

The Keys to CalFresh Outreach General Market



- **Introduction**
Welcome to Your Toolkit! 1

- **Chapter One**
California's CalFresh Outreach Program 3

- **Chapter Two**
Outreach Worker Preparation 7

- **Chapter Three**
Outreach Activities 13

- **Chapter Four**
Eligibility Basics 24

- **Chapter Five**
Overview of the Application Process 29

- **Chapter Six**
Maintain Benefits When Eligible. 48

Chapter One: California's CalFresh Outreach Program



The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) implements the CalFresh Outreach efforts throughout the state. They do this through an interagency agreement with the *Network for a Healthy California (Network)* at the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and in partnership with several prime contractors and more than 100 community-based nonprofit organization sub-contractors.

SNAP/CalFresh Outreach is a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) initiative. USDA provides reimbursement funds that allow states to enhance their outreach and increase program enrollment.¹

CalFresh is administered by each county in California. All outreach efforts benefit from

an active partnership with county CalFresh offices, which process CalFresh applications and determine eligibility. Each of California's 58 counties accepts online applications.²

History of CalFresh Outreach

SNAP/Food Stamps/CalFresh was established in its modern form by the Food Stamp Reform Act of 1977. Its purpose was to act as a safety net against hunger for Americans with low incomes. In the latter half of the 1980s, the program was expanded due to severe domestic hunger. Outreach, however, became an optional activity for the states with the passage of the Hunger Prevention Act of 1988 and the Mickey Leland Memorial Domestic Hunger Relief Act in 1990.³

In 2003, CDSS and CDPH collaborated with the California Association of Food Banks (CAFB) to develop the first California Food Stamp Access Improvement Plan. The plan has been updated annually and, as of October 1, 2012, it includes partnerships with many key organizations.⁴ The plan also includes a partnership with the Public Health Institute (PHI) for overall plan development and evaluation, and Runyon Saltzman and Einhorn (RS&E) for statewide media, advertising and public relations. In 2011, the plan was renamed the CalFresh Outreach Plan.

¹ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Services. *State Outreach Plan Guidance*. Updated April 2012, accessed September 8, 2012, <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/guidance/stateplan.htm>

² *Your Online Resource for California Benefits Simplified*, accessed September 8, 2012, <http://www.benefitscal.org/> and <http://beneficioscal.org>

³ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Services. *SNAP Legislation*, accessed September 9, 2012, <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/rules/Legislation/>

⁴ California Association of Food Banks, Catholic Charities of California (CCC), The California State University Chico Research Foundation (CRF), Redwood Community Health Coalition (RCHC), Santa Ynez Valley People Helping People (SYVPHP), Clinica Sierra Vista (CSV), and INFO LINE of San Diego County, dba 211 San Diego.

Need

In the report *Household Food Security in the United States in 2011*, the USDA Economic Research Service (ERS) stated that 14.9 percent of American households had difficulty “at some time during the year providing enough food for all their members due to a lack of resources.” In California, this food insecurity rate reached 16.96 percent.⁵

A different study looked at Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs), which include central cities plus the surrounding counties with strong economic and social ties to the central cities. The study reported that in the Bakersfield, Fresno and Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario MSAs, the food insecurity rate was more than 23 percent.⁶

According to the USDA ERS’ *The Food Assistance Landscape FFY 2011 Annual Report*, published in March 2012, SNAP accounted for 73 percent of all federal food and nutrition spending in fiscal year 2011. Benefits per person averaged \$134 per month nationally. Federal spending for the program was over \$75 billion.⁷ In California the average benefit amount was \$147 per month.⁸

In fiscal year 2011, almost 45 million people in the United States, or about one in seven, participated in SNAP each month. This is the largest number ever, and marks an increase of 11 percent from the previous year.⁷

Economists estimate that every \$1 in CalFresh benefits generates \$1.79 in local economic activity.⁹ When CalFresh funds are allocated, they are generally spent in the same month and act as a substantial stimulus to local economies.

Economists estimate that every \$1 in CalFresh benefits generates \$1.79 in local economic activity.⁹ When CalFresh funds are allocated, they are generally spent in the same month and act as a substantial stimulus to local economies.

Participation Rate

A 2012 USDA report estimated that nationally only 72 percent of eligible people participated in SNAP in 2009. California’s participation rate was estimated at 53 percent. The estimated participation rate for those working but still eligible was 60 percent nationally and 36 percent for California. California’s participation rate ranks last among all the states.¹⁰ USDA’s most recent participation figures (June 2012) show California as having over 4 million participants and more than any other state.¹¹

⁵ Coleman-Jensen, Alisha, Mark Nord, Margaret Andrews, and Steven Carlson. *Household Food Security in the United States in 2011*. ERR-141, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, September 2012, accessed September 9, 2012, <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/ERR125/>

⁶ FRAC *Food Hardship in America 2011*, updated February 2012, accessed September 9, 2012, http://frac.org/pdf/food_hardship_2011_report.pdf

⁷ Oliveira, Victor. *The Food Assistance Landscape*. EIB-93, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, March 2012, accessed September 9, 2012, <http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/eib93/>

⁸ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Services. *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program: Average Monthly Benefit per Person*, updated August 30, 2012, accessed September 9, 2012, [http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/18SNAPavg\\$PP.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/18SNAPavg$PP.htm)

⁹ Hanson, Kenneth. *The Food Assistance National Input-Output Multiplier (FANIOM) Model and Stimulus Effects of SNAP*. ERR-103. U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Econ. Res. Serv. October 2010. Accessed March 9, 2012, <http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/err-economic-research-report/err103.aspx>

For participation estimates in your county see the Program Access Index of California Food Policy Advocates' Measuring County CalFresh Performance in 2010.¹²

Funding Process and Mechanism

CalFresh Outreach is a public/private partnership. The Prime Contractors, and their community-based organization (CBO) subcontractors, secure outreach funds from non-profit organizations to conduct outreach. This process is referred to as State Share.

For all of the outreach efforts included in the CalFresh Outreach Plan, USDA provides 100 percent reimbursement of documented and allowable costs.

CDPH retains a percentage of the reimbursement to administer the CalFresh Outreach Plan, maintain the statewide hotline, and develop materials, mass media, and other training and outreach program enhancements.

Prime Contractors receive a percentage of the reimbursement to manage their subcontractors. Subcontractors receive the remaining reimbursement to support CalFresh Outreach.

The goal of CalFresh outreach is to:

- Increase the number of households participating in CalFresh.

The goal of CalFresh outreach is to:

- Increase the number of households participating in CalFresh.
- Educate people with low incomes and other stakeholders about CalFresh.

- Educate people with low incomes and other stakeholders about CalFresh.

Roles and Responsibilities

USDA – Provides federal reimbursement matching funds and Plan approval.

CDSS – Provides oversight of the CalFresh Outreach Plan and is the state agency responsible for all federal SNAP funding.

CDPH – Implements aspects of the CalFresh Outreach Plan and reports to CDSS.

County CalFresh Offices – Responsible for determining CalFresh eligibility, CalFresh program administration and outreach, including partnering with community-based organizations.

¹⁰ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Services. *Reaching Those in Need*, December 2011, accessed September 8, 2012, <http://www.fns.usda.gov/ora/menu/Published/snap/FILES/Participation/Reaching2009.pdf>

¹¹ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Services. "Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program:" *Number of Persons Participating*, updated August 2012, accessed September 9, 2012, <http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/29SNAPcurrPP.htm>

¹² Shimada, T. *Measuring County CalFresh Performance in 2012*, updated February 2012, California Food Policy Advocates, accessed September 9, 2012, <http://cfpa.net/CalFresh/CFPAPublications/PAI-FullReport-2012.pdf>



Accomplishments

In FFY 2011, CalFresh Outreach partners secured an estimated \$141.4 million in annual CalFresh benefits to California. They did this by prescreening 475,000 individuals, assisting an estimated 39,000 households with their applications, and securing enrollment of an estimated 35,000 new CalFresh households, or approximately 80,000 individuals.

To achieve this level of success, a great deal of phone work, community partnering, and media activity took place. Refer to the CalFresh Annual report, available from CDSS, for more detailed information.

Future Plans

The CalFresh Outreach Plan will continue with a new funding cycle beginning October 1, 2013.

Funded CBO/Partners – Provide State Share and carry out direct outreach services as described in the Scope of Work (SOW); report to Prime Contractors. Prime Contractors report to CDSS.

Unfunded Partners – Promote CalFresh by distributing outreach materials to their clients and hosting CalFresh outreach workers at their sites; work with funded CBOs.

Chapter Two: Outreach Worker Preparation

Effective CalFresh Outreach requires knowledge and skill, which is best gained through experience, education, and mentorship. To begin, it helps to know some key facts about CalFresh recipients.

- In FFY 2012, the maximum gross weekly income for a CalFresh household of three was less than \$464 per week, or \$2,008 per month.¹
- Families living in poverty often focus on relieving hunger as inexpensively as possible and may choose shelter over food when there is not enough money in the household.
- Some people living in poverty have been victims of abuse.
- Many people need CalFresh benefits for the first time due to underemployment, unemployment or low wages.
- According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2010 *Supplemental Poverty Measure*, the estimated percentage of Americans age 65 and older living in poverty is 15.9 percent.²

SNAP/CalFresh plays a key role in alleviating the effects of poverty in the United States.³



However, many CalFresh clients feel embarrassed about their situation and may delay applying for, or accepting, benefits. According to some CalFresh eligibility workers, an estimated 60 percent of those who submit an application fail to follow up for the initial interview.

¹ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Services. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. *Fact Sheet on Resources, Income, and Benefits*, March 2012, accessed September 10, 2012, http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/applicant_recipients/fs_Res_Ben_Elig.htm

² Short, Kathleen. *The Research Supplemental Poverty Measure: 2010*, U.S. Department of Commerce, United States Census Bureau, November 2011, accessed September 10, 2012, <http://www.census.gov/prod/2011pubs/p60-241.pdf>

³ Tiehen, Laura, Dean Jolliffe, and Craig Gunderson. *Alleviating Poverty in the United States: The Critical Role of SNAP Benefits*, ERR-132, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, April 2012, accessed September 10, 2012, www.ers.usda.gov/publications/ERR132/ERR132.pdf

Build Client Confidence with a Tangible Resource

You did not create the problems that you find in the community. However, you can contribute to a solution. The average CalFresh monthly benefit in California in 2011 was \$147 per person, or \$335 per household.^{4,5} This is very real relief for many households. As an outreach worker, you may be able to help households overcome the barriers to get their entitled benefits.



The average CalFresh monthly benefit in California in 2011 was \$147 per person, or \$335 per household.^{4,5}

Make a Good First Impression

Your initial contact with the client will set the tone for the entire encounter. Be on time if it is an appointment, have helpful information available, show compassion, listen carefully, and use body language that demonstrates respect.

 See *Tip Sheet A* for keys to compassionate interviewing.

People living in poverty are just like everybody else, except that they have to survive daily under very difficult circumstances. You might be the first person the client tells about his or her situation. They may rattle off a list of hardships without any emotion. You may feel overwhelmed. Realize that you are part of a community of service providers; your contribution is to help relieve hunger. Focus on what you can contribute. Set reasonable expectations for yourself and with your client.

