

July 17, 2025

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**ALL COUNTY LETTER NO. 25-53**

The purpose of this All County Letter is to provide County Welfare Departments with consolidated policy guidance related to the CalFresh Statewide Restaurant Meals Program through the release of the CalFresh Restaurant Meals Program Handbook.



JENNIFER TROIA  
DIRECTOR

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**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES**  
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GAVIN NEWSOM  
GOVERNOR

July 17, 2025

ALL COUNTY LETTER NO. 25-53

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

SUBJECT: CALFRESH RESTAURANT MEALS PROGRAM HANDBOOK  
VERSION 1.0

REFERENCE: [FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ACT OF 1977; FOOD, AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION, AND TRADE ACT OF 1990; ASSEMBLY BILL \(AB\) 942 \(CHAPTER 814, STATUTES OF 2019\); ALL COUNTY INFORMATION NOTICE \(ACIN\) NO. I-31-04; TITLE 7 CODE OF FEDERAL REGULATIONS \(CFR\) 278.1\(d\)\(3\); 7 CFR 271.2; MANUAL OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES \(MPP\) SECTION 63-102\(s\)\(9\); MPP SECTION 63-102\(h\)\(2\)\(A\)-\(D\); 7 CFR 273.2\(n\); ALL COUNTY LETTER \(ACL\) NO. 24-01; ACL NO. 21-100; WELFARE AND INSTITUTIONS CODE \(WIC\) SECTION 18919\(e\)\(2\); ACL NO. 19-29; ACL NO. 14-49; ACL NO. 23-72; ACIN NO. I-71-11; FOOD ACCESS RESEARCH ATLAS; MPP SECTION 63-102\(e\)\(2\)\(H\); 7 CFR 278.1\(b\)\(1\); 7 CFR 278.1\(i\); SEC. 4. 7 U.S.C. 2013\(a\); SEC. 7.07 U.S.C. 2016 \(f\)\(3\)\(B\); SEC. 7.07 U.S.C. 2016 \(h\)\(3\)\(B\); SENATE BILL \(SB\) 282; 7 USC § 2012\(k\)\(4\); EDUCATION CODE SECTION 66025.93; ACL NO. 18-27; SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM \(SNAP\) QUALITY CONTROL REVIEW HANDBOOK \(FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICE HANDBOOK 310\)](#)

The purpose of this All County Letter (ACL) is to issue the CalFresh Restaurant Meals Program (RMP) Handbook Version 1.0. The RMP Handbook provides consolidated policy guidance regarding the implementation and eligibility requirements of the CalFresh RMP.

The policy guidance in this handbook is consistent with state and federal regulations.

The policy guidance is also consistent with the goals of the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to maximize food benefits for eligible people, ensure accuracy when determining whether RMP eligibility criteria are met, and minimize the administrative burden on County Welfare Departments (CWDs) due to the range of responsibilities associated with the CalFresh RMP.

This handbook includes a general overview of the Statewide CalFresh RMP, guidance on participant eligibility for the program, and requirements for participating vendors. The handbook will be revised as needed to include additional policy guidance and RMP resources.

If you have any questions or need additional guidance regarding the information in this letter, contact the CalFresh Policy Bureau at [CalFreshPolicy@dss.ca.gov](mailto:CalFreshPolicy@dss.ca.gov).

Sincerely,

***Original Document Signed By***

ALEXIS FERNÁNDEZ GARCIA  
Deputy Director  
Family Engagement and Empowerment Division

Attachment



# CalFresh Restaurant Meals Program Handbook Version 1.0



CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES  
CALFRESH BRANCH

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## I. Introduction

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 United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service (USDA-FNS) authorized restaurant throughout California.

The Food Stamp Act of 1977, which was part of the [Food and Agriculture Act of 1977](#), established the RMP as a state option in 1978 to provide Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefit recipients aged 60 or older, and those with disabilities, the option to purchase hot and/or prepared meals at federally authorized restaurants. The [Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990](#) expanded the RMP to serve SNAP recipients who are experiencing homelessness. California adopted the program as a County Welfare Department (CWD) option in 2003, beginning with San Francisco County's pilot program referenced in [All County Information Notice \(ACIN\) No. I-31-04](#). CWDs that opted into the program operated under the oversight of the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) and were responsible for the implementation and management of the program. In 2021, [Assembly Bill 942 \(AB 942\) \(Chapter 814, Statutes of 2019\)](#) expanded the RMP to all 58 California counties.

