

January 8, 2025

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ALL COUNTY LETTER NO. 25-01

The purpose of this All County Letter is to provide instructions for implementation of the CalFresh Minimum Nutrition Benefit Pilot Program (MNB Pilot). Assembly Bill 120 (Chapter 43, Statutes of 2023) added Welfare and Institutions Code section 18901.26 which mandates that the California Department of Social Services establish the MNB Pilot.



JENNIFER TROIA
DIRECTOR

CALIFORNIA HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
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GAVIN NEWSOM
GOVERNOR

January 8, 2025

ALL COUNTY LETTER NO. 25-01

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

SUBJECT: CALFRESH MINIMUM NUTRITION BENEFIT PILOT PROGRAM

REFERENCE: [ASSEMBLY BILL \(AB\) 120 \(CHAPTER 43, STATUTES OF 2023\);](#)
[WELFARE AND INSTITUTIONS CODE \(WIC\) 10980;](#)
[WIC 18901.26; ALL COUNTY LETTER \(ACL\) NO. 17-34;](#)
[ACL NO. 20-145; ACL NO. 22-15; ACL NO. 23-92; ACL NO. 24-62](#)

The purpose of this All County Letter (ACL) is to provide instructions for implementation of the CalFresh Minimum Nutrition Benefit Pilot Program (MNB Pilot). [Assembly Bill \(AB\) 120 \(Chapter 43, Statutes of 2023\)](#) added [Welfare and Institutions \(WIC\) Section 18901.26](#) which mandates that the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) establish the MNB Pilot.

BACKGROUND

The MNB Pilot will provide up to twelve months of state-funded nutrition benefits to eligible households receiving less than sixty dollars in CalFresh or California Food Assistance Program (CFAP) food benefits. Eligible households will receive a state-funded food benefit issuance that, when added together with their regular food benefit allotment, totals no less than sixty dollars.

For the purpose of this letter, all references to CalFresh also apply to CFAP.

Program Timeframe and Duration

Implementation will occur as soon as necessary automation is complete in the California Statewide Automated Welfare System (CalSAWS). The implementation date, which is currently pending, will be communicated via a separate letter.

Once implemented, the MNB Pilot will operate for twelve months, subject to available funding.

MNB Pilot Program Eligibility Criteria

Households eligible to participate in the MNB Pilot include those who meet all the following requirements:

- Meet the eligibility criteria for the Elderly Simplified Application Project (ESAP), as described in [ACL No. 17-34](#) released April 25, 2017, [ACL No. 20-145](#) released December 29, 2020, and [ACL No. 22-15](#) released February 10, 2022,
- Receive a monthly food benefit allotment less than sixty dollars, and
- Are a household of two or more CalFresh-eligible members.

To participate in the MNB Pilot eligible households must be (1) receiving CalFresh on the implementation date or (2) have a pending application approved with a beginning date of aid on or before the implementation date.

Households that apply for CalFresh after the MNB Pilot implementation date are not eligible.

Additional Eligibility Criteria

Households that otherwise qualify but receive a prorated CalFresh benefit allotment due to a restoration of aid or any other reason will not receive an MNB issuance in the month in which their CalFresh allotment was prorated.

Households approved for a monthly CalFresh allotment of less than sixty dollars and receiving less than their approved allotment because they are repaying a CalFresh overissuance through benefit reduction are eligible for the MNB Pilot. They will receive an MNB issuance that, when added to their approved allotment prior to benefit reduction, will equal no less than sixty dollars.

Ineligible Households

Households that apply for CalFresh after the implementation date are not eligible to the MNB Pilot. Households approved for a monthly CalFresh allotment of sixty dollars or more but receiving less than sixty dollars because they are repaying a CalFresh overissuance through benefit reduction are *not eligible* for the MNB Pilot.

Additionally, Supplemental Nutrition Benefit (SNB) program recipients are not eligible to the MNB Pilot. The SNB program provides a state-funded supplemental nutrition benefit which is more than the MNB Pilot threshold of sixty dollars.

Discontinuances and Restorations

Once determined eligible for the MNB Pilot, households will continue to receive MNB issuances through the duration of the pilot, up to twelve months, unless they lose eligibility for any of the following reasons:

- The household is no longer eligible to CalFresh,
- The household no longer has at least two CalFresh-eligible members,

- The full month CalFresh allotment before any disqualifications or benefit reduction increases to sixty dollars (\$60) or more, or
- The household no longer meets the eligibility criteria for ESAP.

Households who lose eligibility to the MNB Pilot must be discontinued the first of the month following timely and adequate notice of discontinuance.

Households who are discontinued from the MNB Pilot, but regain eligibility through rescission, restoration, or reapplication during the 12-month duration of the pilot, and do not have a break in aid will again be eligible for MNB issuances. Households who are discontinued from CalFresh and reapply after a break in aid are not eligible to participate in any remaining months of the MNB Pilot.

Overissuances

If the county determines that a household was eligible for a higher CalFresh allotment of more than sixty dollars (\$60) that would have disqualified the household from participation in the MNB Pilot, it must correct the issuance amount to reflect the amount of CalFresh benefits it was eligible to receive and discontinue MNB Pilot participation. The County Welfare Department (CWD) must not recover any MNB Pilot benefits issued in error.

Existing CalFresh claims management policies and procedures, including for claims establishment and collection, remain in effect for CalFresh, but do not apply to the MNB Pilot. Additionally, MNB Pilot benefits may not be used to repay CalFresh claims.