Clients may be angry and resentful and blame those who offer to help for not helping them enough. Allow the client to vent. Acknowledge their difficulties. **Try to offer hope and focus on the most beneficial thing you can do: help them complete the CalFresh application.**

Most clients are very appreciative of the outreach worker's help. The client may feel vulnerable when acknowledging hardship to a stranger and you may feel inadequate. Know that the act of listening to someone in pain can be very healing.

⁴ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Services. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program: Average Monthly Benefit per Person*, August 2012, accessed September 10, 2012, [http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/18SNAPavg\\$PPP.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/18SNAPavg$PPP.htm)

⁵ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Services. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program: Average Monthly Benefit per Household*, August 2012, accessed September 10, 2012, [www.fns.usda.gov/pd/19SNAPavg\\$HH.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/19SNAPavg$HH.htm)

Demonstrate Self-Confidence

To do your best work, you need self-confidence. You can maximize your confidence by knowing as much as possible about CalFresh and other local community resources, as well as the client's cultural perspective and their unique strengths and barriers.

Gather Information

To supplement the information in this toolkit, talk to colleagues, review similar toolkits, or read the April 2012 in-depth profile of SNAP.⁶

For local community information, attend community service provider hunger coalition meetings, visit local food banks, stop by emergency shelters, and shadow (or do outreach with) an experienced outreach worker.

To understand the client's unique strengths and barriers, ask the client to tell their story.

Use Effective Communication Skills

Communication is the foundation of any successful outreach worker/client relationship. To communicate in a way that fosters mutual trust and understanding between you and your client, try using the following techniques:

- Listen with an open mind and avoid value judgments. If clients sense they are being judged, they can become defensive or hostile.

- Show that you are listening actively. Ask questions to clarify what the client has told you, and paraphrase what you heard back to the client. The client will know that you are interested and will likely be more open and cooperative.
- Ask questions that require more than “Yes” or “No” answers. This lets the client know that you want to understand his or her unique situation.
- Use “I” statements rather than “You” statements: “*I would like to help you fill out this application*” rather than “*You have to fill out this application,*” for example. This keeps the client in control of the application process.
- Share examples from real life, such as: “*One of my clients waited an extra month to get their CalFresh benefits because they missed an appointment with the eligibility worker.*” This lets the client know that they can learn from another person's experience.
- Be honest. If you don't exaggerate or make false promises, the client will most likely trust you. Stick with the facts, and finish every encounter by offering the client reassurance.

CalFresh eligibility is based on the client's income, minus approved deductions. The client feels best if they know that the regulations and requirements are not personal. You can explain that the requirements have developed over time; the regulations are there to make sure that only people who are eligible for the benefits will get them.

⁶U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Services. Office of Research and Analysis, April 2012, *Building a Healthy America: A Profile of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program*, accessed September 10, 2012, www.fns.usda.gov/ORA/menu/Published/SNAP/FILES/Other/BuildingHealthyAmerica.pdf

In order to help the client, you must work closely with your local CalFresh office. When communicating with the CalFresh office, keep in mind that **the eligibility worker is the only person who can determine eligibility**. Be diplomatic, professional, and factual when you communicate with the county on the client's behalf.

Once you establish a reliable relationship with the local county office, barriers for the client are reduced and the chances of a complete application and a timely application determination increase.

You can expect routine hiccups in the application process. Understanding that the process is pretty much the same for everyone helps the client handle delays without frustration.

Maintain Confidentiality

Outreach workers are required to keep clients' personal information confidential.⁷

Each agency has its own protocol for protecting client privacy. When client privacy is not protected, the individual who releases the information improperly may be held accountable.

Personal and confidential information includes but is not limited to the following:

- Client names
- Names of household members
- Social Security numbers
- Physical descriptions

- Home addresses
- Telephone numbers
- Education levels
- Financial matters
- Medical or employment history

Personal and confidential information includes but is not limited to the following:

- Client names
- Names of household members
- Social Security numbers
- Physical descriptions
- Home addresses
- Telephone numbers
- Education levels
- Financial matters
- Medical or employment history

Remember, disclosure of information obtained from clients may be made only to the person authorized by the client. Do not leave client information, whether hard copy or on computer, in your car. Place confidential information in a secure location and do not leave it in the open where it can be seen by anyone. If you

⁷U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Services. *State Outreach Plan Guidance*, updated April 2012, accessed September 8, 2012, <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/guidance/stateplan.htm>

use a computer to keep records, make sure it is encrypted with appropriate software. Follow your agency's protocol for protecting client privacy.

Get a Release/Exchange of Information

Sometimes it is necessary for you to talk to the eligibility worker without the client present. A signed Release/Exchange of Information Form is required to allow you to do this. Protect yourself, your client, and your agency by asking the client to sign a Release/Exchange of Information Form.

 Go to *Worksheet G* for a sample Release/Exchange of Information Form.

The client has the right to refuse to sign a release. Keep in mind, though, that in order to follow up on a client you must have the signed Release of Information Form available when you contact the eligibility worker.

You can avoid the need for a release by having the client submit their CalFresh application themselves. A client can go online and complete the application in either English or Spanish.⁸ (Remember, adopting a motto of “do with” and not “do for” the client keeps the client in charge.) With the exception of a signed release, CalFresh outreach workers are not required to keep copies of client information.

Apart from the release being a legal requirement, asking permission first before you share the client's information is another way that you show respect for the client. Finding a quiet place to ask questions builds trust. Asking permission to follow up with the client after the

initial application lets the client know that you care what happens to them.

Sometimes it is necessary for you to talk to the eligibility worker without the client present. A signed Release/Exchange of Information Form is required to allow you to do this.

To further build client confidence and trust, it is often helpful for you to provide phone numbers to resources that are not food related, like housing or counseling.

 Go to *Worksheet H* to create a list of local resources that you can share with your client, if needed.

Find an Outreach Mentor

CAFB offers its subcontractors a mentorship program, which is a valuable resource for new outreach workers. Outreach veterans can help new outreach workers navigate challenges, locate information, and become familiar with resources that already exist.

If you work with CAFB, contact them to participate in the mentorship program. If you do not work with CAFB and would like a mentor, see who else in your area is doing CalFresh Outreach. Knowledgeable outreach workers can

⁸ *Your Online Resource for California Benefits Simplified*, accessed September 8, 2012, <http://www.benefitscal.org/> and <http://beneficioscal.org>

be found in a number of places, including local CalFresh task forces, anti-hunger coalitions and meetings.

Be Culturally Competent

Cultural competence refers to how well people understand and interact with people from diverse backgrounds. A diverse population includes people of different nationalities, ethnic groups, and religious backgrounds, as well as different socio-economic positions, genders, ages, abilities, and levels of integration into mainstream American culture.

By the year 2030, according to Census Bureau reports, 40 percent of the United States population will describe themselves as members of a racial and ethnic group other than non-Hispanic white.⁹

To become culturally competent, spend time with the people you need to get to know. Talk to trusted members of the community to learn the practices and beliefs that are new to you. Look for opportunities to attend cultural awareness training. Know your own cultural biases so that you do not offend others or appear judgmental.⁹

Refer to Frequently Asked Questions

As you work with community members and your outreach partners, it is helpful to have a list of frequently asked questions for reference.



- ✎ Go to *General Market Appendix F1* to find a list of common questions along with the suggested responses.

Use Media Talking Points

Everyone relies on media to advertise their programs or to find out about a different program. From time to time outreach workers are interviewed about CalFresh.

- ✎ To find some approved talking points that are best to use when dealing with members of the media, go to *General Market Appendix F5*.

Help to Overcome Myths

A myth is a false belief, and there are many associated with CalFresh. Replacing myth with fact is an ongoing job for the outreach worker. Many clients believe they will have to repay

⁹United States Department of Agriculture, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. *Engaging Special Populations – Cultural Competency*, accessed September 10, 2012, http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/pdfs/toolkit/2011/Community/Special-Populations/cultural_competency.pdf

CalFresh benefits, they will be deported, their children will be drafted into the military, or they will not be allowed to become citizens.

 All of these myths and more are covered in *General Market Appendix F8*.

Know the facts and you will be able to educate and reduce barriers for your clients.

Be Prepared and Be Successful

Successful outreach workers are prepared. With each success, they find that their reputation spreads in the community and clients will refer friends to them for support.



Chapter Three: Outreach Activities

CalFresh Information Line

Callers to the toll-free statewide CalFresh Information Lines (CIL) enter their ZIP code and receive information and a referral to the appropriate county office. The toll-free numbers are:

- 1-877-847-3663 (English)
- 1-888-9-COMIDA or 1-888-926-6432 (Spanish)

Each county selects how the CIL calls are handled. About 60 percent of counties refer the calls to a voice recording; others route calls to a live operator at the CalFresh office, 2-1-1 agencies, or to food bank help lines.

Events

The primary goal of CalFresh Outreach is to increase participation in CalFresh. Outreach can take place anywhere. However, outreach workers have found that bringing information to community events is very effective. Often, outreach workers will complete prescreening and application assistance at these events.

- ✎ See Chapter Five of this manual for details on prescreening and application assistance.

People who attend community events may not need services themselves, but may know someone who could use the CalFresh information.



Examples of community events include:

Health Fairs

Health fair organizers bring together the community stakeholders and provide information, health screening, and fun activities.

- ✎ This toolkit contains brochures and fliers that are ideal as “grab and go” pieces for community members who may want information but may not want to stop and talk to someone.
- ✎ Go to the *Consumer Fliers tab* and the materials section of your toolkit for information designed especially for these events.

Check bulletin boards and newspapers for information about upcoming health fairs, or attend planning collaborative meetings. Often, if you participate in planning an event, you

will have the best opportunity to promote your program to the organizers, other participating agencies, and people at the event.

Parents at Schools

In 2011, Assembly Bill (AB) 402 was signed in an effort to increase participation in CalFresh. The bill authorized school districts or county offices of education to enter into a memorandum of understanding with the local agency that determines CalFresh program eligibility to share information provided on the School Lunch Program application to determine an applicant's CalFresh program eligibility. Parents may not be aware that students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch may be eligible for CalFresh. In addition, students in families receiving CalFresh may be eligible for free or reduced-price school meals.

Back to School nights or Parent Teacher nights during the school year give you access to parents, many of whom may not know about CalFresh. Check with your local Parent Teacher Association,^{1,2} school district administrators, and school principals for other opportunities.

Retail Promotion

CalFresh participants use their benefits at grocery stores, farmers' markets, dollar stores, and mini markets. They can use their CalFresh benefits at any store or market that accepts the EBT card.³

The *Network-Retail Program* helps form partnerships between neighborhood stores and community health agencies to increase the consumption and purchase of fruits and vegetables among those who are CalFresh-eligible. It provides retailers with tools, resources, and outreach activities to inspire healthy change among consumers.⁴ Attending some of the *Network-Retail Program* promotional events and food demonstrations can be an effective way to increase enrollment in CalFresh.

Locations

To maximize CalFresh program reach, outreach workers find it helpful not just to attend events but to go to specific locations on a regular basis to find CalFresh applicants. Outreach workers have found that once they become a familiar face to the people accessing services, people are more willing to engage with them about CalFresh.

Examples of locations include:

Community Clinics

Community clinics and health centers (CCHCs) provide primary and preventive care to low-income individuals and families.^{5,6} CalFresh outreach takes place in some of these clinics but many clinics are not served.

