

May 3, 2024

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ALL COUNTY LETTER NO. 24-31

The purpose of this All County Letter is to provide County Welfare Departments and education partners with consolidated policy guidance related to CalFresh student eligibility through the release of the CalFresh Student Eligibility Handbook Version 2.0.



KIM JOHNSON
DIRECTOR

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DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
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GAVIN NEWSOM
GOVERNOR

May 3, 2024

ALL COUNTY LETTER NO. 24-31

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS
ALL CALFRESH PROGRAM SPECIALISTS
ALL CALWORKS PROGRAM SPECIALISTS
ALL CONSORTIA MANAGERS
ALL QUALITY CONTROL COORDINATORS

SUBJECT: CALFRESH STUDENT ELIGIBILITY HANDBOOK VERSION 2.0

REFERENCE: [34 CODE OF FEDERAL REGULATIONS \(CFR\) SECTION 361.125; 7 CFR 272.10\(b\)\(1\); 7 CFR SECTION 273.1\(b\)\(7\)\(vi\); 7 CFR SECTION 272.1\(c\); 7 CFR SECTION 273.2\(f\)\(1\); 7 CFR SECTION 273.2\(f\)\(1\)\(I\); 7 CFR 272.10\(b\)\(1\); 7 CFR SECTION 273.2\(f\)\(4\); 7 CFR SECTION 273.2\(f\)\(5\); 7 CFR SECTION 273.5; 7 CFR SECTION 273.5\(a\); 7 CFR SECTION 273.5\(b\); 7 CFR SECTION 275.3\(b\)\(1\); 7 CFR SECTION 273.5\(b\)\(5\); 7 CFR 273.5\(b\)\(10\)\(ii\); 7 CFR SECTION 273.5\(b\)\(11\); 7 CFR SECTION 273.5\(b\)\(11\)\(iv\); 7 CFR 273.7\(b\)\(1\)\(viii\); 7 CFR SECTION 273.5\(c\); 7 CFR SECTION 273.9\(c\)\(3\)\(i\); 7 CFR SECTION 273.9\(c\)\(4\); 7 CFR SECTION 273.9\(c\)\(19\); EDUCATION CODE \(EDC\) SECTION 66010; EDC SECTION 66025.93; EDC SECTION 69519.3; EDC SECTION 78040-78043; WELFARE AND INSTITUTIONS CODE \(WIC\) SECTION 10006; WIC SECTION 18901.11; MANUAL OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES \(MPP\) SECTION 19-001; MPP SECTION 19-005; MPP SECTION 63-102\(P\)\(1\); MPP SECTION 63-402.4; MPP SECTION 63-406.11; MPP SECTION 63-406.111; MPP SECTION 63-406.111\(a\)\(1\); MPP SECTION 63-406.111\(a\)\(2\); MPP SECTION 63-406.111\(a\)\(2\)\(A\); MPP SECTION 63-406.21; MPP SECTION 63-406.212; MPP SECTION 63-406.216\(a\); MPP SECTION 63-406.22; MPP SECTION 63-408.111; MPP SECTION 63-502.112; MPP SECTION 63-502.134; MPP SECTION 63-502.142; MPP SECTION 63-502.2\(E\); MPP SECTION 63-503.242\(c\)\(3\); MPP SECTION 63-505.2\(q\)\(1\)\(A\); MPP SECTION 63-507\(a\)\(6\); MPP SECTION 63-507\(a\)\(10\); MPP SECTION 63-507\(a\)\(17\);](#)

[ASSEMBLY BILL \(AB\) 214; AB 612; AB 927; AB 942; AB 1894; AB 1930; SENATE BILL \(SB\) 850; ALL COUNTY LETTER \(ACL\) NO. 15-70; ACL NO. 17-05; ACL NO. 17-97; ACL NO. 17-125; ACL NO. 17-125E; ACL NO. 18-27; ACL NO. 19-93; ACL NO. 20-08; ACL NO. 21-24; ACL NO. 20-135; ACL NO. 21-11; ACL NO. 21-11E; ACL NO. 21-58; ACL NO. 21-100; ACL NO. 21-101; ACL NO. 22-46; ACL NO. 22-48; ACL NO. 24-01; ALL COUNTY INFORMATION NOTICE \(ACIN\) NO. I-45-11; ACIN I-85-22; ACIN NO. I-89-15; ACIN I-102-10; SNAP- CLARIFICATION ON TREATMENT OF MEAL PLANS AT INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION](#)

The purpose of this All County Letter (ACL) is to release the CalFresh Student Eligibility Handbook Version 2.0 (Handbook). The Handbook provides updated policy guidance on CalFresh student eligibility. The guidance released in this ACL supersedes guidance released in the previous CalFresh Student Eligibility Handbook, [ACL No. 20-08 issued on February 12, 2020.](#)

BACKGROUND

The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) has taken steps to reduce the occurrence of food insecurity among college students by focusing on improved CalFresh access. Over time, policy guidance has been released regarding student eligibility via ACLs and All County Information Notices (ACINs). The CDSS has developed the Handbook to consolidate this policy guidance. The Handbook focuses on student eligibility rules, key definitions, student exemptions, student income, and verification procedures.

HANDBOOK UPDATES

There have been updates to the following sections of the Handbook:

- Restaurant Meals Program (RMP)
- Paid Work Exemption
- Local Programs that Increase Employability (LPIE)
- Exception for California Community Colleges (CCCs) offering a baccalaureate degree (BA)
- Student Income Eligibility for CalFresh
- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)
- Verification of Exemptions

New sections that have been added are as follows:

- County Staff Liaisons for Public Institutions of Higher Education
- Participation in an LPIE
- Tracking Student Exemptions

- New Resources added in Appendices

The Handbook, along with corresponding resources, can also be found on the CalFresh Resource Center Policy Page under “Student Resources” at:

<https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/calfresh-resource-center/policy>.

If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact the CalFresh Policy Bureau at CalFreshPolicy@dss.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Original Document Signed By

ALEXIS FERNÁNDEZ GARCIA
Deputy Director
Family Engagement and Empowerment Division

Attachment



CALFRESH STUDENT ELIGIBILITY HANDBOOK Version 2.0



CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
CALFRESH AND NUTRITION BRANCH

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Handbook is to provide policy guidance about CalFresh eligibility for college students. The Handbook provides an overview of the student eligibility rule, key definitions, exemptions from the rule, and policy guidance around income. The guidance in this Handbook is based on statutes, regulations, and previously issued All County Letters (ACLs) and All County Information Notices (ACINs). The guidance in this Handbook supersedes the guidance provided in [ACL No. 20-08](#), released February 12, 2020.

[Welfare and Institutions Code \(WIC\) Section 18901.11](#) was enacted through of [Assembly Bill \(AB\) 1930 \(Chapter 729, Statutes of 2014\)](#). The bill mandated that no later than October 1, 2015, the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), in consultation with representatives of the office of the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges (CCC); Offices of the Chancellor of the California State University (CSU); University of California (UC) Chancellors' Offices; the California Workforce Development Board; county human services agencies; and advocates for students and clients, establish a protocol to identify and verify all potential exemptions from the student eligibility rule, described in [7 Code of Federal Regulation \(CFR\) Section 273.5\(a\)](#). To carry out this mandate, the Student Eligibility Workgroup (the Workgroup) was established.

The Workgroup's first policy document was [All County Letter \(ACL\) No. 17-05](#) released February 14, 2017. The letter provides policy guidance with the aim to improve CalFresh access among college students to reduce the high rate of hunger and food insecurity among this population. The letter identifies programs to increase employability for which participation qualifies a student for an exemption from the student eligibility rule. As part of this effort, CDSS and Workgroup members developed a process to keep County Welfare Departments (CWD) informed of local programs to increase employability.

Effective January 1, 2018, the College Student Hunger Relief Act of 2017, [[AB 214 \(Chapter 134, Statutes of 2017\)](#)] enacted [Education Code \(EDC\) Section 69519.3](#) and [WIC Section 18901.11](#) to establish new requirements and clarify existing policy regarding CalFresh student eligibility. The [EDC Section 69519.3](#) requires the California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) to notify Cal Grant recipients of their potential eligibility for CalFresh. Additionally, the bill defined an "on campus food vendor" and "food facility" for the purpose of implementing the Restaurant Meals Program (RMP) on college campuses, redefined "half-time enrollment", and defined "anticipating participation" in work study. As required by [WIC Section 18901.11](#), CDSS is required to maintain, and regularly update, a list of local programs to increase employability. Additionally, CDSS is required to issue and maintain instructions for verifying an exemption from the student eligibility rule based on participation in such a program. As a result of these changes and continued efforts of the Workgroup, [ACL No. 18-27](#) was released on April 2, 2018.

PART 1: DEFINITIONS

STUDENT

Per [7 CFR 273.5\(a\)](#) and [Manual of Policies and Procedures \(MPP\) Section 63-406.11](#), for CalFresh purposes, a student is any person who is age 18 through 49; physically and mentally fit for employment; and enrolled at least half-time in an institution of higher education as defined by the institution. See [Institution of Higher Education](#) section below for more details.