## II. Restaurant Meals Program Participation Requirements

### Restaurant Meals Program Eligibility Criteria

Federal regulations at [Title 7 Code of Federal Regulations \(CFR\) 278.1\(d\)\(3\)](#) establish eligibility criteria for the RMP. Only those CalFresh households where all members meet the eligibility criteria may participate in the program. For a household to be eligible for the RMP, all members of the household must be:

- 60 years of age or older, or
- A person with a disability, this includes, but is not limited to, individuals that receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI); Social Security disability or blindness benefits; disability-related Medi-Cal or Medicaid; disability-related General Assistance (GA); interim assistance pending receipt of SSI; public disability retirement pensions, Railroad Retirement disability annuity payments and/or Veterans' disability compensation, or
- A person experiencing homelessness as defined at [7 CFR 271.2](#) and [MPP Section 63-102\(h\)\(2\)\(A\)-\(D\)](#), or
- The spouse of a CalFresh household member who is 60 years of age or older, or
- The spouse of a CalFresh household member who is a person with a disability.

Per [MPP Section 63-102\(s\)\(9\)](#), spouses are individuals who would be defined as married to each other under applicable state law or who are cohabitating and are

holding themselves out to the community as spouses. Spouses do not have to meet the age or disability criteria for the RMP.

Households that include at least one member, other than a spouse, who does not meet RMP eligibility criteria are ineligible for the program.

See [ACL No. 24-01](#) for more information on RMP eligibility.

### Use of Authorized Representatives

CalFresh allows authorized representatives (AR), as defined at [7 CFR 273.2\(n\)](#), to act on behalf of a household in the CalFresh application process as well as obtaining and using benefits. ARs have no impact on a household's RMP eligibility and are not considered when making the RMP eligibility determination.

### Restaurant Meals Program Household Composition Examples

The following chart provides examples of various household composition scenarios and their associated eligibility for the RMP.

| Household Composition   | Eligible for RMP (Yes/No)? |
|---|----------------------------|
| Household of Two <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Person 1 – age 62</li><li>• Person 2 – age 58 (spouse of person 1)</li></ul>   | Yes                        |
| Household of Two <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Person 1 – age 50</li><li>• Person 2 – age 55 with a disability (spouse of person 1)</li></ul>                               | Yes                        |
| Household of Two <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Person 1 – age 67</li><li>• Person 2 – age 70</li><li>• Authorized Representative – age 35</li></ul>                         | Yes                        |
| Household of Three <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Person 1 – age 65</li><li>• Person 2 – age 55 (spouse of person 1)</li><li>• Person 3 – age 10</li></ul>                   | No                         |
| Household of Three <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Person 1 – age 50 with a disability</li><li>• Person 2 – age 50 (spouse of person 1)</li><li>• Person 3 – age 25</li></ul> | No                         |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Household of Two <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Person 1 – age 35</li> <li>• Person 2 – age 15 with a disability</li> </ul> | No  |
| Household of Two <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Person 1 – homeless</li> <li>• Person 2 – homeless</li> </ul>               | Yes |

### Notice of Approval/Termination of the CalFresh Restaurant Meals Program

Upon completion of automation in the California Statewide Automation Welfare System (CalSAWS) in Spring 2025, CWDs must provide notice to all households that are approved for or terminated from the CalFresh RMP, per [ACL No. 24-01](#).

### **III. Restaurant Meals Program Administration**

There are two options for administrative oversight of the RMP. CWDs have the option to administer the RMP at the local level or opt for CDSS to administer the RMP in their county. CWDs may either transition the RMP to CDSS or resume administrative authority of the RMP from the State once every 24 months. Instructions for administration of the RMP are provided below.

#### ***County Administered Restaurant Meals Programs***

Under the county administered option, CWDs may maintain or reassume administration of the RMP in their county.

CWDs that choose to assume or reassume administration of the RMP must inform CDSS of their decision via email at [CDSSRMP@dss.ca.gov](mailto:CDSSRMP@dss.ca.gov) no less than 120 days before the intended initiation or transition date. CWDs that seek to reassume administration of a county administered RMP must also submit a proposal containing a draft vendor agreement detailing the obligations of the CWD and participating vendors. CWDs must follow the standard implementation process outlined in [ACL No. 19-29](#).