¹ California Department of Education. *California School Directory*, accessed September 9, 2012, <http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/sd/>

² California State PTA. Accessed September 10, 2012, <http://www.capta.org/>

³ Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) is an electronic system for distributing CalFresh, California Food Assistance Program, and cash aid benefits. In California the card is called the Golden State Advantage EBT card. For details on the EBT card go to: www.ebt.ca.gov. Some EBT card users also can access their general relief cash aid from their EBT card. CalFresh can only be used to purchase food items. It cannot be used to withdraw cash.

⁴ California Department of Public Health. *Network for a Healthy California-Retail Program*, June 2012, accessed September 10, 2012, <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/cpns/Pages/RetailProgram.aspx>

⁵ California Primary Care Association, accessed February 14, 2013, <http://www.cPCA.org>

⁶ National Association of Community Health Centers. *California Health Center Fact Sheet, summer 2011*, accessed September 10, 2012, <http://www.nachc.com/client/documents/research/CA11.pdf>

There are more than 900 community clinics and health center sites throughout California. In 2012, these clinics served almost 5 million low-income individuals.⁸

Community health center or clinic staff often encourage outside speakers to teach classes, or to be on-site routinely to screen patients for programs that promote health. Contact your regional consortia for CCHC contacts in your area.⁷

There are more than 900 community clinics and health center sites throughout California. In 2012, these clinics served almost 5 million low-income individuals.⁸

Faith-Based Agencies

The Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnership works to build and support partnerships with faith-based and community organizations in order to better serve individuals, families, and communities in need.⁹ USDA is linked to this partnership and has a toolkit in Spanish.¹⁰

You can introduce yourself to these agencies and let them know that you are a CalFresh outreach worker. Look for a directory of faith-

based centers in your area and offer to bring information to their events, put small ads in bulletins, or take fliers to the office. Outreach workers have also successfully conducted outreach at faith-based counseling offices, homeless shelters, and congregate meal sites.

Farmers' Markets

Many farmers' markets accept EBT/CalFresh. Some may also run a program that doubles the amount of fresh produce someone using CalFresh is able to purchase with their benefits. Farmers' markets are great places to distribute fliers or answer questions about CalFresh.¹¹



Family Resource Centers

In some counties, Family Resource Centers are housed within the county Welfare Department Offices; in others, they are housed within the Early Start Program (www.frcnca.org) and in others, they are independent centers that provide a broad array of resources for families.

⁷ California Primary Care Association, Regional Associations, accessed February 14, 2013, <http://www.cpa.org/index.cfm/peer-networks-workgroups/regional-associations-california/>

⁸ California Primary Care Association 2012 Annual Report, accessed February 14, 2013, http://www.cpa.org/cpa/assets/File/About/Flipbooks/Annual-Report-2012/CPCA_2012_AR.html

⁹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Service. *About Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships*, accessed September 10, 2012, <http://www.hhs.gov/partnerships/about/>

¹⁰ United States Department of Agriculture, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. *La Mesa Completa*, accessed September 10, 2012, http://www.fns.usda.gov/outreach/getinvolved/documents/pastor_toolkit.pdf

¹¹ United States Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Marketing Service. *Farmers' Market Search*, accessed September 10, 2012, search.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets/

Food Distribution Sites

Community agencies such as food closets and food pantries obtain food from a larger food bank and from community food donations. Each organization then distributes the food, typically on a schedule. You can offer to conduct CalFresh Outreach at these times. Some food banks already do CalFresh Outreach at food distributions, so be sure to coordinate your efforts.¹²

Grocery Stores

Many grocery stores have community bulletin boards where you can post CalFresh information for shoppers. Other stores offer food at discounted prices.¹³

Schools

School counselors often come in contact with students in need of social services. You can bring brochures or fliers to school administrative

Older adults are among the fastest growing population in need of food assistance and can be located with help from the Area Agencies on Aging throughout California.¹⁴ Many do not know that they qualify for CalFresh.

offices and ask staff to give them to the counselors to distribute to their students. (Large outreach campaigns in the school setting require school administrative approval.)

Senior Centers

Older adults are among the fastest growing population in need of food assistance and can be located with help from the Area Agencies on Aging throughout California.¹⁴ Many do not know that they qualify for CalFresh.

 See the *CalFresh Outreach Basics Handbook for Older Adults* in this toolkit for details on effective outreach to older adults.

Shelters

Residents of homeless, domestic violence and refugee shelters may not be aware that they qualify for CalFresh. You can drop off outreach material, post information on bulletin boards, and even offer to make a presentation about the program requirements at a group meal.¹⁵ Shelter administrators generally appreciate someone who brings tangible resources to their residents.

Women, Infants, and Children Nutrition Program

WIC is a federally funded health and nutrition program for women, infants, and children. Participants must meet income guidelines and be pregnant, new mothers, or have infants or children under age five. Many WIC participants are also eligible for CalFresh. Outreach workers

¹² United Association of Food Banks. *CAFB Programs*, accessed September 10, 2012, http://www.cafoodbanks.org/CAFB_Programs.html

¹³ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Services. *SNAP Retailer Locator*, August 2012, accessed September 10, 2012, <http://www.snapretailerlocator.com/>

¹⁴ California Department of Aging. *Area Agency on Aging by County*, June 10, 2012, accessed September 10, 2012,

http://www.aging.ca.gov/ProgramsProviders/AAA/AAA_Listing.asp#S

¹⁵ HSD. *California Homeless Shelters and Social Services*, accessed September 10, 2012, <http://www.homelesshelterdirectory.org/california.html>

report very successful partnerships with the WIC agencies and frequently conduct outreach at WIC offices.¹⁶

In California in 2010, 84 WIC agencies provided services locally to over 1.45 million participants each month at over 650 sites throughout the state.¹⁶

How to Partner

CalFresh outreach workers can be extremely effective if they partner with agencies that work with the same target audience. Attending collaborative meetings, where several agencies meet on a regular basis to share resources, is an excellent way to access your target population. It's also a great opportunity to make presentations to the staff and clients of the organizations serving the same population you are trying to reach.

The following are some examples of partnership:

- A food bank and a small nonprofit agency both want to increase services to their clients. They might partner and agree to make referrals to each other, co-locate services, and abide by mutual standards of confidentiality.
- A food bank and an association of nonprofit agency directors might want to raise awareness about benefit programs to relieve hunger in their county. They might

partner to provide training together in the community, share staff to cover a booth at a community forum, or make presentations to their boards of directors.

- A coalition addressing food security and a group dedicated to hunger advocacy might partner to co-sponsor a conference, alert each other to food security issues in the community, and share policy information.
- CDSS and California Department of Education (CDE) want to reduce barriers for students accessing reduced-price lunches. They might partner to share certain types of client data.¹⁷

Partnership Agreements

There are many kinds of partnerships. Some are informal, while others are more formal and may require a written agreement.

Selecting a Partner

The partnership agreement includes a description of the agencies involved, the items agreed, the length of the agreement, and the signatures of the authorized representatives. Some agreements have serious legal consequences if they are breached, such as the one described above between the CDSS and CDE. Other agreements might result in a loss of goodwill between the partners if either party defaults.

¹⁶ California Department of Public Health. *Women, Infants, and Children Program*, accessed September 6, 2012, www.wicworks.ca.gov

¹⁷ Drafting an agreement to share confidential information is the most difficult type of partnership and requires a high degree of legal expertise, many rounds of approval and even public comment to make sure that all regulations are respected and client privacy is protected.

There are several mechanisms used to outline the terms of an agreement, such as:

- **Formal Inter-Agency Agreements** (IAA) between large government entities. CalFresh Outreach operates under an IAA between CDPH and CDSS.
- **Formal Memorandum of Understanding** (MOU) is negotiated by upper-level management and signed by the executive directors. MOUs are required between organizations, especially if money is changing hands. The MOU has significant legal consequences if either party defaults.

✎ See *General Market Appendix G* for a detailed example of a Memorandum of Understanding.

Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) can be a very simple statement of understanding between agencies where each agency agrees to support the other's mission. They make and accept referrals, provide follow up on referrals consistent with client consent, co-host events in the community, and even co-locate services.

MOAs can be written with the same format used for the formal MOU in *Appendix G*, but will need much less detail.

Other valuable partnerships include partnerships with providers funded by the *Network for a Healthy California SNAP-Ed* program.¹⁸

- **First 5 California** is designed to ensure that more children under the age of five are born healthy and reach their full potential.¹⁹
- **Project LEAN** increases opportunities for healthy eating and physical activity in California communities to reduce the prevalence of obesity and chronic diseases such as heart disease, cancer, stroke, osteoporosis, and diabetes.²⁰

Developing a partnership builds trust. Many fruitful associations began as informal agreements.

The **California CalFresh Listserv**, hosted by Benchmark Institute, is available to CalFresh outreach workers. It is a place to build partnerships with others interested in promoting CalFresh in the community. The listserv provides accurate information that dispels many myths about CalFresh eligibility. Members can post questions and offer solutions to questions posted by others. Join now and encourage others to do the same.²¹

You can encourage your organization to **create a link from your agency website to www.CalFresh.ca.gov**. The CalFresh site has access to approved outreach material, CalFresh application forms in 16 different languages, and a link to the online application website in both English and Spanish.²²

¹⁸ California Department of Public Health. *About the Network for a Healthy California*, accessed September 10, 2012, <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/cpns/Pages/AboutUs.aspx>

¹⁹ First 5 California, *Welcome to First 5 California*, accessed September 10, 2012, <http://www.cfc.ca.gov/>

²⁰ California Project Lean, *Promoting Health Places and Policies*, accessed September 10, 2012, <http://www.californiaprojectlean.org/default.asp>

²¹ Food Assistance Skills Training, *Join the Food Stamp List Serv*, accessed September 10, 2012, <http://fs10.formsite.com/CAFB/form907773838/index.html>

²² *Your Online Resource for California Benefits Simplified*, accessed September 8, 2012, <http://www.benefitscal.org/> and <http://beneficioscal.org>

Household Outreach

Raising state and community awareness is a key aspect of CalFresh Outreach. The three core elements to outreach at the individual client level include:

- **Prescreening** that provides basic CalFresh information.
- **Application Assistance** where the outreach worker helps the client to complete the actual CalFresh application.
- **Follow Up** on the application once it is submitted to the local CalFresh office to ensure that:
 - 1) it can be evaluated for eligibility and
 - 2) those eligible can retain their benefits.

Helping a client and following up on an application require a good working relationship with the local CalFresh office.

Building and Sustaining a Productive Relationship with Your CalFresh Office

There are almost 400 county CalFresh offices spread throughout the 58 California counties. Each county administers CalFresh according to federal and state regulations. Each county has the authority to implement the program to best suit its county. Each county, and sometimes each office within the same county, may have a slightly different preference about how the outreach worker should assist the client with the application. For example:

In all counties, only the CalFresh eligibility worker (EW) at the CalFresh office can determine a client's eligibility for CalFresh.

- Some counties want a completed multi-page application, including all supporting documents from the CalFresh outreach worker.
- Some counties only want the first page of the application and a referral.
- In some counties, only county workers conduct outreach.
- Some counties fund CBOs to conduct outreach.
- In some counties, CBOs are funded by their local county and through the Statewide CalFresh Outreach Plan.
- In some counties the only funding for outreach comes to CBOs from the CalFresh Statewide Outreach plan.

