

²⁴ U.S. Department of Agriculture, "Community Partner Outreach Toolkit, Addressing Barriers and Challenges," SNAP. Accessed March 9, 2012, <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/tool-kits.htm>

²⁵ USDA Toolkit – Addressing Barriers and Challenges http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/toolkits/2011/resources/SNAP_SpecPop_AddressSeniorConcerns.pdf

²⁶ California Department of Social Services. <http://www.calfresh.ca.gov/PG847.htm>

- A phone interview is your right and is an option available to you. Just make sure to request a phone interview when the eligibility worker contacts you to set up an appointment. In some areas, you may even be eligible for a home visit in lieu of a phone or in-person interview.
- CalFresh is easy to use. The Electronic Benefit Card (EBT) is like an ATM card that can be used at most grocery stores and Certified Farmers' Markets.
- You may be eligible to use your EBT card in certified restaurants in some counties.

Myth

Other people need the benefit more than I do.

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.²⁷
- You worked hard and the taxes you paid helped to create CalFresh. Now it's time to let it help you buy the healthy foods you like to eat.


- CalFresh helps your state and local economy. Every dollar in CalFresh benefits generates \$1.79 in economic activity.²⁸

Myth

Applying for CalFresh isn't worth the benefit.

Fact

- The minimum amount an individual can receive is \$16 a month. Sixteen dollars doesn't seem like much, but over a year it adds up to \$192. Think of what you could purchase with \$192.
- Would you throw away a coupon for \$16? How much could you buy in prescriptions with the money you save on food?²⁹
- The maximum benefit for a **one-person household** is \$200 a month. (Note: This amount changes yearly.)³⁰

 For more suggestions on how to combat myths about CalFresh, please refer to *Older Adults Appendix A*.

²⁷ U.S. Department of Agriculture, "Common SNAP Myths," SNAP Community Outreach Toolkit, August 2011. Accessed March 9, 2012, <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/tool-kits.htm>

²⁸ Hanson, K. *The Food Assistance National Input-Output Multiplier (FANIOM) Model and Stimulus Effects of SNAP*. ERR-103, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Econ. Res. Serv., October 2010. Accessed March 9, 2012. http://www.ers.usda.gov/media/134117/err103_1_.pdf

²⁹ Barber, L. & N Dowd Eisenhower, "SNAP and the Aging Network," Webinar National Council on Aging, March 2012. Slide 26.

³⁰ U.S. Department of Agriculture, "SNAP Benefits October 2011-2012." Accessed March 9, 2012, http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/applicant_recipients/eligibility.htm