

April 19, 2021

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 Outreach and application assistance in California. This letter provides CWDs and CBOs with information about CalFresh Awareness Month 2021. CalFresh Awareness Month presents another opportunity to ensure eligible individuals and families 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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GAVIN NEWSOM  
GOVERNOR

April 19, 2021

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS

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

SUBJECT: **MAY IS CALFRESH AWARENESS MONTH**

The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) issues this year's CalFresh Awareness Month letter to share the significant role CalFresh has played in providing supplemental nutrition assistance to millions of California households during the pandemic emergency. In the last year, CalFresh has served a record number of individuals and families. This speaks both to the need for nutrition assistance and the role of counties and stakeholders statewide in ensuring access to benefits.

In partnership with counties and stakeholders, California has implemented important administrative flexibilities and has increased benefits to ensure access and meet the growing needs of Californians:

**Emergency Allotments**

Emergency allotments raised benefits for all ongoing CalFresh households to the maximum allotment based on household size beginning March 2020. As of April 2021, a new minimum emergency allotment of \$95 for all households, including those at the maximum allotment before the issuance of the emergency allotment, was also introduced.

**Telephonic Signature Adjustment**

This administrative flexibility waives the requirement to capture an audio recording of a telephonic signature; instead counties can document in the case file that a client verbally attested to the information provided on the application. This flexibility helps ensure that households can submit a CalFresh application and other required reports by phone. Currently, this waiver is approved through May 31, 2021.

**Elimination of the Interview Requirement at Certification and Recertification**

This administrative flexibility waives the interview requirement at initial application and recertification, provided that the applicant's identity has been verified and all other mandatory verifications at 7 CFR 273.2(f)(1) are complete. Currently, this waiver is approved through June 30, 2021.

**Exclusion of Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (PUC)**

This temporary provision allows counties to exclude PUC benefits when determining CalFresh eligibility so that PUC benefits are not counted towards household income and resources in the month of receipt. Currently, this provision is effective through October 31, 2021.

**SNAP Benefit 15% Increase**

This temporary provision provides a 15% increase in CalFresh benefits for all households. Currently, this provision is effective through September 30, 2021.

**Expansion of Student Eligibility**

This temporary provision introduced two changes to the CalFresh student eligibility rule by expanding eligibility to students who are eligible for federal or state work study or who have an Expected Family Contribution of zero dollars. Currently, this provision is effective through the end of the public health emergency.

These actions have been critical to the state's pandemic response, yet there is still much to do to ensure that every eligible Californian is aware of and has access to CalFresh, including through CalFresh Outreach and application assistance.

The pandemic emergency has had a significant impact on the ability to conduct in-person outreach, for example, limiting our ability to host in-person CalFresh Awareness Month events. That said, even during the pandemic emergency, CalFresh Awareness Month provides an opportunity to ramp up CalFresh outreach activities in new and innovative ways as we head toward reopening and recovery.

One way the California Department of Social Services' is spreading the word and equipping our partners for a successful CalFresh Awareness Month, is by hosting its first annual [CalFresh Awareness Month 2021 Kick-Off](#) webinar on **Thursday, April 22, 2021 from 10:00 am – 11:30 am**. We encourage counties and community-based organizations to attend as we hear from partners across the state about innovative approaches and inspiration for virtual and socially distanced CalFresh awareness, outreach, and application assistance.

If you would like to learn more about opportunities to replicate and build upon the CalFresh Awareness Month efforts undertaken by other counties and community-based organizations, or about state CalFresh Outreach efforts, please contact Jessica Cooper, Manager, CalFresh Outreach Unit, at (916) 210-9268.

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