In all counties, only the CalFresh eligibility worker (EW) at the CalFresh office can determine a client's eligibility for CalFresh.

When working with the CalFresh office to facilitate the application process, it is not possible to provide a one-size-fits-all approach. It is essential to have good rapport with your county, but you must talk to your supervisor and other outreach contractors first before

approaching your county for partnership. Local CBOs may have partnership understanding and even written agreements in place, and it is important to respect what has been approved by the county before trying something new.

Starting off on the right foot will be an important first step to your long-term success as a CalFresh outreach worker. Here are a few tips to keep in mind:

- You and the CalFresh office eligibility worker (EW) are on the same team. You all want people who are eligible for CalFresh to receive benefits.
- Follow the Golden Rule. It takes time for trust and partnerships to develop, as with any other relationship.
- Understand what the county wants you to tell a client about how to apply for CalFresh and how to refer clients who appear to qualify for Expedited Service. Gathering this information from the CalFresh office is a good way to make the connection.

Once you have established your partnership with the CalFresh office in your county, it must be maintained and strengthened.

- **Acknowledge what the county does well.** If you hear back from a client that an eligibility worker was helpful, be sure to pass along the praise to his or her supervisors. Just as success stories build you up, they also edify your county partners. Be sure to share!

- **Treat your CalFresh office as a partner.** Ask what you can do for them. Notify them if you know there is a media spot that will be running. Invite them to present at your meetings or to co-host trainings.
- **Report trends.** Instead of reporting every problem you come across, keep an eye out for trends. Letting the county know about the trends you notice helps them identify areas for EW training. For example, several EWs have moved to CalFresh from another program and mistakenly believe finger imaging for CalFresh applicants is mandatory. (Finger imaging is no longer required for CalFresh but it is required for CalWORKs.) Letting the office know about similar problems can alert the supervisor to a training need for the EWs.

Media Materials

CalFresh is a federal entitlement and is highly regulated. Any material that is used to promote CalFresh in the community must have prior CDSS approval. Gaining approval of sensitive material takes considerable time.

CDSS strongly encourages CalFresh outreach contractors to use already approved materials. New materials developed require CDSS approval before you can use them.

Train Community Partners

As a trained outreach worker, you become a CalFresh content expert for your community and you are encouraged to partner with your local CalFresh office to provide training to community members about CalFresh.

- ✎ Much of the material in this toolkit is suitable for training community partners. Training PowerPoint slide shows are available in *General Market Appendix D*.

Evaluation

Tracking Outreach Activity and Measuring Outcomes

CalFresh Outreach Prime Contractors are required to submit quarterly activity reports to CDSS and sometimes to other funding agencies. CDSS is required to verify reports that the contractors submit. This verification includes a review of the contractor's operation and the outreach worker activity logs and reports.

The very best way to report your activity is to keep track of it on a daily basis. Have the reports in an orderly manner, and keep copies of reports that you submit to your supervisor. Each agency can put its own outreach worker reporting packet together as long as it includes a:

1. Narrative summary
2. Tracking log that allows you to keep track of your outreach activities at the client level: Prescreening, Application Assistance and

Follow Up, Quarterly and Semi-Annual Reporting, and Annual Recertification^{23,24}

3. Materials distribution log where you have kept track of the type and amount of approved CalFresh material distributed, along with the locations where material was distributed
4. List of training events and sign-in sheets
5. List of partner agencies with copies of agendas for meetings attended
6. Mileage log (if not kept elsewhere)

- ✎ See *Worksheet A* for a CalFresh Outreach Activity Log template and *Worksheet B* for a Materials Distribution Log template.

Measure Outcomes

CalFresh Outreach is funded to increase the number of eligible households in California actively receiving and using CalFresh.

In the Outreach contract, outreach workers are asked to report the status of the applications that they assisted once the information is readily available. However, most CalFresh outreach workers are not able to systematically report assisted applicant enrollment rates because this information is not readily available.

Here are some ways to obtain this data:

- **Case Determination Information from Clients**
The outreach worker may have the opportunity to learn from some assisted

²³ When you assist a client with an online application, there may be an option to print a report that you can attach to your tracking log. See appendix I for CBO Web Portal registration and reports.

²⁴ The Food Stamp Application and Screening Tool (FAST): FAST is an excellent tool for tracking all prescreens conducted, applications assisted and follow-up. (See Chapter 5)

applicants if they were ultimately enrolled. However, assisted applicants most commonly recontact the outreach worker when they are having trouble with the application process, not when they have successfully received benefits. Still, outreach workers can ask assisted applicants if they are willing to be recontacted after several weeks to see if they have been able to enroll in CalFresh.

- Outreach agencies can randomly sample a subgroup of assisted applicants for a systematic estimate of enrollment rates. Of course, this requires a commitment of time and effort on the part of the outreach agency, and finding assisted applicants is often challenging.

- **Case Determination Information from Counties**

In a few cases, counties are able to provide case determination information for outreach-assisted applicants, usually when additional data is available. County data is ideal since CalFresh systems track case determination and generate “denial codes” if a given application is not accepted. Denial codes provide additional management-oriented information that can be used to shape and improve the type of outreach services provided.

Of course, tracking outreach-assisted applications requires a system for identifying these applicants from among the larger pool of applicants. It also requires considerable county resources to “manually” check the

status of each individual application, since current computer systems are not set up to allow for automatic queries. Finally, if available, case determination information is typically provided in an aggregate form due to client confidentiality regulations. Given the considerable increase in CalFresh demand coupled with reduced county resources, county data on outreach case determination is rarely available.

Estimating CalFresh Enrollment or “Success Rates” Due to CalFresh Outreach Activities

Evaluators at the state will estimate the number of new CalFresh households due to outreach activity based on the number of CalFresh Outreach Worker Assisted Applications. Each county reports, on a monthly basis, the number of CalFresh applications received, approved, denied, and withdrawn.²⁵

These reports are used to calculate an average statewide monthly application “success rate.” In 2011 this was 63.4 percent. Assuming that outreach-assisted applicants have the same “success rate” as the counties overall, this percentage is applied to the number of reported outreach-assisted applications.

For outreach workers providing phone referrals, such as the 2-1-1 agencies contracted to complete phone outreach, and callers assisted by the statewide toll-free CalFresh information line (CIL), it is assumed that five percent of the callers will ultimately apply for CalFresh. This estimate is based on previous years’ county

²⁵ California Department of Social Services. *CalFresh – Data Tables*, accessed September 10, 2012, <http://www.cdss.ca.gov/research/P349.htm>

	QUANTITATIVE	QUALITATIVE
Process Evaluation	SOW Target Numbers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partners • Materials • Events Tabled • Trainings Hosted • Individuals Trained • Callers • Prescreenings • Application Assists • Online App Assists • Follow Up • Bi-Annual Reporting Assists • Annual Re-Certification Assists • Informed About CalFresh if off CalWORKs 	Anecdotal feedback from outreach staff, recipients, community partners on the quality and/or usefulness of outreach services.
Outcome Evaluation	SOW Target: Households successfully enrolled (increased participation) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approval Rates <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Actual rates when available from your County CalFresh offices. b. Reports from applicants. c. Estimate rates based on statewide averages. 	Anecdotal feedback from outreach recipients indicating that outreach staff provided them assistance to enroll in CalFresh, that they received benefits, and/or how these benefits helped them. Capture client success stories to demonstrate the success of outreach, break stereotypes about the people on CalFresh, and use for media, newsletters, etc.

data, which showed a five percent increase in application submissions following the USDA’s media campaign to promote the CIL number. Again, it is assumed that the same statewide approval rate will apply to these new applications.

This approach likely results in a conservative estimate of the number of “new” CalFresh households due to outreach efforts, since it does not include new cases brought into CalFresh as a result of prescreening, training, and other collaborative efforts. But the approach represents a reasonable estimate based on the information available. As a greater percentage of outreach-assisted applicants are submitted through online systems, it is hoped that technological improvements will make even more accurate estimates possible.

The table above provides a matrix that outreach workers can use to fully report their CalFresh activities.

Information gathered to complete a program evaluation falls into four main categories:

- Quantitative Process
- Qualitative Process
- Quantitative Outcomes
- Qualitative Outcomes

Quantitative refers to activities that are evaluated with numbers, such as the number of prescreens. Qualitative information is narrative, as in describing a particular case or event, and lends texture to the evaluation that numbers do not capture. Process information describes “the journey toward the outcome” or the program activities, and Outcome reports the results.

 For a list of CalFresh outreach partners participating in the CalFresh Outreach Plan and the counties they serve, see *General Market Appendix A2*.

To learn more about CalFresh Outreach in California, go to www.CalFresh.ca.gov.

Chapter Four: Eligibility Basics

California Guide to Food Benefits is an invaluable resource for CalFresh outreach workers and is referred to with permission throughout this handbook.¹

Who is eligible for CalFresh?

Households that include lone individuals, couples, or families are eligible for CalFresh if they meet certain income criteria and reside in California legally.² The amount of CalFresh benefits a person gets will depend on the number of people in their household who purchase and prepare food together and how much monthly income is left after certain expenses (deductions) are subtracted.

A CalFresh household is a group of people who:

- Live together
- Buy food and prepare meals together
- Meet CalFresh eligibility requirements
- Are approved for CalFresh benefits

Households can be composed of unrelated individuals living together (e.g., roommates) or a single person. More than one household can live in the same home if they purchase and prepare food separately.

In general, the household's income must be less than the gross income eligibility standard in order to qualify for CalFresh.³ The chart on

A CalFresh household is a group of people who:

- Live together
- Buy food and prepare meals together
- Meet CalFresh eligibility requirements
- Are approved for CalFresh benefits

the next page demonstrates the gross incomes (130 percent of Federal Poverty Guidelines/ Poverty Limit), net incomes, and maximum amounts paid to CalFresh recipients as of October 1, 2012.

If the household **includes** a person age 60 or older, or a person with disabilities, the household does not have to meet any **gross** income limit, but instead would just have to meet the **net** income limit after allowable deductions for that household size.

If **all** members of the household are receiving some type of welfare cash assistance — e.g., CalWORKs, cash general assistance or general relief — then the household may be categorically eligible, regardless of its gross or net income. Categorically eligible means

¹ The Legal Services of Northern California has granted permission to the California Department of Public Health to refer to the California Guide to Food Benefits throughout both CalFresh toolkit handbooks. Readers are encouraged to review the original links provided. These are guides only and do not constitute legal advice. CalFresh outreach workers are encouraged to refer specific questions about eligibility to the CalFresh office. The California Guide to Food Benefits is a special project of Legal Services of Northern California

in collaboration with California Food Policy Advocates, Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County and the Western Center on Law and Poverty Copyright © 2001-2011.

² *California Guide to Food Benefits*, accessed September 10, 2012, <http://foodstampguide.org/summary-of-basic-eligibility/>

³ <http://foodstampguide.org/grossnet-income-checklist/>

that the applicant is automatically eligible for CalFresh because they qualify for a program that has similar requirements.⁴

Once it is determined that an applicant is likely eligible for CalFresh, the eligibility worker will determine which deductions can be applied in order to ensure an accurate benefit amount is awarded. Allowable deductions for all CalFresh households include:

Earned Income Deduction: 20 percent is deducted from income earned from working, such as salary, wages, and tips.