Students are eligible to participate in CalFresh if they meet the criteria for at least one of the exemptions to the student eligibility rule specified at [7 CFR Section 273.5\(b\)](#). This is known as the “student eligibility rule” and is referred to as such throughout this Handbook. Exemptions to the student eligibility rule are described in [Part 2: Student Eligibility Exemptions](#) of this Handbook.

STUDENT STATUS

Student status is when an individual is determined to be a student for CalFresh purposes. Student status is to be reported and determined at application and at recertification. Student status begins on the first day of an academic term, and continues during subsequent regular school breaks, unless the student graduates, is suspended or expelled, drops out, or does not intend to register for the next normal school term (excluding summer school) in accordance with [7 CFR Section 273.5\(c\)](#).

Reporting Changes in Student Status

Changes in student status are not a mandatory mid-period reporting requirement. This means that not enrolling for a summer term or intersession is not a mandatory mid-period report. Student status is only required to be assessed at application and recertification. If the household voluntarily reports a change in student status mid-period, the CWD must follow guidance in [ACL No. 21-101](#) and act only on changes that will increase the household’s CalFresh allotment.

HALF-TIME ENROLLMENT

The [EDC Section 69519.3](#), which supersedes current regulations at [MPP Section 63-406.11](#), defines half-time enrollment for purpose of determining CalFresh student eligibility as follows, “a student shall be determined to be attending at least half-time any semester or term in which he or she enrolls in at least half of the number of credits needed each semester or term to graduate within four years of enrollment as a first-time freshman, or within two years of enrollment as a transfer student.” This means that the number of credits needed to meet the definition of half-time will vary by institution.

Because the definition will vary by institution, the CWD must work with the applicant/recipient and/or local institution to determine what number of credits are needed each semester or term to graduate within four years of enrollment as a first-time freshman, or within two years of enrollment as a transfer student. This calculation also applies to those receiving graduate degrees.

When a student has not chosen a major, the CWD must base the half-time calculation on the minimum number of credits required for the student to obtain a General Education Bachelor of Arts degree at that institution of higher education. If the student has chosen a major, the CWD must base the half-time calculation on the number of credits required for that student's chosen major at that institution of higher education.

Note: Individuals enrolled less than half-time, are not considered students for CalFresh purposes and therefore are not subject to the student eligibility rule.

SUMMER ENROLLMENT

In accordance with [7 CFR Section 273.5\(c\)](#) and [MPP Section 63-406.22](#), the enrollment status of a student begins on the first day of the school term.

Individuals who submit an initial application for benefits in the summer, prior to the start of their first official day of the regular school term, are not considered to have student status. As such, they are not subject to the student eligibility rule at the time of application. Their student status will not be reassessed until recertification. At recertification they will be considered a continuing student who is subject to the student eligibility rule.

Continuing students are subject to the student eligibility rules during regular school breaks because they were already classified as a student.

INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION

An institution of higher education, in accordance with [7 CFR Section 273.5](#) and [MPP Section 63-406.111\(a\)\(1\)](#), is a business, technical, trade, or vocational school that normally requires a high school diploma or equivalency certificate for enrollment in the curriculum, or in accordance with [MPP Section 63-406.111\(a\)\(2\)](#), a regular curriculum at a community college or state or university that offers degree programs regardless of whether a high school diploma is required. A regular curriculum at an institution of higher education means the standard requirements for graduation or certification/qualification in a particular field of study.

In accordance with [MPP Section 63-406.111\(a\)\(2\)\(A\)](#), if an institution of higher education normally requires a high school diploma or equivalency certificate but does not require either of these for a particular program or course, enrollment in such a program or course does not constitute enrollment in an institution of higher education.

An individual is considered to be enrolled in an institution of higher education if the individual is enrolled at least half-time and enrolled in a regular curriculum at a two-year community college, four-year state or university or graduate school. An individual is also considered to be enrolled in an institution of higher education if the individual is enrolled at least half-time in a business, technical, trade, or vocational school that normally requires a high school diploma or equivalency certificate for enrollment in the curriculum in accordance with [MPP Section 63-406.111](#).

Institutions of higher education include, but are not limited to:

- California Community Colleges (CCCs),
- California State Universities (CSUs),
- Universities of California (UCs),
- Nonprofit and for-profit Private colleges,
- Business schools/programs,
- Technical schools/programs,
- Trade schools/programs, or
- Vocational schools/programs.

PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Per [EDC Section 66010](#), private institutions are nonpublic higher education institutions that grant undergraduate degrees, graduate degrees, or both, formed as nonprofit corporations in California, and are accredited by an agency recognized by the United States Department of Education.

ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMS

The CalFresh student eligibility rule does not apply to students who are enrolled in non-regular curriculums, including adult education programs, remedial education, continuing or community education, professional development, English for Speakers of Other Languages, and workforce development/training programs. Enrollment in K-12 adult schools and community college non-credit classes does not require a high school diploma or equivalency certificate. Therefore, if a course does not provide credits towards college graduation, it's considered a non-credit course. Many adult education courses are not for credit and will not count towards enrollment of half time or more. These programs are not considered to be institutions of higher education as defined by CalFresh, and so if the student meets all other eligibility requirements, they are eligible for CalFresh.

GRADUATE STUDENTS

For CalFresh, there is no differentiation between graduate students and other students. Both are defined using the same criteria for students above. There are no specific exclusions for graduate students. The CWD must apply the student eligibility rule and exemptions to all students meeting the definition above.

VETERAN STUDENTS

Students who are military veterans are subject to the student eligibility rule. There are no specific exclusions for students who are veterans. Please see [MPP Section 63-502.2\(e\)\(1\)](#) and the income exclusion section in [Part 4: Student Income Eligibility for CalFresh](#) of this Handbook for guidance on the exclusion of educational assistance provided to students who are veterans.

COLLEGE MEAL PLANS

Students who live on campus and receive more than 50% of their meals through a meal plan, (whether purchased or provided at no cost to the student), are considered residents of an institution who are not eligible for CalFresh in accordance with [7 CFR Section 273.1\(b\)\(7\)\(vi\)](#) and [MPP Section 63-402.4](#). Not all students living on campus have a meal plan. Students participating in a meal plan that provides them with 50% or fewer of their daily meals are not considered residents of an institution and may be eligible for CalFresh. CalFresh benefits cannot be used to pay for a college meal plan.

Meal plans vary by institution, the CWD must determine the scope of the meal plan on a case-by-case basis. Both mandatory and optional meal plans must be considered when determining eligibility. There are 21 total meals in a week (3 meals per day over 7 days per week). Students living on campus, and whose meal plan provides 11 meals or more per week, are not eligible for CalFresh. Students living on campus who receive 10 meals or less, are not considered a resident of an institution and are therefore potentially eligible for CalFresh. For additional guidance, see the [SNAP- Clarification on Treatment of Meal Plans at Institutions of Higher Education](#), issued June 2, 2022.

Note: Students who live off-campus and/or commute are not considered residents of an institution. These students are potentially eligible for CalFresh, even if they have a meal plan that provides more than half of their daily meals.

RESTAURANT MEALS PROGRAM

The CalFresh Restaurant Meals Program (RMP) is a statewide program that provides eligible households the option to use their CalFresh food benefits to purchase hot and/or prepared meals at any participating United States Department of Agriculture – Food and Nutrition Service authorized food establishment statewide. Eligible CalFresh households are those comprised entirely of adults aged 60 and older, and/or people with disabilities, the spouse of an individual that belonging to one of those two categories regardless of their age or disability status, and/or people experiencing homelessness. If a household is comprised of some members who do not qualify based on the RMP eligibility criteria, the entire household is ineligible for the RMP. For more information on RMP eligibility, please see [ACL No. 24-01](#) issued January 19, 2024. Students who meet these criteria are eligible to participate in the RMP.

[EDC Section 66025.93](#), [Assembly Bill \(AB\) 942 \(Chapter 814, Statutes of 2019\)](#) allows CDSS to enter into an agreement, also known as a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), with the Chancellor of the California State University, the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges, or both. Under this MOU, any qualifying food facility located on a campus of the California State University, or a campus of the California Community Colleges, may apply to participate in the RMP. Refer to [ACL No. 21-100](#) issued August 27, 2021 for further guidance regarding the implementation of [AB 942 \(Chapter 81, Statutes of 2019\)](#). For additional information about the CalFresh RMP, please visit the [CalFresh RMP Webpage](#).

COUNTY STAFF LIAISONS FOR PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

The implementation of [AB 1326 \(Chapter 570, Statutes of 2021\)](#) requires the CWD to designate at least one employee as a staff liaison to serve as the point of contact for academic counselors and other relevant professional staff at a campus of a public higher education institution to provide information on programs and services that may be available to students.

The staff liaison is encouraged to provide information to campuses regarding the location and hours of CWD offices, as well as information regarding online and telephone access to program applications, if available. Any disclosure or sharing of personal information of CalFresh and CalWORKs applicants that occurs as a result must be made in compliance with state and federal confidentiality laws outlined in [MPP Section 19-001](#), [MPP Section 19-005](#), and [Title 7 CFR Section 272.1\(c\)](#).

With input from the public institutions of higher education, counties must develop protocols for engagement between the staff liaison and the institutions of public higher education located within the county. Counties are also encouraged to consult with stakeholders in the development of those protocols. Stakeholders may include:

- Representatives from each campus of an institution of public higher education within the county;
- Counselors or other relevant professional staff from each campus of an institution of public higher education within the county; and/or
- Relevant organizations representing the interests of students, faculty, and staff from each campus of an institution of public higher education within the county.