Recipients of MNB Pilot benefits are subject to the fraud provisions at [WIC 10980](#) and may be investigated for suspected criminal activities relating to the program.

Underissuances

Counties are reminded that the correction of any error related to the MNB Pilot must be kept separate and apart from the correction of any error related to CalFresh. Identification of a CalFresh error may be an indication that the MNB Pilot eligibility determination should be reviewed. If the household was issued less MNB Pilot benefits than it was eligible for, the benefit amount will be recalculated, and additional benefits issued based on the difference between the MNB Pilot benefits the household received and the benefits for which the household was eligible.

Correction of any MNB Pilot under issuances must be made no later than June 30, 2026. MNB Pilot benefits must not be issued after June 30, 2026, for any reason unless further policy guidance is released.

Additional Considerations

Provisions regarding replacement and reimbursement of CalFresh benefits as described in [ACL No. 24-62](#) and [ACL No. 23-92](#) do not apply to the MNB Pilot. MNB Pilot benefits must not be replaced if they are lost in a disaster, household misfortune or stolen by electronic theft.

MNB Pilot benefits, like regular CalFresh benefits, are nutrition benefits. Nutrition benefits must not be considered income for any means-tested program, including but not limited to: California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs), Medi-Cal, General Assistance/General Relief (GA/GR), Supplemental Security Income / State Supplementary Payment (SSI/SSP), and In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS).

Automation

A new aid code will not be established for the MNB Pilot. MNB Pilot benefits will be issued onto the household's existing Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card in addition to their CalFresh food benefit allotment. A new EBT benefit type code is being developed for programming in the CalSAWS.

MNB Pilot benefits may be used as any other food benefit, including the Restaurant Meals Program (RMP) if otherwise eligible, and Market Match.

MNB Pilot benefits will follow existing procedures regarding expungement of unused benefits due to inactivity or all household members deceased.

FORMS AND NOTICES OF ACTION

Two notices of action (NOAs) were developed for the MNB which include:

- [Notice of Approval for the CalFresh Minimum Nutrition Benefit Pilot Program \(CF 378A\)](#)
- [Notice of Discontinuance for the CalFresh Minimum Nutrition Benefit Pilot Program \(CF 378B\)](#)

Eligible households will be provided the [CF 378A](#) when approved for the MNB. Households may experience a change in MNB benefit allotment when their CalFresh allotment changes. When this occurs, a new [CF 378A](#) does not need to be provided.

The [CF 378B](#) will be provided when the MNB Pilot ends or when a household loses eligibility for any reason. Timely and adequate notice rules apply to the [CF 378B](#). The CWD must ensure the appropriate reason statement(s) for the discontinuance is indicated. If the reason for discontinuance is because the household's CalFresh benefits have increased to sixty dollars or more, the [CF 378B](#) must be issued alongside the CalFresh benefit change NOA. If the reason for discontinuance is because the household is being discontinued from CalFresh, the [CF 378B](#) must be issued alongside the CalFresh discontinuance NOA.

The MNB Pilot notices will be provided in English and Spanish only, and all notices must be issued with a [Notice of Language Services \(GEN 1365 - 12/16\)](#). Issuance of the [GEN 1365](#) will support language access and the provision of translation services for languages other than English and Spanish.

FAIR HEARINGS AND QUALITY CONTROL REVIEWS

If a CalFresh applicant or recipient requests a hearing for an issue related to the MNB Pilot, benefits cannot be paid pending a decision. The CWD may issue additional MNB

Pilot benefits because of an appeal or a hearing decision as long as all issuances are made no later than June 30, 2026. The CWD must issue these benefits manually using the MNB Pilot EBT benefit type code.

The MNB Pilot provides state-funded benefits. As such, MNB Pilot benefits are not subject to federal or state Quality Control (QC) review procedures. CalFresh households that receive MNB Pilot benefits will continue to be included in QC samples and Management Evaluation case reviews, but MNB-specific errors will not count towards the QC error rate.

COPIES AND TRANSLATIONS

Forms referenced in this letter are available on the [CDSS Forms/Brochures webpage](#). When CDSS completes translations of a form, they are posted on the [Translated Forms and Publications webpage](#). When made available by CDSS, forms translated into an individual's preferred language must be provided to the individual pursuant to [Manual of Policies and Procedures \(MPP\) Section 21-115.2](#). For questions on translated materials, please contact the Translation Services Section at its@dss.ca.gov. If translations are not available, recipients who have elected to receive materials in languages other than English should be sent the English version of the form or notice along with the [GEN 1365-Notice of Language Services](#) and a local contact number. See [ACL No. 22-56](#).

Per [MPP Section 21-115](#), the CWDs must ensure effective bilingual services are provided. This requirement may be met through utilization of paid interpreters, qualified bilingual employees, and qualified employees of other agencies or community resources. These services must be provided, free of charge, to the applicant/recipient. If CDSS does not provide translations of a form, it is the county's responsibility to read and interpret the form if an applicant or recipient requests it. See [ACL No. 22-56](#).

Additionally, the CWDs must provide auxiliary aids and services to persons with vision, hearing, or speech disabilities, where applicable. More information regarding provisions for services to applicants and recipients who have limited English proficiency or who have disabilities can be found in [MPP Section 21-115](#) and [ACL No. 19-45](#).

If you have any questions or need additional guidance regarding the information in this letter, contact the CalFresh Policy and Employment Bureau at CalFreshPolicy@dss.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Original Document Signed By

ALEXIS FERNÁNDEZ GARCIA
Deputy Director
Family Engagement and Empowerment Division