Standard Deductions: Standard deduction amounts vary with the number of household

members. Standard deductions are 8.31 percent of the current net income limit for the household size. It cannot be more than 8.31 percent of the current net income limit for six persons, even if the household is larger than six persons. The maximum standard deduction rates (from October 2012 through September 2013) are:

- \$149 for one to three persons.
- \$160 for four persons.
- \$187 for five persons.
- \$214 for six or more persons.

OCTOBER 1, 2012 TO SEPTEMBER 30, 2013 ⁵			
People in the Household	Gross Monthly Income (amount before deductions)	Net Monthly Income (amount after deductions)	Maximum Monthly Benefit
1	\$1,211	\$931	\$200
2	\$1,640	\$1,261	\$367
3	\$2,069	\$1,591	\$526
4	\$2,498	\$1,921	\$668
5	\$2,927	\$2,251	\$793
6	\$3,356	\$2,581	\$952
7	\$3,785	\$2,911	\$1,052
8	\$4,214	\$3,241	\$1,202
Each Additional Member	+\$429	+\$330	+\$150

* This table is for households that do not have a member age 60 or older or a member with a disability. It is updated annually by CDSS, based on the SNAP federal guidelines.⁶

⁴ <http://foodstampguide.org/people-on-calworks-ga-and-ssi/>

⁵ California Department of Social Services website, accessed September 20, 2012, http://www.cdss.ca.gov/lettersnotices/entres/getinfo/acin/2012/1-46_12.pdf

⁶ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Services. *Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) Information*, accessed September 10, 2012, <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/government/cola.htm>

Dependent Care Deduction: CalFresh households can deduct **actual costs** that they pay for child or other dependent care. The care must be necessary to allow a household member to accept or continue to work, or to attend training or education that prepares the person for work.⁷ It must also comply with the requirements of the CalFresh Employment and Training (E&T) program. There is no maximum deduction.

Homeless Shelter Deduction: Homeless households can claim the Homeless Shelter Deduction of \$143 per month if they pay for some shelter during a month. All homeless households that incur, or reasonably expect to incur, shelter costs during a month are eligible to use the deduction without verifying the shelter costs. The households can claim a higher shelter deduction if they can verify higher shelter costs.

Shelter Costs: Shelter costs are based on costs the household has been billed for (it does not matter if the household has not paid the bill). Shelter costs include rent, mortgage payments, home association fees, payments on a mobile home and rent for the space where it is parked, electricity, gas, heating oil, bottled gas, firewood, water, sewage, garbage, taxes and insurance on the house, repairs to the house for damage caused by a fire, flood, storm or other disaster, installation fees for utilities or telephones, and the basic charge for one telephone. (The household cannot count the unpaid balance on these bills from an earlier month.)



The maximum shelter deduction is \$469 *unless* there is an aged/disabled household member. Households with aged or disabled members can deduct the full amount of excess shelter costs.⁸

- **Excess Shelter Deduction:** The Excess Shelter Deduction is monthly shelter costs that exceed 50 percent of the adjusted household income. Effective October 1, 2012, the maximum shelter deduction is \$469, except for households with senior/disabled members.⁹ Households with a member age 60 or older or with a disability can deduct the full amount of excess shelter costs.

Utility Deduction: There are several approaches to utility deduction.¹⁰ These include:

- **Standard Utility Allowance (SUA):** The SUA is a fixed amount, adjusted annually by the CDSS, for households that have

⁷ <http://www.foodstampguide.org/work-requirements-overview/#overview>

⁸ California Department of Social Services website, accessed September 20, 2012, http://www.cdss.ca.gov/lettersnotices/entres/getinfo/acin/2012/I-46_12.pdf

⁹ <http://foodstampguide.org/calculating-income/>

heating or cooling costs separate from their rent or mortgage payments. The SUA is not pro-rated for shared living situations or living with excluded household members.

- **Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP):** Households receiving energy assistance payments made under the LIHEAP are eligible for the SUA. Households receiving energy assistance vendor payments made under other programs are eligible for the SUA only if they continue to pay out-of-pocket heating or cooling expenses.
- **Limited Utility Allowance (LUA):** A household that is not eligible for the SUA but has expenses for at least two separate types of utilities (other than heating and cooling) can claim a limited utility allowance (LUA), which is adjusted annually by CDSS. Utilities expenses for which the household can claim the LUA are telephone, water, sewage, and trash collection.
- **Telephone Utility Allowance (TUA):** A household that is not eligible for either the SUA or LUA but has telephone expenses can claim a telephone allowance (TUA) of \$20. Only households that have telephones or equivalent forms of communication can claim the TUA.

Special Deduction for Households with an Elderly or Disabled Member:

A household with at least one member age 60 or older or with a disability can also deduct that member's non-reimbursed medical expenses over \$35.¹¹

After all deductions and credits are applied, the household's net income is then used to determine whether it meets the threshold net income eligibility standard. These various deductions and credits also are used to calculate the amount of benefits the household will receive.¹²

Resource Limits

As of February 2011, for those households with gross income that does not exceed 130 percent of the FPL, there is no resource limit as a result of California's modified categorical eligibility (MCE) policy, which exempts resources when determining eligibility to CalFresh.¹³

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and CalFresh

CalFresh is California's SNAP. From time to time, you will see regulations that are in the SNAP material that do not match CalFresh implementation. **In California, CalFresh rules apply.** See two examples on the following page:

¹⁰ <http://foodstampguide.org/income-deductions-for-food-stamp-households/>

¹¹ <http://foodstampguide.org/115-2/>

¹² <http://foodstampguide.org/how-many-food-stamps-a-household-gets-each-month/>

¹³ California Department of Social Services. *All County Letter NO.11-11*, accessed September 10, 2012, <http://www.cdss.ca.gov/lettersnotices/entres/getinfo/acl/2011/11-11.pdf>

	CALIFORNIA - CALFRESH	FEDERAL - SNAP
Resources/ Property	Effective February 1, 2011, the CalFresh resource rules changed, and the value of all resources is no longer considered when determining eligibility for CalFresh benefits, for households with gross income that doesn't exceed 130 percent of FPL and has received the "Family Planning-PUB 275" brochure.	Households may have \$2,000 in countable resources, such as a bank account, or \$3,250 in countable resources if at least one person is age 60 or older, or has a disability. However, certain resources are NOT counted, such as a home and lot, the resources of people who receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI), the resources of people who receive Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF, formerly AFDC), and most retirement (pension) plans.
SSI	SSI recipients also get Supplemental Security Payments (SSP) in California that include benefits for food. SSI/SSP recipients in California are not eligible for CalFresh.	SNAP - SSI recipients are categorically eligible.

Chapter Five: Overview of the Application Process

Every application process follows the same general sequence:

GENERAL SEQUENCE OF APPLICATION PROCESS	
The Client:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gets a copy of the CalFresh application or accesses it online. 2. Completes the application (paper or online). 3. Signs and submits it via mail, fax, online, or in person. 4. Participates in the interview (in person or by phone) with the CalFresh eligibility worker (EW). 5. Provides documents that verify the information on the application.
The Eligibility Worker (EW):	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Determines eligibility. 7. If the client is eligible, the EW approves the award amount, called the benefit. 8. Notifies the client if they are eligible or not eligible. 9. Authorizes the amount for the client's EBT card.
The Client:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. If found not eligible, may contact the county and, if necessary, appeal the decision. 11. If eligible, receives their EBT card in person or by mail. 12. Maintains their CalFresh benefits by updating their information with the county CalFresh office based on reporting requirements.

Prescreening for CalFresh

A client is not required to complete a prescreen before applying for CalFresh at the local CalFresh office. A prescreen is used by the CalFresh outreach workers to identify those who are likely eligible; some may need assistance with the application.

During the optional prescreening process, the client answers a few basic questions. The answers will allow you to gather enough information to understand the likelihood that the client is eligible.

This process is referred to as “prescreening” to reinforce that it is not a process to determine eligibility and that it does not “screen out” potential applicants.

While prescreening is an essential piece of California’s outreach efforts, it can inadvertently spread incorrect information or inappropriately discourage a person from applying for CalFresh. To avoid this, CalFresh outreach workers are encouraged to use the protocol on the next page:



The prescreen begins when you tell the client about CalFresh. The steps will not necessarily be in the following order. You will need to:

Know

- The CalFresh program: what it is, who it serves, how to apply, and the rights and responsibilities of applicants and recipients
- The word “household” as it applies to CalFresh
- How household size is determined
- Household gross and net income
- The rules for deductions and proration
- The rules for mixed households
- Special rules for people age 60 and older, people with a disability, students, certain immigrants, able-bodied adults without dependents, children in foster care, boarders, and individuals who are homeless

- Supplemental Security Income/ Supplemental Security Payment (SSI/SSP)
- Confidentiality regulations
- Prescreening questions
- How to assist the client with their application if the applicant’s gross income and circumstances appear to be in line with eligibility guidelines

Let the client know that **only the local CalFresh office can determine eligibility** and even if they appear ineligible based on this prescreening, they should apply. There are more exceptions than rules in the program and a trained EW will make the final decision on eligibility. Make the client aware that the CalFresh office (local County Welfare Department) can offer assistance for non-English-speaking applicants.

Let the client know that only the local CalFresh office can determine eligibility and even if they appear ineligible based on this prescreening, they should apply.

Core Concepts

Be familiar with the following concepts, terms, and definitions so that you can best assist your clients.

Disabled is a classification given to any person who receives any of the following benefits:

- Disability benefits such as Supplemental Security Income/ Supplemental Security Payment (SSI/SSP). For SSI/SSP details see page 31 under Supplemental Security Income/Supplemental Security Payment.
- Social Security disability or blindness benefits (SSDI).
- Public disability retirement pension, if it is for the kind of disability that Social Security says “cannot get better.”
- Veterans’ disability benefits that can include the veteran or veteran’s immediate family members.

Gross Monthly Income is the amount the household earns before any deductions are taken. The gross monthly income limit (130 percent of the FPL) does not apply to people age 60 and older and people with a disability.

Most households with a person age 60 or older, or a person with a disability, don’t have to pass the gross income test. Deductions like out-of-pocket medical costs, rent or mortgage costs, dependent care costs, and utility costs are taken from their gross income. In these cases the net monthly income limit is looked at and must meet the guidelines (100 percent of the FPL).

Household is an individual living alone or a group of individuals living together who may or may not be related and usually buy food



and prepare meals together. There may be more than one household occupying the same home, if they buy and prepare food separately. There are special rules to decide if there are separate households and who is included in each household.

✎ See *Regulation Quick Reference Sheet F* for more information on unique household composition.

Household Size is the number of people in this household. These are the people whose income is counted to see if the household is eligible and who help determine the amount of the CalFresh benefit.

Households with a Member 60 Years of Age or Older or a Member with a Disability applying for separate household status have a higher gross income limit than other applicants. The gross income limit for these households is 165 percent of FPL.

Income, Deduction & Proration is the process of review to determine eligibility based

on income minus the allowed deductions. If a household includes a member that is not applying for CalFresh, their income is counted toward the household income. Proration is the reduction of the CalFresh benefit for the first month of eligibility from the date the application was submitted to the end of the month.