More information about the implementation of county liaisons for public institutions of higher education is provided in [ACL No. 22-48](#), issued June 10, 2022. Considerations for the development of protocols for engagement between the CWD and a campus of an institution of public higher education are described in [ACIN No. I-85-22](#).

PART 2: STUDENT ELIGIBILITY EXEMPTIONS

If a student meets the criteria for an exemption from the student eligibility rule, they may be eligible for CalFresh. The CWD must evaluate the circumstances of any household member who is identified as a student to determine if they are subject to the student eligibility rule and whether they meet the criteria for any of the exemptions listed at [7 CFR Section 273.5\(b\)](#).

Note: Per the CalFresh definition of a student, any person who is enrolled less than half-time (see [Half-Time Enrollment](#) section of this Handbook), is not considered a student, and therefore is not subject to the student eligibility rule ([7 CFR Section 273.5\(a\)](#) and [MPP Section 63 406.11](#)).

APPLICABILITY OF EXEMPTIONS

In accordance with [MPP Section 63-406.21](#), for a student to be eligible for CalFresh, the student must meet the criteria for at least one of the following exemptions on the date of the application interview or recertification interview. Once an exemption has been established, the exemption typically will apply through the length of the certification period, except for the exemptions based on work hours and work study, or if the individual reports a change in their student status.

EXEMPTIONS FROM THE STUDENT ELIGIBILITY RULE

Age

A student who is age 17 or younger or age 50 or older meets the criteria for an exemption from the student eligibility rule ([7 CFR Section 273.5\(b\)\(1\)](#)).

Disabled

Students who receive disability-based income, like Social Security Disability, Supplemental Security Income, Veterans' Disability, Worker's Compensation, or other disability-based income meet the definition of being physically or mentally unfit to work. The disability must be expected to last more than 30 days.

Physically or Mentally Unfit to Work

For the purposes of the CalFresh student exemption, the definition of physical or mental unfitness to work aligns with the Able-bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) definition of unfitness as described in [ACL No. 19-93](#), released September 12, 2019.

An individual is considered medically certified as physically or mentally unfit to work if they have a temporary or permanent illness, disability, condition, or life circumstance that reduces or affects their ability to work. The physical or mental condition must make

an individual unfit to work an average of 20 hours per week on an ongoing basis and is not limited to being unfit to work at all.

Students who do not receive disability-based income but are unable to work due to a physical or mental condition, must provide verification of the inability to work from a third-party source if the student's unfitness is not apparent. Like ABAWD time limit rules, indicators of apparent unfitness to work include but are not limited to chronic homelessness, struggling with drugs or alcohol, and having experienced domestic violence. If unfitness is not apparent, verification is required and a client statement or affidavit will not suffice.

Verification can be provided by a medical professional, including but not limited to a physician, nurse, psychologist, or psychiatrist. Other professionals, who are not medical professionals, but assist clients in case management or other services, such as a Behavioral Health Case Manager or Regional Center Case Manager, may also provide verification.

When third party verification is unavailable, worker observation noted in the case record can also be used as verification. When possible, the CWD will assist the client in obtaining verification for this exemption.

Receipt of a Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Funded Benefit

A student receiving a TANF-funded (cash or non-cash) benefit meets the criteria for this exemption from the student eligibility rule ([7 CFR Section 273.5\(b\)\(3\)](#)). This includes:

- California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs),
- Tribal TANF,
- TANF-Funded Cal Grant A or B, and
- Any other program funded with the TANF block grant under Title IV of the Social Security Act (including but not limited to the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) program under Title IV of the Social Security Act, succeeded by TANF).

Note: Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) program was succeeded by TANF. Any student participating in a job training program as result of participation in TANF is exempt from the student eligibility rule.

Receipt of a TANF-Funded Cal Grant A or B:

The CDSS allocates TANF funds yearly to CSAC for the purpose of issuing Cal Grants to students with low-income who meet the TANF eligibility requirements. As stated on page two of [ACL No. 17-05](#), the student must be:

- a. Currently unmarried;
- b. 25 years of age or younger; and

- c. Have parental and/or student income of \$50,000 a year or less.

Note that CSAC may have additional eligibility requirements that are not listed here. These additional eligibility criteria are used by CSAC to determine whether a student is eligible to receive a Cal Grant. Students without qualifying citizenship status may be approved for a Cal Grant A or B but will not receive TANF funding for the Cal Grant. Therefore, their receipt of the Cal Grant does not qualify them for an exemption from the student eligibility rule.

In accordance with [ACL No. 19-32](#) released April 22, 2019, CSAC offers three types of Cal Grants to students:

1. Cal Grant A provides tuition and fee assistance;
2. Cal Grant B contains two components:
 - a. Cal Grant B provides tuition and fee assistance
 - b. Cal Grant B Access provides assistance to cover the cost of books/supplies and other college expenses; and
3. Cal Grant C provides assistance to students pursuing an occupational or technical program. Receipt of a Cal Grant C award does not exempt a student from the student eligibility rule. Please see CTE/Vocational Training for more information in the [State-Funded Local Programs that Increase Employability](#) section of the Handbook.

Receipt of a TANF-funded Cal Grant A or B may be used to determine if a student meets the criteria for an exemption from the student eligibility rule. CSAC also provides Cal Grants to student who do not meet the TANF eligibility requirements, therefore the CWD should not assume that the Cal Grant A or B received by a student is TANF-funded. If verification is needed to establish this student exemption, please refer to the [TANF-Funded Cal Grant A or B](#) verification section of this Handbook.

CCCs and Cal Grants

Cal Grants A or B provide tuition and fee assistance for students who attend a “tuition charging institution.” Students with low-income do not pay tuition at any CCC as a result of fee waiver programs, such as College Promise, formerly known as the Board of Governors Grant (BOGG) Fee waiver. Therefore, the CCCs are not considered tuition charging institutions for the purposes of establishing Cal Grant eligibility. Students with low income who attend a CCC and meet the TANF eligibility requirements are not eligible to receive tuition and fee assistance through Cal Grant A or B while attending a CCC.

Most students who attend a CCC can only receive the Cal Grant B Access component and therefore, do not meet the criteria for this exemption from the student eligibility rule. See [ACL No. 17-05](#) for other exemption criteria that may apply to students who attend a CCC. As stated in [ACL No. 18-27](#), a student with low income who attends a CCC may be eligible for a TANF-funded Cal Grant A or B, if and when the student transfers to a

four-year, tuition charging institution of higher education. The student will receive tuition and fee assistance through the TANF-funded Cal Grant A or B only at the time they transfer to the four-year, tuition-charging institution.

Guidance regarding four-year institutions of higher education has not changed. Students attending a CSU, UC, or another four-year institution of higher education, including private institutions, who are receiving tuition and fee assistance through a TANF-funded Cal Grant A or B meet the criteria for an exemption from the student eligibility rule. Please refer to “[Exception for CCCs with a BA Degree](#)” for more details on additional exemption criteria for CCCs.

Note: If a student applies in summer months, but Cal Grant has not yet been awarded, the student may use the Cal Grant award from the previous year to meet this exemption.

Exception for California Community Colleges (CCCs) Offering a Baccalaureate (BA) Degree

The [EDC Section 78040-78043](#), as passed by [Senate Bill \(SB\) 850 \(Chapter 747, Statutes of 2014\)](#), authorized the CCC Board of Governors to establish a statewide BA Degree Pilot Program in Fall 2017 and allowed fifteen approved CCCs to offer bachelor’s degrees. Each of the fifteen approved CCCs offer one academic degree in the area of health, science, or technology not already offered at a CSU or UC. Under the law, each CCC charges \$84 per unit of upper-division course work. A small population of CCC low-income students eligible for a TANF-funded Cal Grant A or B and participating in the BA Degree Pilot Program is charged tuition and may receive tuition and fee assistance through a TANF-funded Cal Grant A or B while attending the CCC.

On October 6, 2021, California Governor Gavin Newsom signed [AB 927 \(Chapter 565, Statutes of 2021\)](#) authorizing the Board of Governors to expand and extend the operation of the statewide BA Degree Pilot Program indefinitely. The bill amends [EDC Section 78042](#) et seq. to authorize the Board of Governors to establish up to 30 BA degree programs annually, with a maximum of 15 per biannual application cycle.

Note: Students participating in the CCC BA Degree Pilot Program who have received tuition and fee assistance through a TANF-funded Cal Grant A or B will also receive written notification from CSAC as verification. This is an exception to the students attending a CCC and are participating in the BA pilot program.

Paid Work

A student who is enrolled at least half-time in an institution of higher education and paid for employment, working an average of 20 hours per week or an average of 80 hours per month or if self-employed, working an average of 20 hours per week or an average of 80 hours per month and receiving weekly earnings at least equal to the Federal

minimum wage multiplied by 20 hours weekly, meets the criteria for an exemption from the student eligibility rule.

[ACL 17-97](#) released September 21, 2017 provides guidance that the CWD will average student work hours monthly to determine CalFresh eligibility. Students whose employment hours fluctuate from week to week will be considered to have met the minimum work hour requirement if they maintain an average of either 20 hours per week or an average of at least 80 hours per month. The CWD must review student work hours at application and recertification (see [MPP Section 63-408.111](#) and [MPP Section 63-502.112](#)).

