

NEWS RELEASE

California Department of Social Services

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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CONTACT: (916) 657-2268

CALFRESH FOOD BENEFITS NOW CAN BE USED TO PURCHASE GROCERIES ONLINE

California also received federal approval to issue Pandemic-EBT benefits in May and June, providing additional food to eligible children during the COVID-19 pandemic

SACRAMENTO – To help ensure that California children, families, and individuals have access to food during the COVID-19 emergency, Californians who receive CalFresh food assistance can now use their Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards to make online food purchases through Amazon and Walmart.

“This new functionality will help ensure that Californians, particularly those that are most vulnerable and with the most need, have access to healthy food while staying home and staying safe during the COVID-19 pandemic,” said California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Director Kim Johnson. “We will continue to work with our federal partners to bring additional retailers on board as quickly as possible.”

CalFresh recipients can use their EBT cards to buy groceries online just as they would when visiting a retail store. No additional application or verification is needed.

In March, the Department requested a waiver from the federal government to allow EBT card holders to purchase groceries online. The waiver was approved, contingent upon working initially with existing federally approved retailers, Amazon and Walmart.

CalFresh food benefits bolster household budgets, allowing individuals and families to afford nutritious food, including more fruit, vegetables, and other healthy options. It is the nation’s largest nutrition assistance program and provides more than 4 million Californians with food benefits each month. Benefits for one individual range from \$16-\$194 per month. CalFresh food benefits are delivered via EBT debit cards, which are accepted at grocery stores and farmers’ markets statewide.

In addition, CalFresh [is available to older adults and people with disabilities who receive Supplemental Security Income.](#)

There are three ways to apply for CalFresh and connect with your local county social service office:

- **Click:** GetCalFresh.org to apply online.
- **Call:** 1-877-847-3663 (FOOD).
- **Come in:** Locate your local county office at CalFreshFood.org.

We encourage Californians to apply online or by phone at this time. Reasonable accommodations and services in multiple languages are available through local county social service offices.

Also, to help provide food to children during the COVID-19 emergency, children who are eligible to receive free or reduced-price meals at school will receive extra food benefits. These food benefits, called Pandemic EBT (P-EBT), will help eligible children and families buy food when schools are closed.

“With schools currently closed throughout California, many students have lost access to meals they normally receive on campus,” said CDSS Director Kim Johnson. “These additional food benefits will help families put food on the table during this time of great need.”

Eligible families will receive up to \$365 in total benefits per child, which can be used on food and groceries. Families with children currently enrolled in CalFresh, Medi-Cal or Foster Care, do not need to apply and will receive a P-EBT card in the mail. Cards will be mailed during the month of May. P-EBT recipients will also be able to use their P-EBT cards to make food purchases online.

Eligible families with children who are not receiving CalFresh, Medi-Cal or Foster Care benefits must apply online beginning in late May and before June 30, 2020. P-EBT benefits will be issued retroactively regardless of when families apply online. Additional information on P-EBT, including how to apply online, will be available in the coming weeks, at www.cdss.ca.gov/pandemic-ebt.

The State of California and local governments have taken extraordinary steps to protect public health in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. Recently, the Governor [signed emergency legislation](#) allocating \$1.1 billion toward the state’s response, and [deployed the National Guard to help support food banks](#).

Visit covid19.ca.gov for critical steps Californians can take to stay healthy, and resources available to those impacted by the outbreak.

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