Mixed Citizenship Status Household

is a household with some members who are federally eligible citizens and state-eligible legal noncitizens. Some households may also include undocumented noncitizens who are not eligible for CalFresh, but their income is counted when determining household gross income and when determining the benefit amounts to the household if the household is eligible. The client is not required to disclose immigration status of undocumented household members who can opt out of the application and are not included; however, their income is counted as part of the household income.

Net Monthly Income is what is left after the allowable deductions are taken. Most households must meet the gross **and** the net income requirements unless they contain a member who is age 60 or older or has a disability.

Senior is defined as anyone 60 years of age or older according to the Food Stamp Act.

Supplemental Security Income/ Supplemental Security Payments

Generally, people on SSI in California are not eligible for CalFresh because they also receive a state-funded SSP that includes a

Important tip about SSP:
Recent budget cuts in California have resulted in some SSP benefits being \$0. If a client's SSP is zero as a result of the budget cuts, refer him/her to the local CalFresh office for assistance.

food allowance. If someone on SSI moves to California, there may be a short period of time before they receive SSP and when they are temporarily eligible for CalFresh.

Recent budget cuts in California have resulted in some SSP benefits being \$0. If a client's SSP is zero as a result of the budget cuts, refer him/her to the local CalFresh office for assistance.

Maintain Client Confidentiality

You may learn confidential information from clients, such as names of household members, financial information, and medical or employment history. Abide by all confidentiality rules, and do not ask for any unnecessary information. (See Chapter Four.) The prescreen can be completely anonymous. However, if you gather information and the client wants to share the information with a third party, you must have the client sign a waiver to release information.

Basic Prescreening Flowchart

CalFresh prescreening is best done as a conversation. There is a lot of back and forth with the client in order to complete the prescreen. Each client is unique.

Introduce yourself to the client and say:

“Hi, my name is _____ and I am doing outreach for a program known in California as CalFresh. CalFresh is the new name in California for the Food Stamp Program. Have you heard about it?” At this point the client may share their experience or you can offer a brief explanation.

Continue with:

“May I ask you a few questions to help us see if you might be eligible?”

If the client agrees, then continue.

1. Yes/No *“Are you receiving CalFresh, formerly known as Food Stamps?”*

If *“Yes,”* skip to question #9.

If *“No,”* continue.

2. Yes/No *“Have you received CalFresh before?”*

If *“Yes,”* see note* and skip to question #9.

If *“No,”* continue.

*Note: Sometimes a client may have neglected to file updated paperwork and lost benefits that you can help restore. Discuss the reasons why the client has not updated their information. If their circumstances have not changed since they last received benefits, they just need to reapply or reopen their case.

3. Yes/No “Are you receiving CalWORKs, General Assistance or General Relief?”

If “Yes,” see note* and skip to question #9.

If “No,” continue.

*Note: If the answer is “Yes,” the client is categorically eligible and should be sent to the CalFresh office immediately, if they have not been receiving CalFresh. Categorically eligible means that the CalFresh program accepts eligibility determinations made by these other programs.

A person with a drug felony for sales or manufacturing is not eligible for CalFresh.

 Go to *Regulation Quick Reference Sheet B* for a summary.

An answer of “Yes” to any of these questions means **no further prescreen is needed**.

To find out if the client might be eligible, continue with:

4. Yes/No “How many people live in your home? Do you all purchase and prepare food together?”

 If “No,” then refer to *Regulation Quick Reference Sheet F* and help the client figure out how many households are in their home.

 If “Yes,” use the *Regulation Quick Reference Sheet F* and help the client figure out how many people are in their own household.

Continue with:

“With just your household in mind, please answer the following questions:”

5. Yes/No “Does anyone in your household have a Social Security number?”

(Citizens and Legal Permanent Residents (LPR) have a Social Security number.)

If “Yes,” skip to question #6.

If “No,” then continue.

5a. Yes/No “Is anyone in your household eligible for a Social Security number and has applied or has not yet applied?”

If “Yes,” skip to question #6.

If “No,” then continue.

5b. Yes/No “Is anyone in your household a refugee or seeking asylum?”

 See Regulation Quick Reference Sheet D for details.

If “Yes,” skip to question #6.

If “No,” continue.

5c. Yes/No “Does anyone in your household meet the special population exceptions?”

 Use your Regulation Quick Reference Sheets B, C, D & E to review special populations.

If “Yes,” skip to question #6.

If “No,” continue.

Advise the client that there are some exceptions and they may still be eligible. Discuss with the client and see if there are any special circumstances that would make them eligible.

Gross Monthly Income Limits for CalFresh Households Without Any Members Age 60 and Older or with a Disability October 1, 2012 to September 30, 2013

How many people are in your household?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Per additional household member
Is your household’s combined Gross Monthly Income less than: (Pick the column that matches the number of people in your household.)	\$1,211	\$1,640	\$2,069	\$2,498	\$2,927	\$3,356	\$3,785	\$4,214	+\$429
You might be eligible for as much as the amount in the column that matches the number of people in your household, every month:	\$200	\$367	\$526	\$668	\$793	\$952	\$1,052	\$1,202	+\$150

6. Yes/No “Are you, or is there, any person in your household who is age 60 or older, or has a disability and is not receiving SSI/SSP?”

If “Yes,” then skip to question #8.

The income chart demonstrating Gross Income at 130 percent FPL does not apply to people age 60 or older or with a disability, or some immigrants.

6a. Yes/No or DK “Is the person receiving SSP receiving \$0 or are they in pending status due to \$0 in the award?”

If “Yes” or Don’t Know (DK), skip to question #8.

If “No,” then skip to question #9.

Gross Monthly Income Limits for CalFresh Households Where a Member Age 60 or Older or with a Disability is a Separate Household October 1, 2012 to September 30, 2013

How many people are in your household?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Per additional household member
Is your household’s combined Gross Monthly Income less than: (Pick the column that matches the number of people in your household.)	\$1,536	\$2,081	\$2,625	\$3,170	\$3,714	\$4,259	\$4,803	\$5,348	+\$545
You might be eligible for as much as the amount in the column that matches the number of people in your household, every month:	\$200	\$367	\$526	\$668	\$793	\$952	\$1,052	\$1,202	+\$150

7. Yes/No “Does your household gross income fall below the amount allowed for the size of your household?”

 See *Tip Sheet B* for the detailed guide to prescreening.

When you have finished the questions, evaluate your results. If the answer to any of the above questions is “Yes,” the household may be eligible for CalFresh. If any answers are “No,” the household may still be eligible.

If the client’s gross income is considerably higher than the limit in the table, you can let the client know that they are outside the income range of those who are usually eligible; however, encourage them to go to the CalFresh office and have an EW review their application with them.

If the client appears to meet the income guidelines, offer to assist them with completing the application.

8. Yes/No “Would you like me to help you to complete an application?”

If “Yes,” then complete the packet.

If the client is 60 or older or has a disability, proceed with a review of the deductions for seniors and complete the application assistance as described in the *CalFresh Outreach Basics Handbook for Older Adults*.

If “No,” offer the application packet to the client to allow them to apply themselves.

9. Yes/No “Would you be willing to tell others about the program?”

If the client says “Yes,” then provide them with your phone number. If it seems like a good use of resources you can offer them brochures or fliers to take with them. Make sure your contact information is on the flier.

Remind the client that only the eligibility worker can determine eligibility.

Expedited Services (ES) from CalFresh

Some households may have no money to purchase food. These households with very low income and very few resources may qualify for Expedited Service (ES), which is CalFresh on an emergency basis. The client goes through the same application process as all other clients but not all information has to be verified before benefits are issued (with the exception of identification, which the client is required to provide). Households may qualify for ES if the household:

- Has less than \$150 in monthly gross income and liquid resources of \$100 or less;
- Has a combined monthly gross income and liquid resources that are less than the household monthly rent or mortgage plus utilities;

OR

- Is a migrant or seasonal farm worker and is destitute. The definition of destitute is that the household's only income for the month of application was:
 - ▶ a. Received before the date of application and was from a terminated source;
 - ▶ b. Received from a new source and no more than \$25 will be received by the 10th calendar day after the date of application;

OR

- ▶ c. A combination of (a) and (b), provided their liquid resources do not exceed \$100.

Expedited CalFresh benefits will be made available no later than the third calendar day following the date the application was filed; Saturday and Sunday count as one day. Usually, benefits are issued within 72 hours. The client must complete the application process and follow up with all postponed verifications once the benefits have been issued.

Always refer clients to the county CalFresh office immediately if they appear to qualify for ES.

Always refer clients to the county CalFresh office immediately if they appear to qualify for ES.

What are liquid resources?

- Cash
- Checking or savings accounts
- Lump-sum payments such as tax refunds or Social Security back payments

Calculating Income, Deductions and Prorating

Using only the income guidelines is not the most accurate way to determine if a household may be eligible for CalFresh. Understanding gross and net income is complicated. For this reason, most outreach programs throughout the state use a prescreening tool. You can perform the calculations manually, but we recommend using a tool.

Electronic Prescreening Tools for Outreach Workers

Food Stamps (CalFresh) Application & Screening Tool (FAST) is a free tool available to any nonprofit organization wishing to determine potential CalFresh eligibility, assist with the application, and follow up with applicants.¹ In approximately seven minutes, a client is prescreened and a printable CalFresh application (California Form DFA-285 A-1 and A-2), pre-filled with the client's information, is generated.

The current tool also prints a confidentiality waiver and a “next steps” flier based on information provided by the county. It directs the client to the closest CalFresh office or provides instructions on applying over the phone. FAST is also an excellent tool for tracking all prescreens conducted, applications distributed and submitted, and follow-up actions.

FAST requires Microsoft Access. All data fields are exported into an Excel spreadsheet,

which then allows the user to analyze needed data for reports. FAST is user-friendly, and an excellent way to store client information safely and securely. FAST also offers a quick link to the California Guide to Food Benefits, an unofficial quick reference to CalFresh federal and state regulations. After registering, FAST is available free to CalFresh outreach partners.

CalFresh Excel Calculator is for more advanced CalFresh outreach workers.

This Excel screening tool is especially helpful to determine potential eligibility for a household that includes a person age 60 or older, a person with a disability, or people with mixed immigration status.² In these cases, the standard income guidelines may not apply.

Other Websites

California Association of Food Banks (CAFB) has a wealth of information on its website at www.MyCalFresh.org. This is available as a tool for all outreach workers.

California Department of Social Services has a link to electronic benefits at www.calfresh.ca.gov.

Applying for CalFresh – General

Once the prescreen is complete, the outreach worker can move forward to help the client with the application process.

The client has rights and responsibilities. Some are listed on the following pages.

¹ California Association of Food Banks. Food Stamp Prescreening Tool, accessed September 10, 2012, <http://www.myfoodstamps.org/screeningtool.html>

² http://www.myfoodstamps.org/docs/FFY0910_Food_Stamp_Calculator.xls

CalFresh Applicants Have the Right to:

- Get help filling out the application.
- Receive services in their preferred language.
- Ask for translated forms and notices.
- Receive an application when they ask for it.
- Turn in their application the same day they receive it.
- Receive their CalFresh benefits (or be notified that they are not eligible for the program) within 30 days after they turn in their application.
- Receive expedited CalFresh benefits within three (3) days, if they are eligible and qualify for expedited services.
- Have a fair hearing if they disagree with any action taken on their case.