Students employed by their institution of higher education have an exemption to the student eligibility rule. See the [State-Funded Local Programs That Increase Employability](#) section of this Handbook for more information.

Determining Average Hours Worked

The sum total hours must not be used to determine if the student meets the paid work exemption. Hours must be averaged using the multiplier 4.33 or the number of weeks in the year.

- ***Example 1 – Using 4.33 multiplier***

A student provides their most recent pay stubs showing they work 19 hours per week. Even though the student does not work 20 hours per week, they do work more than an average of 80 hours or more each month. The student is eligible for the paid work exemption.

Average hours: 19 hours per week X 4.33* = 82.77 hours per month

- ***Example 2 – Using number of weeks in the year***

A student provides their previous month's pay stubs showing they work 16 hours per week. This student does not work an average of 20 hours per week and does not maintain an average of at least 80 hours per month. The student is not eligible for the paid work exemption.

Average hours: 16 hours per week X 52 weeks per year* = 832 hours per year / 12 months = 69.33 hours per month

***Note:** The 4.33 multiplier or averaging over the number of weeks in a year is used to account for the varying lengths of months over the year. Students who work a sum total of 80 hours in a single month, but who will not maintain an average of at least 80 hours each month, are not eligible for the paid work exemption.

Reported Changes to Work Hours

Under semi-annual reporting, a change in student work hours is not a mandatory mid-period report. If the student does not report a change in work hours during the certification period, the student meets the criteria for an exemption from the student eligibility rule through the length of the certification period.

If the student reports a change in work hours at periodic report, the CWD must determine if the change in work hours averages to 20 hours per week or an average of 80 hours per month to continue applying the exemption. If the change in work hours does not average to 20 hours per week or an average of 80 hours per month, the CWD must determine whether the student meets the criteria for another exemption from the student eligibility rule or whether the student is no longer eligible for CalFresh.

If a student voluntarily reports a change in income during the certification period and the change in income is verified, the CWD must act to reassess the student's continuing CalFresh eligibility. However, the CWD cannot request further verification, in accordance with [ACL 21-101](#). While the CWD is acting on the verified change in income, it may become known to the CWD that a student no longer meets the criteria for an exemption from the student eligibility rule based on work hours. In this scenario, the CWD must determine whether the student meets the criteria for another exemption from the student eligibility rule or whether the student is no longer eligible for CalFresh.

Work Study

A student is eligible for the work study exemption if they have been approved, awarded, or accepted for state or federally financed work study for the current school term (as defined by the institution) and anticipate working during the term.

Length of Exemption

The exemption begins the month the school term starts, or the month work study is approved, whichever is later and continues until the end of the month in which the school term ends, or if it becomes known that the student refused a work study position.

The exemption shall not continue between terms when there is a break of a full month or longer unless the student is participating in work study during the break ([MPP Section 63-406.212](#)). A break or end of work study is not a mandatory mid-period report. Assessment of whether a student is participating in work study, for the purpose of determining whether the individual is an eligible student, may only be initiated by the CWD at periodic report (SAR 7) and recertification. If the student is not participating in work study, the student may be ineligible for CalFresh unless they have another exemption. Counties are reminded to assess whether a student who is not participating in work study during the break meets the criteria for another exemption before acting to discontinue CalFresh eligibility.

Anticipating Work

The [ACL No. 18-27](#) and [WIC Section 18901.11](#) state that for the purpose of determining CalFresh eligibility, a student is considered “anticipating participation” in work study if they “can reasonably expect or foresee being assigned a work study job, and a student shall be deemed to be ‘anticipating participation’ in work study until he or she receives notices from the institution of higher education that he or she has been denied participation in work study.” Furthermore, a student meets the criteria for this exemption if the work study position which has not yet begun or is not yet available. A student can fairly anticipate that they will be offered a work study position until they receive a notice of denial. If the student is approved for work study and a job does not materialize, the student is not penalized ([ACIN No. 1-89-15](#) dated December 31, 2015 and [ACL No. 17-05](#)). If a student is approved for work study, but states during the CalFresh interview that they do not anticipate accepting a work study position if offered, the CWD must document the student’s voluntary statement in the case file and deny the exemption.

Additionally, a student who is denied work study due to funding limitations does not meet the criteria for an exemption from the student eligibility rule. A student must officially be approved for work study. Eligibility for work study without official approval is insufficient for a student to meet the criteria for an exemption.

Parental Control for A Child Under Age Six

A student who is exerting parental control over a dependent household member under the age of six meets the criteria for exemption from the student eligibility rule. See [MPP Section 63-102\(p\)\(1\)](#) for the definition of “parental control.”

Only one parent can claim the exemption as the primary person responsible for the care of a dependent child under the age of six. However, the CWD must determine each application on a case-by-case basis and follow in good faith the “intent” of the law. The Statute, as written, is intended to exempt an individual from the student eligibility rule. If there is more than one child under age six, the CWD must explore the reason if one of the parents is unable to care for both children or the reason that each parent is “responsible” for each child.

Parental Control for A Child Under Age Twelve Without Adequate Child Care

A student who is exerting parental control over a dependent household member who:

- Has reached age six, but is under age twelve, and
- The CWD has determined on a case-by-case basis that adequate child-care services are not available to enable the individual to attend class and work an average 20 hours per week or an average of 80 hours per month, or
- Participate in a state or federally financed work study program during the regular school year,

meets the criteria for an exemption from the student eligibility rule. See [MPP Section 63-102\(p\)\(1\)](#) for the definition of “parental control.”

Only one parent can claim the exemption as the primary person responsible for the care of a dependent child who has reached age six but is under age twelve and adequate childcare services are not available. If there is more than one child under age twelve, the CWD must explore the reason if one of the parents is unable to care for both children or the reason that each parent is “responsible” for each child.

Single Parent Responsible for Child Under Twelve

A student enrolled full-time in an institution of higher education and who is a single parent with responsibility for the care of a dependent child under age 12 meets the criteria for an exemption from the student eligibility rule.

This exemption applies when only one of the child’s natural, adoptive, or stepparent, regardless of marital status, is in the same CalFresh household as the child. If no natural, adoptive, or stepparent is in the same CalFresh household as the child, another full-time student in the same CalFresh household as the child may qualify for this exemption if they have parental control over the child and their spouse is not part of the CalFresh household in accordance with [7 CFR 273.5\(b\)\(10\)\(ii\)](#).

Attending School as Part of an Employment and Training Program

A student who is assigned to, or placed in, an institution of higher education through or in compliance with one of the requirements listed below meets the criteria for an exemption from the student eligibility rule:

- a) Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act ([WIOA](#))
- b) CalFresh Employment and Training (CalFresh E&T) Program
- c) Programs under [Section 236 of the Trade Act of 1974](#)
- d) State or local government E&T programs for individuals with low income, determined by the CWD to be providing at least one of the components listed below:
 - Job retention,
 - Job search,
 - Job search training,
 - Work experience,
 - Workfare,
 - Vocational training,
 - Self-employment training,
 - On-the-job-training, or
 - Education.

Self-initiated placements during the period of time the person is enrolled in one of the E&T programs as specified in the list above must be considered to be in compliance

with the requirements of the program in which the person is enrolled, provided that the program has a component for enrollment in an institution of higher education and that program accepts the placement.

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) reauthorized and amended the [Workforce Investment Act \(WIA\) of 1998](#), which superseded the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA). The purpose of WIOA-funded activities is to promote an increase in the employment, job retention, earnings, and occupational skills improvement by participants. [MPP Section 63-406.216\(a\)](#) identifies JTPA as one of the allowable exemptions from the student rules. Therefore, a student enrolled in a WIOA activity meets the criteria for an exemption from the student eligibility rule.

Please note, the Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) receives federal funding under the Rehabilitation Act, as amended by the WIOA. The vocational rehabilitation program is Title IV of the WIOA, and is part of the California Unified Strategic Workforce Development Plan pursuant to [34 CFR 361.125](#). All individuals who are receiving or participating in DOR services are therefore participating in a WIOA employment and training program. Per [ACL No. 15-70](#), released September 17, 2005, a student enrolled in a WIOA activity is considered eligible for CalFresh if all other conditions of eligibility are satisfied.

Local Programs that Increase Employability (LPIE)

Participation in a state or local program that increases employability (LPIE) also exempts students from the student eligibility rule. In accordance with [7 CFR Section 273.5\(b\)\(11\)](#) a student meets the criteria for an exemption from the student eligibility rule if the student's attendance can be described as part of a program to increase the student's employability. To be defined as a program to increase employability, a student must participate in a program which assists in gaining the skills, training, work, or experience, that will increase the student's ability to obtain regular employment. This includes programs for students with low-income that are operated by a state or local government where one or more of the components of the program are equivalent to an E&T component.

The [W&IC Section 18901.11](#) requires CDSS to issue guidance and maintain a non-exhaustive list of LPIEs. The list is updated the first of each month. Both undergraduate and graduate students can qualify under this exemption.

In addition to the programs listed, there may be other state-funded programs that are referred to locally by another name, or programs that are locally funded and provide education components with the goal of increasing employability. LPIEs may be identified and submitted by local institutions of higher education or other education and training partners.

