

Chapter Eight: Prescreening Older Adults – The Basics

Prescreening is the most basic level of screening. It includes providing an overview of the CalFresh Program, asking a set of basic questions, and inviting the client to accept application assistance from the outreach worker and/or county CalFresh office.³³ For an in-depth description of the prescreening process, including all of the questions that comprise a prescreening, please refer to Chapter Five in the *CalFresh Outreach Basics Handbook for the General Market*.

While the prescreening process involves several questions, two areas are particularly pertinent to older adults:

Client Age

For purposes of CalFresh program screening, it is important to know whether the client is 60 years of age or older. If so, he or she is considered “elderly” under CalFresh regulations, which will make the household eligible for special rules that make it easier to qualify. For example, households with any members who are elderly or disabled do not have to pass the gross income test.

SSI Benefits

Many older adults may be receiving SSI, which may make them ineligible for CalFresh. SSI is a federal income supplement program funded by general tax revenues (not Social Security taxes). SSI is for people 65 or older, as well as people of any age who are blind or have a disability, including children, who have little or no income. It provides cash to meet basic needs for food, clothing, and shelter. In California, a

client who receives SSI also generally receives State Supplementary Payment (SSP), which is California’s supplement to SSI and is intended to increase the benefit amount. SSP contains money for food, which makes recipients ineligible for CalFresh.

Understanding which type of Social Security benefits a client receives can be confusing, as there are four different government-run “S” programs.

 Refer to *Older Adults Appendix G* for a helpful desk aid for outreach workers titled “All About the ‘Ss,’” which can be used as a cheat sheet on the definitions of each Social Security benefit program.

If the client is not sure of the type of Social Security benefit they may be receiving, encourage them to contact their local Social Security Administration office (SSA) to find out. Consider keeping the number of the local SSA available as a resource to provide the client, or assist the client by making the call together. If it appears that the client is on SSI, it is up to the client to decide whether they would like to continue with the application process. Also, note that while the SSI/SSP recipient is not eligible, their household members may be. Local SSA phone numbers can be accessed online at <https://secure.ssa.gov/apps6z/FOLO/fo001.jsp>

Note that if an older adult moves to California from another state and is not yet receiving SSP, they may be eligible for CalFresh until they begin receiving SSP.

³³ Note that outreach staff should offer all candidates application assistance after the prescreen, whether they prescreen favorably or not.