The CalFresh Applicant Responsibilities Are to:

- Answer all questions completely and honestly when they apply for CalFresh benefits. They must sign their name to certify, under penalty of perjury, that all their answers are true.
- Provide proof that they are eligible.
- Promptly report changes in household circumstances to the CalFresh office.
- Not put their money or possessions in someone else's name in order to be able to get CalFresh benefits.

In order to begin processing, an application only needs to contain the client's:

- Name
 - Contact information
 - Dated signature
- Not make changes on any CalFresh cards or documents.
 - Not sell, trade, or give away their CalFresh benefits, or any CalFresh cards or documents.
 - Use CalFresh benefits only to buy eligible items.

Applicants have the same rights, regardless of their county of residence. The California Department of Social Services provides a list of the rights and responsibilities for CalFresh.³

Step 1: Application

1a. Client submits an application.

Whether in person, online, by phone, fax, or mail, the client must first submit a signed application. The official date of submission starts the day that the county CalFresh office receives a valid application. (This is known as the **filing date**.) If the application is online, the EW may have a legal way to obtain an electronic signature.

Note: Telephonic signature is still being developed and is not yet implemented statewide.

³ California Department of Social Services. *Rights and Responsibilities*, accessed September 10, 2012, <http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/foodstamps/PG873.htm>.

Make sure to have an address and phone number of the local CalFresh offices available to share with the client. To help avoid problems if an application is misplaced after it is submitted to the county, encourage the client to keep a copy of the application and request a receipt on the date of submission if it is submitted in person. If the application is submitted online, the client needs to keep the confirmation code. The EW will issue benefits from the date the application was originally filed.

In order to begin processing, an application only needs to contain the client's:

- Name
- Contact information
- Dated signature

Paper Application

In California, each county may have a different way to apply for CalFresh benefits. All counties accept a paper application. You can provide a paper application to the client, or the client can:

- Pick one up at the local CalFresh office; or
- Call the CalFresh office and have a copy mailed to them; or
- Download the application from CDSS website at www.CalFresh.ca.gov.

Forms

There are two different types of CalFresh forms: DFA forms and SAWS forms.⁴ Some counties use the DFA 285 A1, A2 and A3 forms for

CalFresh-only applicants. Other counties prefer for all applicants to fill out the SAWS forms. Check with your county for their preferences before starting to assist clients with their applications.

- **DFA 285 A1** is the basic **Application** form. It is three pages and includes 10 detailed questions that help the EW to identify households entitled to expedited service. You can help the client to complete this form, or they can complete it themselves and submit it. The application is available in several different languages.
- **DFA 285 A2** is the **Statement of Facts**. It is six pages and has 24 sections labeled A-X. It elaborates on some of the information provided in the DFA 285 A1. In most cases, it is filled out by the EW during the interview with the applicant. However, it can be completed by the applicant with the outreach worker if the county CalFresh office approves this level of assistance. The client can also fill this out when they recertify or if they apply by mail.
- **DFA 285 A3 and QR** is the client **Rights and Responsibilities**. It is a single page and can be reviewed with the client by the outreach worker or by the EW during the scheduled interview with the local CalFresh office. Check with your county to find out whether you can assist with this form.

⁴ California Department of Social Services. *Forms/Brochures*, accessed September 10, 2012, <http://www.cdss.ca.gov/cdssweb/PG183.htm>

- **SAWS 1, 2, 2A and QR** are an alternative to the DFA A1, A2, A3 and QR and are Multi-Program Applications that allow the applicant to apply for Cash Aid, CalFresh, Medi-Cal, and in some counties the California Medical Services Program (CMSP). They include the Statement of Facts and Rights and Responsibilities. You can provide these applications to the client and assist them with the CalFresh portion. Once you complete the CalFresh portion you can have the client sign and submit it to the local CalFresh office for follow-up on all benefit entitlements.

Online Applications

Online applications have been increasing in popularity. All counties have online applications and this may be a very efficient way to assist someone with their application. If a client applies online, they will need access to a printer to print their own copy of the application. Otherwise the client can note the tracking number and pick up their copy at the CalFresh office.

There are three automated systems in California that process online applications. The client can log on to www.benefitscal.org for the English version or www.beneficioscal.org for Spanish, choose their county of residence, and be redirected to the online application that their county uses.

The three online application systems are:

- ▶ Benefits CalWIN:
www.benefitscalwin.org
- ▶ C-4 Yourself:
www.c4yourself.com
- ▶ Your Benefits Now:
www.dpssbenefits.lacounty.gov/ybn/Index.html

1b. County registers the application.

The county CalFresh office registers the completed application by first clearing the application to ensure that the household or any members of the household are not already receiving CalFresh benefits, then entering the application into the computer eligibility system. If the application is submitted online, the CalFresh office will code the application, indicating that it has been cleared.

1c. County assigns the application.

The application may be assigned to an EW. In some counties, clients who already have an open case in another program (e.g., Medi-Cal) may be assigned to their existing caseworker.

1d. EW conducts an interview.

An interview is required before the EW can certify the household to get CalFresh benefits. The interview may be held with the head of household, the authorized representative⁵, or any other responsible adult household member.

⁵ <http://foodstampguide.org/authorized-representatives/>

Impress on the client that missing this interview is the number one reason that CalFresh application processing is delayed.

Authorized representatives **can** be:

- Relatives
- Friends
- Agency workers

Authorized representatives **cannot** be:

- Soup kitchens or shelters that accept CalFresh
- CalFresh outreach workers

The interview can either be in person or by phone. Counties may waive the face-to-face interview, even when a hardship preventing the client from attending a face-to-face interview does not exist, and conduct the interview over the phone. The county CalFresh office schedules and notifies the applicant, in writing, of the time, date, and place of the interview. Some counties allow applicants or CalFresh outreach workers to schedule this interview.

If applicants miss their first interview, the CalFresh office will notify the applicant, and the applicant household is responsible for contacting the CalFresh office to set up another interview. If the household contacts the

CalFresh office within the 30-day application processing period, the CalFresh office will schedule a second interview. If applicants miss a second interview, the CalFresh office can deny the application. If the CalFresh office has issued a denial, applicants can apply again.

Impress on the client that missing this interview is the number one reason that CalFresh application processing is delayed.

1e. Application is verified.

Some details of the application require verification. There are usually several options regarding the types of verification that can be used.⁶ The verification documents most commonly used are:

- **Identification:** driver's license, ID card, or a health card (a picture ID is not required).
- **Citizenship/Immigration Status/Social Security Number:** a Social Security number (a card is not required), a passport, birth certificate, or a resident alien card.

You can help the client to gather and copy the required verification documents. These do not have to be submitted with the application, but are required before an application can be approved.

⁶ California Department of Social Services. *All County Information Notice 1-45-11*, accessed September 10, 2012, http://www.cdss.ca.gov/lettersnotices/entres/getinfo/acin/2011/1-45_11.pdf

- **Income:** recent pay stubs, letter from employer, child support orders (check or payment stub), and benefit statements.
- **Residency/Expenses:** rent receipts, mortgage statement, utility bills, and child care receipts.

The applicant is required to provide this information or the case will be denied for “failure to provide.” If the client does not have access to some of the documents listed above, the county may help the client obtain them (e.g., identification). In other cases, the county can allow the client to self-certify.

You can help the client to gather and copy the required verification documents. These do not have to be submitted with the application, but are required before an application can be approved.

If additional information is needed, the EW will let the applicant know during the interview and through a written Notice of Action (NOA) after the interview is conducted. If the applicant does not comply with requests for verification within 10 days of the interview, the county may deny the application effective no earlier than the 30th day following the date the application was filed. The applicant must receive a letter of determination stating the reason for approval or denial and information about how to appeal a denial.

The EW will run the applicant’s information through various computer systems to do a secondary verification of information provided.

If the client submits an accurate and complete application and includes verification documents at the outset, the case can be evaluated and the outcome determined more quickly.

If the client submits an accurate and complete application and includes verification documents at the outset, the case can be evaluated and the outcome determined more quickly.

Step 2: Eligibility Determination

Once the interview and verification are complete, the county CalFresh office will determine eligibility and send a letter to the client. The county has up to 30 days from the filing date to approve or deny the application. If an individual needs food before 30 days, they may qualify for Expedited Service (ES).

If the EW determines that the client is eligible, the EW will grant CalFresh benefits. The EW notifies the client and the client will be given an EBT card with the approved dollar amount. The benefits are added to the EBT card each month, as long as the client is eligible. If the client already has an EBT card, the CalFresh benefit will be added to their existing card. Any unused benefits will roll over to the next month even if another monthly benefit is added.

Encourage the client to write down the name and phone number of the EW or the appropriate county contact at the local CalFresh office so that they can follow up on their application.⁷ The EW's name is listed on the letter the client receives in the mail.

When the client follows up on an application, their case status can be either “denied,” “pending,” or “approved.” The client may need to provide additional information if the case is pending, or is denied erroneously. The client can contact the EW or CalFresh office directly to resolve any misunderstanding. Often you, the CalFresh outreach worker, can communicate with the EW on behalf of the client if you have a signed release of information from the client.

 See *Worksheet G* for a sample release of information.

Appeals Process

Any CalFresh applicant or recipient can request a Fair Hearing to any action that affects their benefits. The request should be made within 90 days of the action the household wishes to appeal, and can be made in person, by telephone, or in writing.

Appeals in writing are best and only need to include the request for a hearing and a brief explanation of why the hearing is being requested. The state agency will respond by organizing a hearing, and must accommodate the schedule of the applicant or the recipient. Written Fair Hearing requests are sent to

the CDSS State Hearing Division. Details are provided to the client with every written communication from CDSS to the client.

Generally, the appeals process is best handled by legal services.⁸ But you can assist by educating the client about the process, helping them decide whether to file an appeal, telling them how to file, and referring them to legal aid.⁹



Step 3: Maintenance

EBT Card Issuance and Use

In California, the EBT card is known as the Golden State Advantage EBT card. The cardholder simply slides this card through a point-of-sale (POS) device in the grocery store. Once they slide their card, they select EBT as the card type, enter their PIN, and continue as they would with an ATM card purchase. A household can request that more than one card be issued to the account.

The positive economic benefits of EBT in California extend beyond the cardholder. Every time an EBT card is used it acts as an economic stimulus for retailers and those who work in the

⁷ California State Association of Counties. *California Counties' Websites*, accessed September 10, 2012, <http://www.csac.counties.org/default.asp?id=7>

⁸ Legal Services of Northern California. *LSNC Advocates Feed*, accessed September 10, 2012, <http://www.lsn.net>

⁹ <http://foodstampguide.org/requesting-a-fair-hearing/>

food industry. EBT food and cash aid benefits can be redeemed at more than 80,000 locations in California.¹⁰

Personal Identification Number (PIN)

Once the client receives their EBT card, they must set up their own four-digit secret number or PIN. This can be done at the local CalFresh office by calling a 24-hour toll-free number on the back of the EBT card, or online.¹¹

If the client forgets their PIN, wants to change their PIN, or loses their card because of accident or theft, they can call 1-877-328-9677.

Checking Benefits Online

There are four ways for the client to find out their CalFresh balance:

1. Make an EBT purchase. The balance remaining shows on their receipt.
2. Call the automated EBT Customer Service line at 1-877-328-9677 and enter their card number.
3. Find a store with a customer service counter where the client can swipe their card to check their balance.
4. Access their account at www.ebt.ca.gov/caebtClient/reciplogin_Client.jsp

Replacing a Lost or Stolen EBT Card

The client should report a lost or stolen EBT card immediately to the 24-hour EBT customer service telephone number at 1-877-328-9677.