In accordance with [ACL No. 22-46](#), released June 3, 2022, the Center for Healthy Communities (CHC), a CalFresh outreach prime contractor out of Chico State University, will assist campuses in identification and submission of LPIEs. CDSS confirms and tracks approvals. Once approved, counties must consider student participation in the program as qualifying the student for an exemption from the CalFresh student eligibility rule. The List of Approved LPIEs is located on the [CalFresh Resource Center Policy Page](#) under “Student Resources.”

The CDSS approval of local programs is based on an assessment of whether the local program has one or more components equivalent to a CalFresh E&T Program component. CalFresh E&T components/activities include, but are not limited to:

1. Education
 - a. Adult Basic Education
 - b. CTE / Vocational Training
 - c. English Language Acquisition
 - d. Integrated Education Training
 - e. Work Readiness Training
2. Supervised Job Search
3. Work Experience
 - a. Apprenticeships / Pre-Apprenticeships
 - b. Academic Program which Requires an Internship/Externship
 - c. Campus Employment
 - d. Other Work Activities
4. Self-Employment Training

Please note, if a student resides in one county, but commutes to another county where they are enrolled in an approved LPIE, the student is exempt from the student eligibility rule.

Reassessment of Previously Approved LPIEs

The automatic approval of most state-funded and foster youth programs listed in [ACL No. 17-05](#) and [ACL No. 15-70](#) have been removed as of September 1, 2022. These campus-based programs should be individually identified by campuses or the local program as meeting the standard of an LPIE to the extent possible. Please refer to [ACL No. 22-46](#) for more details.

In accordance with [7 CFR Section 273.5\(b\)\(11\)\(iv\)](#) and [ACL No. 22-46](#), an LPIE must be operated by a state or local government. Due to this requirement, previously approved programs operated by private institutions were also removed from the List of Approved LPIEs effective September 1, 2022. While students at private institutions are not eligible for the LPIE exemption, they are potentially eligible for other student exemptions.

Does Not Expect to be Enrolled Next Term

A student who does not expect to be enrolled in the next school term, due to the student graduating, suspension or expulsion, dropping out, or not intending to register for the next normal school term (excluding summer school) is not subject to the student eligibility rule in accordance with [7 CFR Section 273.5\(c\)](#).

- Example: If a student applies in February, but states they plan to graduate in June, then the student is not subject to the student eligibility rule.
- Example: If a student applies in March but states they do not plan to return to school in the fall, then the student is not subject to the student eligibility rule.

TRACKING STUDENT EXEMPTIONS

The CWD must track all applicable student exemptions, in alignment with [7 CFR 272.10\(b\)\(1\)](#). The CWD may track a student's exemption using the various drop-down menu items in the Demographics, Income, and School detail pages in the California Statewide Automated Welfare System (CalSAWS) which indicate the student's exemption status as it relates to the student eligibility rule.

The table below lists the student exemptions provided on the [CalFresh Student Exemption Screening Form](#) and CalSAWS location for each exemption.

Exemption	Exemption Location in CalSAWS
Enrolled less than half-time	CalSAWS School Attendance Enrollment detail page reflects student is enrolled less than half-time
Taking only non-credit courses	CalSAWS School Attendance select Vocational as institution type
Age 17 or younger	CalSAWS Individual Demographic detail page
Age 50 or older	CalSAWS Individual Demographic detail page
Approved for work study (even if a work study job has not yet begun or is not available), anticipates working, and has not refused a work study assignment	CalSAWS Income detail page for student reflects Work Study income (\$0 entry may be used when assignment is not active)
Received a TANF-funded Cal Grant A or B in the last 12 months	CalSAWS Income detail page reflects the exemption
Working an average of 20 hours per week or an average of 80 hours per month	CalSAWS Employment detail page reflects current employment average hours of 20 hours per week or average of 80 hours per month

Exemption	Exemption Location in CalSAWS
Disabled	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CalSAWS Income detail page includes income from SSA CalSAWS Other Program Assistance page details SSI/SSP CalSAWS Medical Condition detail page indicating a disability that is verifiable and permanent or expected to last at least 30 days
Physically or mentally unable to work	CalSAWS Medical Condition detail page indicating a physical or mental unfitness for work
Does not expect to be enrolled next term	CalSAWS School Attendance Enrollment detail page reflects student is not currently enrolled
Responsible for the care of a household member under the age of 6	CalSAWS Individual Demographic detail page shows Date of Birth field reflecting child under age 6 who is indicated on the Relationship detail page to be under the care of the student
Responsible for the care of a household member under the age of 12 without adequate childcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CalSAWS Individual Demographic detail page shows Date of Birth field reflecting child over age 6 and under age 12 who is indicated on the Relationship detail page to be under the care of the student, and The School Attendance detail page reflects adequate childcare is not available
A single parent responsible for the care of a household member under the age of 12	CalSAWS Individual Demographic detail page shows Date of Birth field reflecting child under age 12 who is indicated on the Relationship Detail page to be under the care of the student and a second parent is not in the household as indicated by the Relationship Detail page
Receiving CalWORKs or Tribal TANF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CalWORKs Program block in Active Status CalSAWS Other Program Assistance detail page with Tribal TANF entry
Participating in CalFresh E&T	CFET program block in Active Status
Enrolled in a WIOA	CalSAWS School Attendance detail page reflects the exemption
Enrolled in an On-the-job training program	CalSAWS School Attendance detail page reflects the exemption
Enrolled in an Approved LPIE	CalSAWS School Attendance detail page reflects the exemption

PART 3: VERIFICATION OF EXEMPTIONS

In accordance with [ACL No. 21-58](#), released May 21, 2021, exemptions from the student eligibility rule are no longer mandatory verifications as California elects to not

require verification of exemptions from the student eligibility rule. Federal regulations at [7 CFR Section 273.2\(f\)\(1\)](#) list mandatory verification factors for the certification of eligible households. Per [7 CFR Section 273.2\(f\)\(3\)](#), State agencies may require verification of any other factor which affects household eligibility or allotment level in addition to the mandatory verifications listed.

Client statement that a student within the household is exempt from the student eligibility rule on the application, during the interview, periodic report, recertification, or at any time during the certification period is sufficient evidence that the student is exempt from the student eligibility rule. Documentary evidence is not required. In accordance with 7 CFR 273.2(f)(2) and [7 CFR Section 273.2\(f\)\(1\)\(xi\)](#), the CWD must only require verification that a student meets an exemption from the student eligibility rule when information is questionable or when a student's claim of physical or mental unfitness is not evident to the CWD.

If an exemption is questionable, the CWD must follow previous guidance for verifying student eligibility exemptions including what is listed in [ACL No. 20-08](#), [ACL No. 21-11](#), and [ACL No. 21-11E](#), issued March 3, 2021. Please refer to [ACL No. 21-58](#) for examples of questionable information for purposes of establishing an exemption from the student eligibility rule. As stated in [ACL No. 20-135](#), issued December 15, 2020, when verifying information, the CWD cannot require a specific type of verification.

This guidance does not alter the need to verify a household's gross nonexempt income, including any applicable educational assistance. Receipt of certain types of educational assistance or student-related income may indicate that the student meets an exemption from the student eligibility rule. While the exemption is no longer a mandatory verification, income must be verified in accordance with [7 CFR Section 273.2\(f\)\(1\)\(i\)](#) for purposes of determining the household's income eligibility for CalFresh.

Only one exemption is needed to qualify a student for CalFresh. The CWD must document in the case record all exemptions being claimed. If the student loses an exemption, the CWD must assess whether the student meets the criteria for another exemption before taking negative action.

WORK STUDY

As stated earlier, approval for state or federally financed work study for the current term, as defined by the institution of higher education, meets the criteria for an exemption from the student eligibility rule. If questionable, acceptable verification of approval for work study may include, but is not limited to, a work study approval or award letter from the financial aid department, in accordance with [ACIN No. I-45-11](#).

PARTICIPATION IN A LOCAL PROGRAM THAT INCREASES EMPLOYABILITY (LPIE)

Verification of participation in an LPIE may include, but is not limited to, a formal document that shows participation in any of the approved programs listed on the [CalFresh Resource Center Policy Page](#) under “Student Resources”, or a print-out from a student’s college or university web-based account indicating participation in an approved program. More information about the verification of this exemption is available in [ACL No. 22-46](#).

TANF-FUNDED CAL GRANT A OR B

The [EDC Section 69519.3](#) directs CSAC to provide recipients of a TANF-funded Cal Grant A or B written notification regarding their potential eligibility for CalFresh. This written notification serves as verification that a student receives a TANF-funded Cal Grant A or B and, by definition, also meets the TANF eligibility requirements.

The written notification, which has taken the form of an electronic or paper letter sent directly to the student, is provided by CSAC once the TANF-funded Cal Grant A or B has been awarded and paid. If the student’s attestation of receipt of a TANF-funded Cal Grant A or B is questionable, the CWD may request verification. Written notification from CSAC can serve as verification that a student has received a TANF-funded Cal Grant A or B.