CWDs that choose to administer the RMP at the local level must receive approval from CDSS and be prepared to accept vendors by the official transition date. Upon CDSS approval, the CWD may begin recruiting vendors in their county. If a CWD's proposal is initially denied by CDSS, CDSS will provide technical assistance to the CWD to revise their proposal to meet state and federal requirements to administer the program. CWDs must follow the process below to assume or reassume administration of the RMP:

1. The CWD must submit a proposal containing the following items:
  - a. Draft CWD-vendor agreement that will detail the obligations of both the CWD and vendor;
  - b. Outreach and marketing plan outlining efforts to engage the local restaurant community and eligible recipient community;
  - c. Outreach materials – county flyer(s), retail flyer(s), and county RMP

- signage; and
- d. Draft demographic analysis by Zone Improvement Plan (ZIP) code of the location of the potential RMP population in relation to potential participating vendors, per [ACIN No. I-71-11](#), with reference to where data was derived.
2. After receiving approval, the CWD will implement the RMP and may begin vendor outreach. The CWD will work with CDSS to transfer any existing CDSS-vendor agreements to the CWD on a co-established timeline.
  3. The CWD will work with vendors to ensure they meet RMP-vendor eligibility and service area requirements outlined in [7 CFR 278.1](#).
  4. The CWD will provide technical assistance to the vendor as they complete the USDA SNAP Application for Meal Services ([FNS 252-2](#)) and assist in gathering all supporting application documents. The vendor is responsible for submitting the FNS 252-2, supporting documents, and CWD-vendor agreement to USDA-FNS for approval.

### ***State Administered Restaurant Meals Programs***

Under the state administered option, CDSS is responsible for administrative oversight of the RMP and will assume all obligations mandated by [AB 942](#). CDSS will be responsible for:

- Providing vendor outreach and technical assistance;
- Entering into and maintaining CDSS-vendor contractual agreements known as [Permanent Single Agreements](#) (PSAs), wherein both parties agree to be compliant with program requirements outlined in the PSA;
- Reviewing Vendor Intake Forms (VIF) to ensure that healthy meal options and concessional pricing are being offered to RMP customers;
- Supporting vendors in obtaining RMP authorization from USDA-FNS; and
- Providing ongoing program monitoring.

CWDs currently operating an RMP can choose to relinquish administrative responsibilities of the program to the State. CWDs that choose to transition a county administered RMP to a state administered RMP must inform CDSS of their decision via email at [CDSSRMP@dss.ca.gov](mailto:CDSSRMP@dss.ca.gov) at least 120 days before the intended transition date.

CWDs that decide to transition administrative responsibilities of the RMP to CDSS must follow the process outlined below:

1. Inform CDSS of its decision to transition its program to State administration no less than 120 days prior to the intended transition date.
2. Enter into an agreement with CDSS known as a County Transfer Agreement Memorandum of Understanding (CTA MOU). This CTA MOU transfers administrative oversight of the RMP and its restaurant vendors from the county to CDSS or vice versa, in accordance with [ACL No. 21-100](#).
3. Continue to operate its county administered RMP until the CTA MOU is fully

executed, including continuing to process new RMP vendor applications during this time.

4. Email communication provided by CDSS to all participating restaurants informing them that administration of the RMP will transition to CDSS once the CTA MOU becomes effective.
5. Work with CDSS to timely transition any existing CWD-vendor agreements to CDSS via PSA.
6. Provide current RMP restaurant vendors with supplemental documents provided by CDSS, such as the Transitioning Vendor Communication, RMP Transitioning Vendor FAQ, the PSA, and VIF.
7. Work with CDSS to ensure current RMP restaurant vendors complete the PSA and VIF to ensure no gap in service.
8. Follow up with RMP restaurant vendors as needed to request they complete the PSA and VIF.

Once the CTA MOU becomes effective, transition to a state administered RMP will be complete. CDSS will fully manage the RMP in that county and will:

- Implement the local RMP and process all PSAs and VIFs that are submitted from transitioning and newly interested RMP restaurant vendors.
- Work with restaurant vendors to ensure they meet RMP vendor eligibility and service area requirements.
- Provide technical support to applicant vendors as they move through the application process, including gathering all supporting application documents, and providing status updates as requested.