The Restaurant Meals Program (RMP) is available in certain counties for approved EBT cardholders who:

- Are age 60 or older
- Have a disability
- Are homeless

The local CalFresh office will cancel the card immediately and give the client a new card within two business days after the card is reported lost or stolen.

Where to Shop and Allowable Purchases

The client can use their EBT card at any store that accepts CalFresh/SNAP throughout California and across the country.¹² They can buy food, as well as edible plants and seeds to grow food. There is no sales tax charged on the food items purchased.

Pet food, vitamins, medicine, alcohol, tobacco, paper products, prepared food, and food that will be eaten in the store cannot be purchased with CalFresh. The only exception occurs if the county participates in the Restaurant Meals Program (RMP) and if the client has been certified as eligible for RMP. In this case, the client can purchase prepared food at approved participating restaurants.

¹⁰ www.ebt.ca.gov

¹¹ California EBT Client Website. *Welcome to the California Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) Client Website*, accessed September 10, 2012, https://www.ebt.ca.gov/caebtclient/reciplogin_client.jsp

¹² U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Services. *SNAP Retailer Locator*; August 2012, accessed September 10, 2012, <http://www.snapretailerlocator.com/>

The Restaurant Meals Program (RMP) is available in certain counties for approved EBT cardholders who:

- Are age 60 or older
- Have a disability
- Are homeless

For a list of restaurants that accept EBT cards, go to www.snapRMP.org.

Recertification

CalFresh recipients do not receive CalFresh for an indefinite period of time. When they are certified as eligible, the EW will let them know how long they can remain eligible (the certification period) without recertifying.

Victims of a Natural Disaster

After a natural disaster declared by the President, with a provision for Individual Assistance, and when commercial channels of food distribution have been disrupted, the CalFresh office can issue emergency CalFresh disaster benefits. These benefits may be issued to CalFresh households and to households that normally would not qualify for CalFresh.

Replacement CalFresh

If a household is receiving CalFresh and experiences a house fire or flood that destroys their food, the CalFresh office may replace the actual value of food destroyed.

The client must report the “disaster” to the CalFresh office within 10 days of the event. The office will verify the disaster by contacting the Red Cross, the fire department, another witness, or by coming to the site.

Help Line

If the client needs help, refer them to the EBT customer service line at 1-877-328-9677. This line is answered in many different languages.

For information on where to apply for CalFresh, clients can call 1-877-847-3663 for assistance in English or 1-888-9-COMIDA (1-888-926-6432) for assistance in Spanish. They can also go online at www.calfresh.ca.gov.

Maximizing CalFresh Benefits

The benefits that are available through CalFresh are meant to supplement the household’s food budget. Share tips and strategies for stretching the client’s food budget, including couponing, shopping in bulk, or spreading benefit use throughout the month. There are a number of websites that have practical tips like these.¹³

Food Resources in the Community

Have the information available in your local area for Meals on Wheels, food banks, and pantries, etc.

¹³ *Network for a Healthy California* Champions for Change. *My Kitchen Recipes*, accessed September 10, 2012, <http://www.cachampionsforchange.cdph.ca.gov/en/Recipes.php>

Chapter Six: Maintain Benefits When Eligible

Generally, CalFresh recipients do not receive CalFresh for an indefinite period. When they are certified as approved, the EW will let them know how long they can maintain eligibility without reapplying. This is known as the certification period.

During this certification period, recipients must report certain changes. Recipients are placed into one of two categories: “change reporting” or “quarterly reporting” (soon to be semi-annual reporting). Quarterly reporting households must submit a report every three months (soon to be every six months).

All CalFresh households wishing to continue receiving CalFresh must recertify. Toward the end of the certification period they must complete a new application.

Change Reporting Households

Change reporting households can include those in which household members:

- Are seasonal and/or migrant farm workers
- Reside on an Indian reservation
- Are homeless
- Are all 60 years old or older or all have a disability

These CalFresh recipients are not required to submit routine reports, but instead are required to report certain changes within 10 days of the change.



The changes they are required to report include:

- A change in the source of income or when income starts or stops
- Unearned income changes of more than \$50
- Earned income changes of more than \$100
- Addition or loss of a household member
- Address changes
- Shelter costs if address changed
- Change in child support payments made to a non-household member
- Able Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) change in the number of hours worked
- Drug felony convictions
- Change in fleeing felon status
- Violations of parole or probation

These changes can be reported in writing, verbally or in person.

Quarterly → Semi-Annual Reporting Households

All households not classified as “change reporting” must turn in a Quarterly Report (QR7) once every three months. Counties may use a calendar quarter, or it can designate other three-month periods as a quarter. It is important to know the applicable quarter, otherwise the correct reporting and budgeting will not occur.

California “prospectively budgets” on a quarterly basis. This means that the county decides whether a household is eligible and the amount of CalFresh benefit to be issued based on the income the household “reasonably anticipates” it will get in the upcoming quarter. If the household’s income fluctuates (i.e., is not reasonably predictable every month), the EW will average the income over the previous quarter to decide the probable income.

Generally, once the EW determines the benefit amounts, the benefit amounts are frozen for the quarter. If the client has an increase in income during the quarter, the benefit amount will remain the same through the quarter. The EW will remind the client to update their QR7 and the EW will make changes to the benefit amount at the beginning of the new quarter.

If the EW makes a mistake in calculation and the household receives more benefit than they are entitled to receive, the EW will send a notification detailing the mistake to the client and will work with the client to repay the over-issuance by deducting a portion of the

overpayment from upcoming benefit amounts. If income is not reasonably anticipated and then it is received, no over-issuance occurs.

Starting April 1, 2013, counties will start moving toward semi-annual reporting (SAR7). By October 1, 2013, all CalFresh recipients (except “change reporting” households) will be reporting semi-annually.

Grace Period

The QR7 is due on the fifth day of the third month in the quarter, called the “submit month.” If the county has not received the report by the 11th of the month, they will mail a notification to the recipient. In order to avoid being discontinued from CalFresh, the household must submit the report by the end of the first business day following the month in which it was due. If the household fails to turn in the report, they will be discontinued and will have to reapply.

For example, if a report was due on June 5, it can be turned in before June 11 and it will not be considered late. If it is turned in anytime between June 11 and the first working day of July then it is considered late but the household will continue to receive benefits. If by the second working day of July the county has not received the report, the household will no longer receive benefits and will have to reapply.



Starting April 1, 2013, counties will start moving toward semi-annual reporting (SAR7). By October 1, 2013, all CalFresh recipients (except “change reporting” households) will be reporting semi-annually.

Recertification Process

The recertification process includes completing an application and an interview. The county office will send the household a notice when their recertification is about to expire, informing them of the date by which they must recertify to continue to receive benefits. In California, most households are on a 12-month certification period. If everyone in the household is age 60 or older or has a disability, they can be certified for a 24-month period.

Counties cannot waive or extend the recertification period for workload or budget reasons.

The CalFresh office will send the client a notice giving them a chance to reapply before their CalFresh stops. The notice will tell them:

- The date when their certification period ends.

- The date by which they must submit an application for recertification in order to receive uninterrupted benefits.

Recertification Interviews

To apply for recertification, most applicants need an interview. Counties may opt to waive the face-to-face interview for a household that is on quarterly reporting and for households with a member age 60 or older or a member with disabilities. However, a face-to-face interview must be conducted:

- when requested by the household or the household’s authorized representative,
- when the county determines it is necessary to verify conditions of eligibility,

OR

- when the client is in the office submitting an application and wishes to complete the interview.

If the face-to-face is waived, the household can have a telephone interview instead. The county *must* waive the face-to-face interview if all household members are 60 or older, or have a disability. It *may* waive the face-to-face if coming in would be a hardship for the household. If the county cannot do a telephone interview because it must verify eligibility factors, it can do a home visit; it must schedule this visit in advance with the household.

As with the initial application, recipients will need to give the CalFresh office verification at recertification.

Households applying for a new certification period can get expedited (emergency) CalFresh if they qualify. See Chapter Five, *Expedited Services*.

Don't Let the Benefits Expire

If applicants reapply before the 15th day of the last month of their certification period and remain eligible, the CalFresh office can make sure that the benefits continue without any break. If the CalFresh office finds that recipients continue to qualify for benefits, it will recertify them and give them a new certification period.

Retention Issues

CalFresh-eligible clients may lose their benefits if they:

- Miss or ignore letters from their local CalFresh office reminding them to submit required paperwork or notifying them that benefits will terminate
- Do not keep the EW informed about changes to their income, living arrangements, household composition or address as specified when their certification period and type of reporting are established
- Misunderstand that their eligibility can be renewed at the end of the certification period if they continue to be eligible
- Misunderstand when they are to report
- Are concerned about issuance
- Do not understand the notices that they receive



- Do not realize that the deadlines are important
- Fill out the paperwork incorrectly
- Think they have to recertify in person and lack transportation or childcare
- Do not realize that they can reschedule an appointment if the one they are given is not convenient
- Feel uninformed
- Are afraid to ask questions
- Believe the myths they hear about CalFresh

Outreach workers help eligible clients to keep their benefits by:

- Dispelling myths and helping the client to understand the regulations, their rights, and their responsibilities

- Reviewing with the client the renewal paperwork they must use to update the CalFresh office of their situation
- ✎ See *Worksheet F* for the Update Reporting Checklist.
- Identifying paperwork due dates with the client by having them mark the due date on a home calendar and making sure that the client has the contact information for their EW
- Showing the client what the Notices of Action (NOA) from the county look like and reading through these notices to explain them to the client
- Answering questions that the client might have about the paperwork
- Encouraging the client to drop off the required reports to the local CalFresh office in person and get a receipt
- Contacting the client to remind them about their paperwork due date
- Pointing out the question, “*Do you want to cancel your benefits?*” on any renewal forms and advising clients **not** to mark “Yes” by mistake

Inter-County Transfers

Individuals moving to a different county can receive seamless services through an Inter-County Transfer (ICT) of their CalFresh benefits. Tell your clients to report their change of address

to the original county (include a change in housing costs and/or the number of household members) so the transfer can be started. If the client has moved, they can also advise their new county and get the transfer started.¹

✎ Go to *Regulation Quick Reference Sheet A* for a summary of inter-county transfers.

ICT Process

- In CalFresh-only cases, the *sending county* notifies the receiving county of the initiation of a case transfer and sends the Notice of Action (NA) 1268 to the recipient.
- The previous county of residence will determine continuing eligibility and amount of CalFresh benefits from the most recent Change Report submitted, or QR 7 due during the transfer period, and continue to issue benefits until the expiration of the transfer period (30 days). If only some of the household moves, they can be added to existing households (if applicable) or must apply on their own.
- The new county of residence will contact the former county to initiate an ICT if a recipient seeks benefits while still active in the former county. It also will notify the former county of residence of the outcome of the ICT, and inform the recipient that the case has transferred and about the new benefits amounts going forward.²

¹ <http://foodstampguide.org/moving/>

² California Department of Social Services, *All County Letter No. 11-22*, accessed September 10, 2012, <http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/lettersnotices/entres/getinfo/acl/2011/11-22.pdf>