

April 20, 2020

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS LETTER

This letter is intended for all County Welfare Departments (CWDs) and community-based organizations (CBOs) who provide CalFresh application assistance in California. This letter provides CWDs and CBOs with information about CalFresh Awareness Month 2020. CalFresh Awareness Month presents another opportunity to ensure households across the state are aware of the food and nutrition resources available to them.



KIM JOHNSON
DIRECTOR

STATE OF CALIFORNIA—HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
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April 20, 2020

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS

FROM: JENNIFER HERNANDEZ, Deputy Director
Family Engagement and Empowerment Division

SUBJECT: **MAY IS CALFRESH AWARENESS MONTH**

In light of the state's unprecedented response to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) and the expansive need that has resulted across the state, the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) issues this year's CalFresh Awareness Month letter with an emphasis on the critical role that CalFresh has and will continue to play in providing nutrition assistance to millions of California households, with low-income during the COVID-19 pandemic. .

In partnership, we have worked diligently to issue emergency benefits, implement program flexibilities, and establish new programs to ensure Californians continue to have access to food as we respond to COVID-19:

Emergency allotments: CalFresh households will be provided an emergency benefit allotment to bring their CalFresh benefits up to the maximum amount allowable based on household size. March and April emergency allotments will be issued on April 12 and May 10 respectively. As a result of our first issuance, more than 1.3 million CalFresh households received over \$233 million in CalFresh emergency allotments. As more federal funding is made available to states for this purpose, California will continue issuing emergency allotments.

Administrative Flexibilities: to support the timely processing of new applications and to keep existing households receiving benefits, the state has pursued administrative flexibilities to ease the burden of reporting, limit interview requirements, and streamline the signature of applications.

EBT Online Purchasing: CalFresh recipients will be able to use their EBT cards to purchase groceries online and request delivery through participating retailers including Amazon and Walmart beginning April 28, 2020. To learn more, visit [EBT Online](#). We encourage you to review the EBT Online outreach toolkit, which will include flyers, social media posts, and a FAQ document.

Pandemic EBT (P-EBT): children who are eligible to receive free or reduced-priced school meals and whose school facility has been closed due to COVID-19 will be eligible to receive P-EBT benefits. Uniquely, children who are also receiving CalFresh, Medi-Cal, or Foster Care benefits will receive P-EBT benefits without having to apply. We have developed and submitted our P-EBT Plan to the Food and Nutrition Service and will soon be sharing more about P-EBT, including when P-EBT cards will be mailed out, who will need to apply, and outreach messaging.

Recognizing that we cannot encourage our partners to host in-person CalFresh Awareness Month events, we ask you to be creative with your client messaging, especially on social media and public facing websites, to promote a virtual CalFresh Awareness Month. In developing client messages for CalFresh Awareness Month, CWDs and CBOs should consider incorporating general information about the availability of CalFresh food benefits. Due to the extensive economic impacts of COVID-19, some individuals and families may be eligible to receive CalFresh for the first time and may need more information about the application process, what information and documents to provide, and how to use benefits. Others may be familiar with CalFresh but could use more information about recent changes in response to COVID-19, such as emergency allotments, administrative flexibilities, and the roll out of EBT Online purchasing. It is our hope that our CWD and CBO partners will continue to share just how beneficial CalFresh benefits have been and will be to individuals and families affected by COVID-19.

Thank you in advance for your proactive efforts to address hunger and food insecurity in your community for the betterment of all California.

If you would like to learn more about opportunities to replicate and build upon the CalFresh Awareness Month efforts undertaken by other counties, or about state CalFresh Outreach efforts, please contact Jessica Cooper, Manager, CalFresh Outreach Unit, at (916) 651-5243.