

# Welcome to Your Toolkit!



Congratulations on becoming a CalFresh outreach worker! You are now in a position to help make amazing positive change in the lives of millions of Californians. But here's something you may not be aware of: You can even help improve the economy of the entire state!

CalFresh, formerly known as Food Stamps in California and known federally as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), is the cornerstone of the nation's nutrition safety net. In the 2011 fiscal year, SNAP distributed \$71.8 billion in benefits to 44.7 million Americans.<sup>1</sup>

Obviously, those benefits help put food on the table. But using CalFresh also helps California and the local economy. Every \$5 in CalFresh benefits generates \$9 in local economic activity and can lead to an increase in the number of jobs. Benefits are spent in local grocery stores, which help support local retailers.<sup>2,3</sup>

However, only about half of eligible Californians are receiving CalFresh benefits. That's the lowest participation rate in the nation, and it translates into almost 2.5 million eligible people who aren't getting CalFresh.<sup>4</sup>

Why aren't more Californians applying for these benefits? There are many reasons. A United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)

report identified 19 studies that had asked eligible households why they did not participate. The major issues reported were:

- Being unaware of SNAP or how to apply
- Thinking they were ineligible
- Wanting to avoid dependence on government assistance
- Thinking the SNAP application or participation requirements are too burdensome
- Feeling social stigma associated with SNAP participation

A common reason people give is simply this: **They didn't know they were eligible.**

As an outreach worker, you have the opportunity to increase awareness of the CalFresh program and help eligible people receive their benefits. While this is clearly a rewarding job, it's not a simple one. In order to do it well, you have to familiarize yourself with complex eligibility rules and regulations. In addition, you must work with a diverse group of people who may be confused, irritated, or misinformed about the application process.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Food and Nutrition Service, *Summary, FY2011-FY2012 Generated from National Data Bank version 8.2 Preload on 7/26/2012, Program Information Report*. Accessed September 7, 2012, [http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns/key\\_data/may-2012.xls](http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns/key_data/may-2012.xls)

<sup>2</sup> Hanson, Kenneth, *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/publications/err-economic-research-report/err103.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Services, *The Benefits of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)*, August 2011. Accessed September 6, 2012, [http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/pdfs/bc\\_benefits.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/pdfs/bc_benefits.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Services, *Reaching Those in Need*, December 2011. Accessed September 8, 2012, <http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/snapmain.htm>

Fortunately, you have this toolkit. Inside you'll find a wealth of information and practical tools to help you perform more effective outreach.

The kit includes:

- *CalFresh Handbooks for the General Market and for Older Adults*, covering all the information you will need to succeed in conducting outreach
- *CalFresh Handbook Appendices*, complete with additional resources and presentations
- *Tips Sheets*, to help you polish your interpersonal outreach skills
- *Regulation Quick Reference Sheets*, to help you quickly and easily navigate regulations for specific populations while you are on the job
- *Consumer Fliers*, additional outreach pieces you can give to potential applicants
- *Worksheets and Forms*, to assist you with the application process and help you stay organized on the job
- *Outreach Video*, to introduce you to the CalFresh program and give you an insider's look at the role of an outreach worker
- *Resource CD*, preloaded with all of the great materials you are receiving as part of the toolkit

Plus, you'll find many more resources in the toolkit case, including:

- *Copies of all of the Consumer Fliers*, for you to hand out when you are in the field
- *Tear pads for each worksheet*
- *Space to insert other outreach pieces*, such as brochures or bookmarks

These tools will be invaluable in helping you understand CalFresh outreach activities. They also explain the basic CalFresh policies and regulations required by CDSS and mandated by federal law. When you know and understand these regulations, you can work smoothly and confidently, make successful referrals to the CalFresh offices, and effectively assist clients with the CalFresh application process.

We welcome any comments and suggestions you have to improve this product. If you would like to become even more knowledgeable about CalFresh outreach, we can provide you with additional training.

Good luck, and congratulations once again!

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