Note: CSAC also sends an initial award notification letter informing the student that they are eligible for a Cal Grant and instructing them to complete additional steps in order to officially receive the Cal Grant. This initial letter does not verify that a student has been awarded and paid a TANF funded benefit. At the time the initial letter is sent to the student, the Cal Grant process is in the early stages. The TANF eligibility requirements have not yet been verified by CSAC and the Cal grant has not been awarded and paid to the student. The student must wait for the official written notification from CSAC confirming that the TANF-funded Cal Grant A or B has been awarded and paid to meet the criteria for an exemption from the student eligibility rule. See [Appendix B](#) for an example letter of the preferred method of verification for a TANF-funded Cal Grant A or B.

If a student who has been awarded and paid a Cal Grant A or B does not receive written notification from CSAC regarding their potential eligibility for CalFresh, it may be that the student is not receiving a TANF-funded Cal Grant A or B. As previously mentioned, it cannot be assumed that every student who receives a Cal Grant A or B has received a TANF-funded Cal Grant A or B. If a student’s Cal Grant A or B is not TANF-funded, CSAC will not provide the written notification.

If a student loses the written notification confirming receipt of a TANF-funded Cal Grant A or B, the student may request a replacement directly from CSAC. If necessary, the CWD may assist the student in requesting a replacement.

Additionally, when a student is approved for a TANF-funded Cal Grant A or B, the award is for one year at a time for up to four years. Generally, a Cal Grant is awarded

for up to four years as long as the student continues to meet the need requirements and meet satisfactory academic progress on campus. Funding is distributed by the school and students receive the funding by term. If the student only attends one term, they will only receive funding for one term. Once eligibility for the exemption has been established, the exemption will apply through the certification period.

The CSAC Cal Grant letter is acceptable for a full year as it is only issued once per year. If the new Cal Grant cycle has not yet been issued for the current school year, the CWD must accept a student's receipt of TANF-funded Cal Grant from the previous academic school year as meeting the criteria for the Cal Grant exemption.

Note: Refer to [Appendix B](#) for additional information on Cal Grants.

PART 4: STUDENT INCOME ELIGIBILITY FOR CALFRESH

CalFresh income eligibility is determined based on gross and net income. Gross income is all non-excludable income from any source, including both earned and unearned income. Net income is all income remaining after deductions are applied to a household's gross income.

Households that include a student are generally assigned a 12-month certification period. Income eligibility is determined at initial application, periodic report (i.e., SAR 7), and recertification. The CWD may also act on certain changes in income during the certification period, known as "mid-period" changes, if the change:

- Is a mandatory report of gross income received over the income reporting threshold (IRT);
- Is considered verified or verified upon receipt (VUR); or
- Is a voluntary report that results in an increase to CalFresh benefits.

Under semi-annual reporting, CalFresh benefits are determined using prospective budgeting and reasonably anticipated income. Prospective budgeting requires that the CWD determine CalFresh eligibility looking forward, based on a household's reasonably anticipated circumstances. Reasonably anticipated income is any income the household can reasonably anticipate receiving over the length of the certification period.

INCOME EXCLUSIONS

In general, education assistance is considered excluded income when determining CalFresh eligibility. In accordance with [7 CFR Section 273.9\(c\)\(3\)\(i\)](#), educational assistance includes, but is not limited to, loans on which the payment is deferred, grants, scholarships, work study, fellowships, and veteran's educational benefits.

If the information provided on the application does not provide sufficient information to confirm the student educational income is exempt from consideration, the eligibility interview should be used to attempt to clarify the information. In accordance with [7 CFR Section 273.2\(e\)\(1\)](#), the interviewer must not simply review the information that appears on the application, but must explore and resolve with the household unclear and incomplete information. The CWD can ask for verification if the interview is unable to clarify whether the income received is an exempt income type or is used for allowable educational expenses per [7 CFR Section 273.9\(c\)\(3\)\(ii\)\(C\)](#). If verification is needed to clarify whether income received is exempt, the participant must not be restricted to a specific verification type or method, such as specific paperwork, in accordance with [7 CFR Section 273.2\(f\)\(4\)](#). The county must assist the household in getting verification, including making collateral contacts when documentary evidence is insufficient or unavailable, in accordance with [7 CFR Section 273.2\(f\)\(5\)](#).

Financial educational assistance provided under any of the following is excluded from consideration as income in CalFresh determinations:

- A program funded in whole or in part under Title IV of the Higher Education Act (P.L. 102-325) including, but not limited to:
 - Pell Grants
 - Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (SEOG)
 - Stafford Loans (subsidized and unsubsidized)
 - Cal Grants (A, B, and C)
 - Federal Parent Loan for Undergraduate Students
 - Federal Direct Loan Demonstration Program
 - Federal Supplemental Loans for Students
 - Byrd Honors Scholarships
 - Income Contingent Direct Loan Demonstration Program
 - Special Programs for Students Whose Families Are Engaged in Migrant and Seasonal Farm Work (CAMP)
 - Upward Bound
 - Presidential Access Scholarships
 - National Student Savings Demonstration Program
 - Federal Consolidation Loans
 - Paul Douglas Teacher Scholarship Program
 - Special Child Care for Disadvantaged
 - Model Program Community Partnership and Counseling Grants
- Bureau of Indian Affairs student assistance programs (P.L. 102-325)
- Title XIII, Indian Higher Education Programs, Tribal Development Student Assistance Revolving Loan Program (Tribal Development Student Assistance Act)
- To the extent specified in [MPP Section 63-502.2\(e\)](#), the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act Amendments of 1990 ([20 U.S.C. 2301-2466d.](#))

- Fee Waivers including California College Promise Grant (CCPG), formerly Board of Governors Grant (BOGG) fee waiver.
- All earned income from a State Work Study program in accordance with [MPP Section 63-502.2\(q\)\(1\)\(A\)](#).
- All earned income from Federal Work Study is to be excluded from consideration as income. Federal statute excludes earned income from work study programs that are funded in whole or in part under [section 20 U.S.C. 1087uu of the Higher Education Act](#).
- Educational loans on which repayment is deferred must be excluded in accordance with [7 CFR Section 273.9\(c\)\(3\)\(i\)](#). A loan on which repayment is not required to begin until 60 days after receipt of the loan, is considered a deferred repayment loan. All other loans, including loans from private individuals as well as commercial institutions, may be excluded from household income pursuant to [7 CFR Section 273.9\(c\)\(4\)](#). Both deferred student loans and vendor payments are considered income exclusions. A vendor payment is a direct payment made by a person or organization outside of the household, on behalf of a household, to either the household's creditors or to a person or organization providing a service to the household. Non-deferred student loans can be considered a vendor payment and thus an income exclusion.
- [7 CFR Section 273.9\(c\)\(19\)](#) provides the option for states to exclude certain types of income that the state agency excludes when determining eligibility or benefits for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, known as CalWORKs in California. When selecting this option for CalFresh, the state agency must exclude the same amount of income excluded for TANF purposes. The following income types are excluded under this provision:
 - Needs-based grants for undergraduate students.
 - Grants whose proceeds are not available to meet the student's current needs.
 - Any award or scholarship provided to or on behalf of a dependent child based on the child's academic or extracurricular activity.
 - Any other loans which have a written agreement specifying obligation to repay and a repayment plan.
 - Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 (Galvanized Iron [G.I.] Bill) and other Veteran's Administration (VA) educational, vocational, training, and rehabilitation benefits are exempt from consideration as income to the extent that the monies are used to meet educational expenses. See Countable Income section regarding treatment of VA educational housing allowances and subsistence allowances that may accompany the excluded benefits.
 - AmeriCorps program living allowance for housing, meals, member uniforms (sometimes referred to as a stipend), limited medical benefits, an education award, and childcare benefits in certain circumstances.
 - All payments received by members of AmeriCorps State and National and AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) are excluded from consideration in CalFresh by [MPP Section 63-507\(a\)\(17\)](#).

- Californians for All College Corps volunteer program is a state disaster relief program designed to provide financial relief in response to the COVID-19 national emergency, which is a federally declared disaster as defined in 42 U.S.C.5122(2), the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act. As such, stipends and educational awards received under College Corps are excluded from consideration as income and resources in accordance with [MPP Section 63-507\(a\)\(10\)](#).
- CalFresh applicants and participants who were receiving public assistance or CalFresh at the time they became members of AmeriCorps Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) shall have stipends and educational awards received from AmeriCorps VISTA excluded from consideration as income.
- Educational assistance not otherwise excluded by federal statute as specified in [MPP Section 63-507\(a\)\(6\)](#), to the extent that it is either earmarked by the lender, used for, or intended to be used for, allowable educational expenses at qualifying institutions as specified in [MPP Section 63-502.2\(e\)](#). Qualifying institutions include those providing secondary or post-secondary education or the equivalent of a secondary diploma, including correspondence schools at these levels and a school at any level for the physically or mentally handicapped or a vocational education program.
- Educational Expenses
 - If financial aid is not exempt, allowable educational expenses may be deducted from the countable income. Allowable educational expenses include tuition and mandatory fees (including the rental or purchase of any equipment, material, and supplies related to the pursuit of the course of study involved), books, supplies, transportation, dependent care, miscellaneous personal expenses incidental to attending an institution, school, or program, origination fees, and insurance premiums on student loans. Students can verify allowable educational expenses through self-attestation.