## **IV. County Responsibilities**

### All County Welfare Departments

Per [ACL No. 23-72](#), all CWDs, regardless of which entity administers the RMP, must:

- Support restaurants interested in participating in the RMP. For counties where the RMP is administered by CDSS, this includes directing restaurants to CDSS, via [CDSSRMP@dss.ca.gov](mailto:CDSSRMP@dss.ca.gov);
- Certify eligible households to participate in the RMP;
  - CalSAWS evaluates RMP eligibility any time there is a change in household circumstances.
- Inform households of their eligibility for the RMP at application, recertification, periodic report (SAR 7), or any time there is a change in household circumstances;
  - CWDs are required to provide the Notice of Approval/Termination of the CalFresh Restaurant Meals Program (CF 889) to all households that are approved for or terminated from the CalFresh RMP. This notice must be provided to the household whenever they become eligible for the RMP or become ineligible for the RMP.
- Inform RMP eligible households of the names and addresses of participating RMP restaurant vendors in their county; and

- CWDs must provide information on the RMP to CalFresh program participants and let them know that they can use their CalFresh benefits at any participating location throughout the state. CWDs can find the latest list of authorized RMP vendors on the [CalFresh RMP webpage](http://www.CDSS.ca.gov/RMP), at [www.CDSS.ca.gov/RMP](http://www.CDSS.ca.gov/RMP).
- Ensure their county RMP reference table value is set to 'yes' to enable CalSAWS to pull accurate RMP data.

### **County Administered Restaurant Meals Programs**

In addition to the above outlined responsibilities and per [ACL No. 23-72](#), CWDs that administer the RMP must:

- Conduct outreach to potential applicant restaurant vendors;
- Screen applicant restaurant vendors to ensure they meet the program requirements outlined in [7 CFR 278.1](#);
- Ensure applicant restaurant vendors are located in eligible service areas;
- Enter into and maintain a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with restaurants that outlines program eligibility, rules, and requirements;
- Provide technical assistance and support to applicant restaurant vendors as they navigate the RMP application process with the USDA-FNS;
- Act as a liaison between applicant restaurant vendors and CDSS, as needed, during the approval process referenced in [7 CFR 278.1](#);
- Perform ongoing program monitoring; and
- Provide ongoing RMP technical assistance to RMP restaurant vendors.

The county may forward any RMP-vendor client complaints to CDSS if the RMP vendor is in a county that has chosen state administration of the program.

## **V. Restaurant Meals Program Vendors**

### **Restaurant Meals Program Vendor Eligibility Criteria**

For purposes of the RMP, a restaurant is defined as a private for-profit establishment where meals are sold and served to customers, including but not limited to brick-and-mortar locations, college and university food establishments, and take-away only restaurants.

Pursuant to [7 CFR 278.1\(d\)\(3\)](#), restaurant vendors are eligible to participate in the RMP if they operate under a contract with a State or local agency to prepare and serve (or deliver) low-cost meals to eligible CalFresh program participants and their spouses. When determining eligibility for the RMP, USDA-FNS only considers establishments that make 50 percent or more of their profits from the sale of prepared foods. To be eligible to participate in the RMP, restaurant vendors must meet the above-noted required criteria, including being a private for-profit restaurant, and are classified as any of the following establishments:

- Sit-down restaurant
- Takeaway only restaurant

- Meal delivery service or provide for-profit meal delivery service
- Private for-profit senior citizens center or residential building
- Located on any of the following location types:
  - Indian reservation
  - College campus
  - Military base

### Vendor Requirements

All vendors must demonstrate they are actively adhering to the following obligations upon request by CDSS or the county that administers the RMP.

### ***Concessional Pricing***

Participating restaurant vendors must offer RMP customers at least one discounted meal, daily advertised special, or sale priced meal, that is equal to or less than what is offered to other customers during regular business hours. This may include advertised specials and sale prices offered to all customers.

As referenced in [7 CFR 278.1\(i\)](#), concessional pricing is low or reduced prices. Examples include, but are not limited to, a percentage reduction, a set dollar amount reduction, a daily special meal, or an offer of a free food item or beverage (excluding alcoholic beverages). While RMP customers are not required to purchase the discounted meal option, all vendors must demonstrate to CDSS that they offer concessional pricing when applying to participate in the program.

### ***Healthy Meal Options***

Restaurant vendors must offer healthy meal options and must demonstrate to CDSS that their restaurant offers healthy meal options when applying to participate in the program.

Examples of healthy options include, but are not limited to:

- Non-fried fruit and/or vegetable side items;
- Whole grains; and
- Healthier meal preparation with techniques such as grilling, baking, boiling, roasting, poaching, stir frying, and steaming.