COUNTABLE INCOME

In accordance with [MPP Section 63-503.242\(c\)\(3\)](#), households which receive scholarships, deferred educational loans, or other educational grants shall have such income, after exclusions, averaged over the period for which it was provided.

Countable student financial aid includes:

- Any non-needs-based awards and scholarships including private scholarships, some athletic scholarships, some fellowship grants, or other non-needs-based grants, are counted as unearned income when they are:
 - not indicated as exempt under provisions described in [ACL No. 21-137](#),
 - not received by a dependent child, and
 - not earmarked, used for, or intended to be used for qualifying educational expenses.

- Any loans, not otherwise exempt, that do not have a written agreement and repayment plan.
- Housing allowance and subsistence payments, portions of VA educational, vocational, training, and rehabilitation benefits, and programs are countable as income in non-assistance CalFresh (NACF) households. These allowances are excluded from consideration in public assistance (PACF) households in accordance with [ACL No. 17-125](#) and [ACL No. 17-125E](#). Other types of VA benefits such as disability or retirement payments are countable as unearned income in accordance with [MPP Section 63-502.142](#)
- Stipends for educational/research and employment purposes when participating in a particular program or major. Regardless of receipt date, the stipend income is to be averaged over the period for which it was provided – typically a semester. Any amount that can be verified as spent on allowable educational expenses in accordance with [MPP Section 63-502.2\(e\)](#) may be excluded from consideration prior to averaging.
- New applicants, who are members of the AmeriCorps VISTA program, and were not receiving public assistance or CalFresh at the time they joined VISTA will have any payments received from the program counted as earned income in accordance with [MPP Section 63-502.134](#).

CONCLUSION

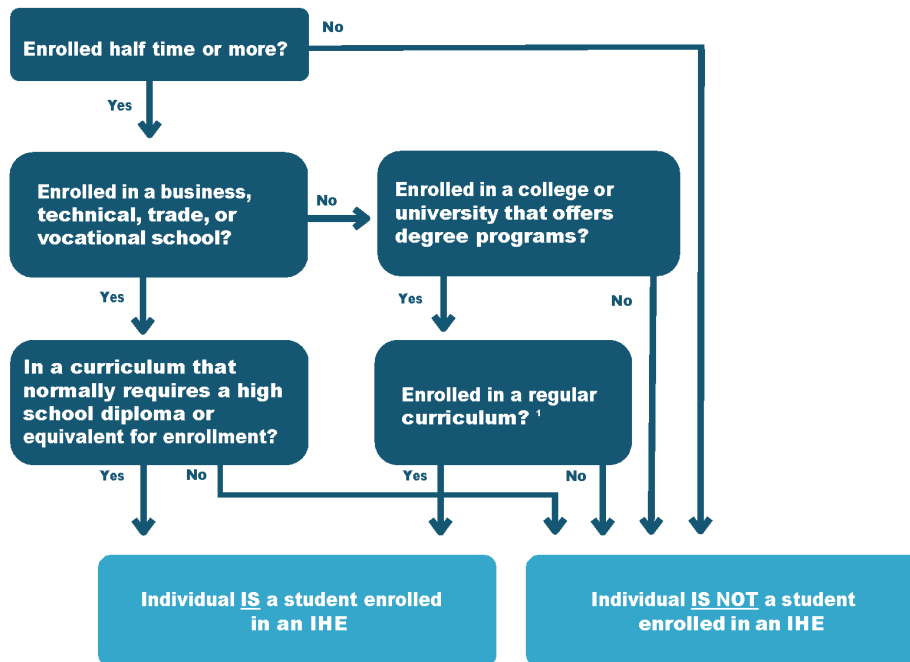
The Handbook was designed with the needs of counties, stakeholders, and students in mind. CDSS intends for the Handbook to serve as a tool for counties to effectively handle student eligibility in a clear and concise manner. This Handbook is intended to help serve CalFresh eligible students by supporting the provision of food assistance, while they strive to obtain a higher education. CDSS holds pride in serving this population and improving CalFresh access to reduce rates of hunger and food insecurity.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – DETERMINING ENROLLMENT IN AN INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION

This flowchart, originally provided in the [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program \(SNAP\) – Institutions of Higher Education and Student Eligibility Rules](#) memo issued February 7, 2023, is to assist in determining whether an individual is enrolled in an IHE for CalFresh eligibility purposes.

How to determine whether an individual is enrolled in an institution of higher education (IHE) for SNAP eligibility purposes:



This chart illustrates how to determine whether an individual is considered enrolled in an IHE and, therefore, subject to the student eligibility rules at 7 CFR 273.5(a).

Students enrolled at least half-time in (1) an IHE and who meet an exemption under 7 CFR 273.5(b) or (2) a recognized school or training program are eligible for SNAP benefits and exempt from the general work requirements in accordance with 7 CFR 273.7(b)(1)(viii).

¹ Many colleges offer special programs that are not part of the regular curriculum. These can include remedial education, continuing or community education, professional development, English for Speakers of Other Languages, and workforce development/ training programs.

APPENDIX B – STUDENT NOTIFICATION MATERIALS

Noticing Cal Grant Recipients

Please see below a sample copy of the TANF funded Cal Grant A or B award letter provided by CSAC. It can also be found on the [CalFresh Resource Center Policy Page](#) under “Student Resources.”



CALIFORNIA STUDENT AID COMMISSION
LUPITA CORTEZ ALCALÁ, Executive Director

- Name
- Address
- City, State CA

Date 04/02/2018
CSAC ID Number XXXXXXXXX

The California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) has confirmed that you received a Cal Grant award to help cover your college expenses. Based on your Cal Grant eligibility, and eligibility requirements specified by the California Department of Social Services, you may be eligible for CalFresh benefits.

CalFresh can help you cover your food expenses while you are in college. We encourage you to apply to receive this valuable benefit that could help make your college expenses more affordable.

Take advantage of CalFresh benefits, which can supplement your budget to help pay for groceries.

- To apply for benefits, go to the CalFresh website found online at: www.benefitscal.com
- To learn more about CalFresh, including income and eligibility requirements, go to the Department of Social Services web page found online at: <http://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/CDSS-Programs/CalFresh/Eligibility-and-Issuance-Requirements>

Please retain this letter as verification of your eligibility for, and receipt of, a Cal Grant payment and for CalFresh eligibility purposes.

You have received a letter notification because you may not have an email address, or valid email address, on your WebGrants4Students account. Please log into your account at <https://mygrantinfo.csac.ca.gov/logon.asp> to correct your email address.

If you have questions about CalFresh, call 1-877-847-3663 (FOOD). If you have questions about your Cal Grant award, please contact Student Support at 1-888-224-7268, Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:45 pm.

Attention County Social Services Provider: This letter confirms that the student listed above received a Cal Grant A or B payment for the 2017-18 academic year that included funds from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, known as CalWORKs in California.

PRIVACY STATEMENT: Cal Grant information for students who are 18 years of age or older, or who have attended a postsecondary institution, will only be released to parents or guardians with written authorization from the student.

Website: www.csac.ca.gov

Local Program that Increases Employability (LPIE) Notification Letter

Please see below a sample copy of Local Programs that Increase Employability (LPIE) notification letter provided by individual institutions of higher education. Please note that letterhead styles may change with campus-specific details. It can also be found on the [CalFresh Resource Center Policy Page](#) under “Student Resources.”



[Insert Campus/Segment Logo]

Date: [insert date]

Dear [insert student name],
SID: [insert student ID]

Congratulations! You are enrolled in [insert specific program name]. This program has been approved as a CalFresh Local Program that Increases Employability (LPIE) and means you may be eligible for CalFresh!

CalFresh is FREE money to help you buy groceries. CalFresh benefits are loaded onto an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) debit card each month and can be spent in-person at most grocery stores and farmers' markets or through online grocery purchasing. With CalFresh, you can get up to \$291 per month to buy food to help promote your success, in and out of the classroom. There are enough CalFresh funds for all eligible students.

Apply for CalFresh:

- We recommend you reach out to your campus Basic Needs Center [insert preferred contact] for help applying or
 - You may apply on your own at [Apply for CalFresh Online](https://benefitscal.com/) <https://benefitscal.com/>.

Important:

- When applying, select this box under “Do any of the student situations below apply to you”:

☒ Participating in a student employment training program

- If you are under 22 and live with your parents, you will need to include them and their income on your CalFresh application.
- If you currently have a meal plan on campus that provides more than half of your meals, you are not eligible for CalFresh.
- You will need to meet [the income requirements](#) and other eligibility factors to be eligible for CalFresh. Most financial aid is not counted as income for CalFresh.

Need food now?

Please visit [campus food pantry, local food bank, or <http://www.cafoodbanks.org/find-food-bank>]

Have questions?

Please contact [insert preferred contact]

Work Study Verification Letter

Please see below a sample copy of the Work Study Verification Letter provided by individual institutions of higher education. Please note that letterhead styles may change with campus-specific details. It can also be found on the [CalFresh Resource Center Policy Page](#) under “Student Resources.”

[Insert school letter head in header]

Student Name:
Student ID:

Date:

SUBJECT: VERIFICATION OF WORK STUDY APPROVAL FOR CALFRESH

The _____ Office of Financial Aid, has confirmed that you are approved for work study during the _____ term.
Based on your work study approval, you may be eligible for CalFresh benefits.

CalFresh is money for food that comes on an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card, which works like a debit card. It can help you pay for groceries while you are in college. We encourage you to apply for CalFresh to make your college expenses more affordable.

- **Step 1:** Apply for CalFresh at <https://benefitscal.com/>.
- **Step 2:** Upload a copy of this letter with your application or give a copy to your worker.

Sincerely,

Attention County Social Services Partners: This letter serves as acceptable verification that the student listed above has been approved for work study and may be exempt from the CalFresh student eligibility rule. Students who are approved for work study and anticipate working during the term, are exempt from the student eligibility rule per 7 CFR 273.5. This applies to all approved work study positions whether on campus, remote, or off campus. Please refer to the CalFresh Student Eligibility Handbook for more information (released in [All County Letter 20-08](#)).



Work Study Verification Form

Please see below a sample copy of the Work Study Verification Form provided by individual institutions of higher education. Please note that letterhead styles may change with campus-specific details. It can also be found on the [CalFresh Resource Center Policy Page](#) under “Student Resources.”

(Insert school letter head)

VERIFICATION OF WORK STUDY APPROVAL FOR CALFRESH

- **Step 1:** Fill out this form.
- **Step 2:** Obtain signature below.
- **Step 3:** Apply for CalFresh at <https://benefitscal.com/>.
- **Step 4:** Upload a copy of this form with your application or give a copy to your worker.

Student Name (First and Last)

Student ID Number

School Name

City

This form is used to determine if the student is exempt from the CalFresh student eligibility rules. To be Completed by School:

1. Enrollment Status (check one):

☐ Half-time or more

☐ Less Than Half-Time

2. Approved for Work Study (check one):

This student has been approved for a federal or state work study program for the following:

☐ Academic School Year: _____

☐ Specific School Term(s): _____

Signature of School Official

Date

Print Name

Title

Phone Number

Attention County Social Services Partners: This letter serves as acceptable verification that the student listed above has been approved for work study and may be exempt from the CalFresh student eligibility rule. Students who are approved for work study and anticipate working during the term, are exempt from the student eligibility rule per 7 CFR 273.5. This applies to all approved work study positions whether on campus, remote, or off campus. Please refer to the CalFresh Student Eligibility Handbook for more information (released in [All County Letter 20-08](#)).



APPENDIX C – LIST OF APPROVED LOCAL PROGRAMS THAT INCREASE EMPLOYABILITY (LPIE)

The list of LPIEs that have been approved since the release of [ACL No. 17-05](#) is currently maintained by CDSS and can be found on the [CalFresh Resource Center Policy Page](#) under “Student Resources”.



Approved List of Local Programs that Increase Employability (LPIE)

Below is a list of LPIEs at California institutions of higher education. They have been approved by the Department of Social Services as containing at least one employment and training (E&T) component as defined by 7 CFR 273.7(e)(1). Students who participate in one of the LPIEs below are exempt from the CalFresh student eligibility rule. As a reminder: Students enrolled in noncredit programs are not subject to the student eligibility rule and do not need to be on this list. **Please refer to ACL 22-46 for more information.** Additionally, If a student resides in one county, but commutes to another county where the approved program is located, the student meets the criteria for an exemption from the student eligibility rule.

Some helpful tips:

1. To sort the entire list into alphabetical order by program name, click on the small triangle next to “Formal Campus Program Name” and select “Sort A to Z.”
2. To filter by County or Campus, click on the small triangle next to “County” or “Campus,” unclick the box next to “(Select All)” and click the box next to each County or Campus you want to be displayed and press “OK.”
3. To clear a filter and show the entire list. Click on the small triangle again and select “Clear Filter from “County”.” If a filter is in place a filter image will appear next to the small triangle.

Last Updated on 7/1/2022

County	Campus Name	Approval Date	Program Name	Column1
All Counties	All Campuses	6/3/2022	Campus Employment Program	
All Counties	All Campuses	6/3/2022	Research Assistantship	
All Counties	All Campuses	6/3/2022	Teaching Assistantship	

County	Campus Name	Approval Date	Program Name	Website Link
Alameda	42 Silicon Valley	2/14/2020	The 42 Program	https://www.42.us.org/innovation/out-mission-disrupting-engineering-education/
Alameda	UC Berkeley	11/19/2020	Master of Public Health (MPH) Program	https://publichealth.berkeley.edu/student-life/career-and-leadership-development/internships/
Alameda	UC Berkeley	11/20/2020	Master of Public Affairs (MPA) Program	https://gspp.berkeley.edu/career-services/client-based-projects/capsone-analytic-project-cap

APPENDIX D - CALFRESH STUDENT EXEMPTION CHECKLIST

The attached student exemption checklist may be used as a reference tool for potentially eligible CalFresh students. The checklist is intended to provide students a comprehensive, but not exclusive, list of criteria to aid in determining if an exemption may apply to them. The sample checklist includes student eligibility exemptions. The student exemption checklist can be found on the [CalFresh Resource Center Policy Page](#) under “Student Resources.”

California Health & Human Services Agency

California Department of Social Services

CALFRESH STUDENT EXEMPTION SCREENING FORM

Student Name: _____ School Name: _____

College students who meet both the regular eligibility criteria (like income), and at least one of the criteria below, may be eligible for CalFresh.

Check all that apply to the student listed above:

- ☐ Enrolled less than half-time (Only count credit-bearing courses. Non-credit courses do not count toward half-time enrollment)
- ☐ Taking non-credit courses
- ☐ Age 17 or younger
- ☐ Age 50 or older
- ☐ Approved for work study (even if a work study job assignment has not yet begun or is not available) and anticipates working during the school term and has not refused a work assignment
- ☐ Received a TANF-funded Cal Grant A or B in the last 12 months
- ☐ Working an average of 20 hours per week or a total of 80 hours per month
- ☐ Disabled or physically or mentally unable to work
- ☐ Does not expect to be enrolled next term
- ☐ Responsible for the care of a dependent in the household under the age of 6 or a child under the age of 12 without adequate childcare
- ☐ A single parent responsible for the care of a dependent in the household under the age of 12
- ☐ Receiving California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) or Tribal TANF
- ☐ Participating in CalFresh Employment and Training
- ☐ Enrolled in Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)
- ☐ Enrolled in an on-the-job training program
- ☐ Enrolled in a Local Program that Increases Employability (LPIE). Many majors and programs qualify. See the full [List of Approved LPIEs](http://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/calfresh-resource-center/policy) (www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/calfresh-resource-center/policy).

For County Use Only: CalFresh Student Eligibility Policy Reminders

- Verification of the criteria above is no longer required unless questionable or inability to work is not evident. Please refer to [All County Letter \(ACL\) 20-135](#) for more information.
- Many educational income payments are not counted when determining CalFresh eligibility and benefit amount. Please refer to [ACL 21-137](#) for more information.
- Individuals under the age of 22 who live with their natural parents, adoptive parents, or stepparents must include them and their income when applying for CalFresh.
- Individuals who currently have a meal plan on campus that provides more than half of their meals are not eligible for CalFresh.

CF 6177 (10/22) Required Form - No Substitutes Permitted

APPENDIX E - QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

- General Overview of Student Eligibility – [7 CFR Section 273.5\(a\)](#), and (b)
 - Including background information on [AB 214](#), and [SB 641](#).
- General information on Income eligibility for CalFresh (based on gross and net income)
 - Income exclusions [MPP Section 63-502.2 \(e\)](#)
 - including educational assistance such as Government Issued Bills received by veteran students, which is excluded for the determination of income because it's considered educational assistance. [7 CFR Section 273.9\(c\)\(3\)\(i\)](#), [ACIN No. I-89-15](#)
- Student eligibility rules - [7CFR Section 273.5\(a\)](#) and (b)
 - Averaging CalFresh student work hours ([ACL No. 17-97](#))
 - Anticipating participation in work study ([ACIN No. 1-89-15](#), [ACL No.17-05](#))
- Student eligibility exemptions from federal/state regulations ([ACIN No. I-89-15](#))
 - Receipt of a TANF funded Cal Grant A or B including the exception to the new bachelor's degree pilot program offered at selected CCCs. ([ACL No. 17-05](#), [ACL No. 18-27](#), [ACL No. 19-32](#))
 - State and federal work study ([ACL No.17-05](#), [ACL No. 18-27](#))
 - Work Study Verification Letter/Form ([ACL No. 20-114](#))
 - Verification of Exemptions ([ACL No. 21-58](#))
 - New LPIE Guidance, Removal of LPIEs at Private Institutions and Reassessment of Previously Approved Statewide Programs ([ACL No. 22-46](#))
 - List of LPIEs ([CalFresh Resource Policy Page](#)) under “Student Resources”
 - Length of student status ([ACL No. 17-05](#))
 - Applicability of exemptions ([ACL No. 17-05](#))
 - Mid-period changes in student status ([ACIN No. I-89-15](#))
- Graduate students (all student eligibility rules and exemption criteria apply to all students) [ACL No. 18-27](#)
- Veterans (veteran students are not treated any differently) [ACL No. 18-27](#)
- Restaurant Meals Program (RMP)
 - Brief background/general overview of RMP: [AB 942](#)
 - Eligibility criteria: [ACL 24-01](#),
 - Implementation: [ACL 21-100](#)