### ***Prohibited Charges***

In accordance with [7 CFR 271.2](#) and [7 CFR 272.1\(b\)](#), participating restaurant vendors can only serve RMP customers “eligible foods” and are prohibited from the following when serving RMP customers:

- Including a service gratuity in the price of the meal;
- Charging sales or meals tax;
- Charging fees; and
- Selling alcoholic beverages.

### ***Signage***

Participating vendors must post signage notifying the public of the restaurant's

participation in RMP which includes references to nondiscrimination statutes and regulations, and a method of reporting CalFresh abuses. RMP signage can be found on the [CalFresh RMP Partners Page](#).

### ***Operational Electronic Benefit Transfer Point of Sale Machine***

Restaurants can only accept a Golden State Advantage Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card for RMP purchases. EBT cards are the method to access EBT benefits issued to a household member or authorized representative through the EBT system by a CWD. EBT cards can be in conjunction with other forms of payment such as cash, debit, or credit card.

Participating vendors are required to obtain an operational Point of Sale (POS) machine that can process EBT transactions to accept charges for RMP purchases per [7 CFR 274.1](#). All vendors must maintain a properly functioning POS machine and demonstrate its functionality upon request.

In the event that an RMP customer requires a refund issued to their EBT card, vendors may perform a food return transaction to credit the overage amount back to the food benefit account through the POS machine. If too much time has passed since the original transaction, vendors can also call and open a retailer-initiated credit to return the appropriate benefits refund depending on the scenario.

### **Health Permits and Food Regulations**

Per [Senate Bill \(SB\) 282](#), restaurant vendors must maintain a current public health license or permit. Vendors must have all required documents available upon request, including a copy of their current public health license.

### **Meal Delivery Services**

As noted in [7 USC § 2012\(k\)\(4\)](#), meal delivery services can be used by participant vendors to deliver eligible food to RMP customers as long as the vendor does not charge CalFresh benefits for delivery and has a mobile POS device to accept payments at the time of delivery. Due to the delivery model and mobility of meal delivery services, USDA-FNS may request additional information and documents at the time of authorization.

### **Denied Applicant Restaurants**

If an applicant vendor's initial request to participate in the CalFresh RMP is denied due to their location in an ineligible service area or another reason, they may request CDSS reconsider via email. Denied restaurant vendors must provide evidence that they serve the RMP population despite the reason for denial. Examples include:

- RMP populations account for a large percentage of the restaurant's patrons.
- The restaurant increases access to food because there are little to no restaurants within the service area.
- The restaurant is located near a communal site or center that serves one or more of the RMP populations.

### Vendors Located on College Campuses

[Education Code Section 66025.93](#) and [AB 942 \(Chapter 814, Statutes of 2019\)](#) allows CDSS to enter into an agreement, also known as a 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.

Per [ACL No. 18-27](#), for purposes of implementing RMP on college campuses, an “on campus food vendor” includes any vendor that sells prepared food for onsite consumption, as defined in the Health and Safety code. On campus food vendors do not include mobile food facilities. As such, CDSS will partner with any on-campus, for-profit food vendors that meet the aforementioned restaurant requirements.

## **VI. Management Evaluations**

CalFresh Management Evaluations (ME) will verify that RMP-eligible CalFresh cases eligible for the RMP have the hot meals indicator active on their EBT cards. If the RMP indicator is not activated on their EBT cards, but the case meets the eligibility criteria for the RMP, CalFresh ME will cite an error.

Counties are reminded the case record must provide sufficient documentation to support the benefit level determination. Documentation must provide enough detail to permit a reviewer without prior knowledge of the individual case to determine the accuracy of benefit allotments. The case record must specifically address whether the household is eligible or ineligible for the RMP.

## **VII. RMP Resources**

### Customer Resources

- [CalFresh RMP Flyer](#) (Translations of this flyer are available on the [CalFresh RMP Webpage](#))
- [CalFresh RMP Social Media](#) (Translations of this social media post are available on the [CalFresh RMP Webpage](#))
- A list and map of participating restaurants are available on the [CalFresh RMP Webpage](#)

### Vendor Resources

- Restaurants interested in participating in the RMP will find application instructions on the [CalFresh RMP Partners Webpage](#)
- [RMP USDA SNAP Application for Meal Services \(FNS 252-2\)](#)
- [CDSS RMP Program Requirements and Permanent Single Agreement](#)
- [RMP Restaurant Vendor Signage](#)
- [RMP Restaurant Meals Provider Logo](#)