

May 14, 2024

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS LETTER

The purpose of this letter is to provide County Welfare Departments with information regarding California's plan to sunset the GetCalFresh.org application assistance tool and transition to BenefitsCal.com for the submission of all CalFresh online applications.



KIM JOHNSON
DIRECTOR

CALIFORNIA HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
744 P Street • Sacramento, CA 95814 • www.cdss.ca.gov



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May 14, 2024

ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS LETTER

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS

FROM: ALEXIS FERNÁNDEZ GARCIA, DEPUTY DIRECTOR
FAMILY ENGAGEMENT AND EMPOWERMENT DIVISION

SUBJECT: GETCALFRESH APPLICATION ASSISTANCE TOOL SUNSET
AND TRANSITION PLAN TO BENEFITSCAL FOR CALFRESH
APPLICATIONS

REFERENCE: [ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS LETTER \(ACWDL\) DATED
JANUARY 28, 2019; ALL COUNTY LETTER \(ACL\) NO. 18-90,
ACL NO. 19-44](#)

The purpose of this letter is to provide County Welfare Departments (CWDs) with information regarding California's plan to sunset the GetCalFresh.org (GetCalFresh) application assistance tool and transition to BenefitsCal.com (BenefitsCal) for the submission of all CalFresh online applications.

BACKGROUND

Since 2017, the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), as part of its CalFresh Outreach program, has partnered with Code for America to provide online application assistance through GetCalFresh. In preparation for the CalFresh Expansion to Social Security Income/State Supplementary Payment (SSI/SSP) recipients, the CDSS expanded GetCalFresh statewide in 2019. In addition, the CDSS and Social Security Administration (SSA), with the United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service's (FNS) approval, agreed to use a modified version of the GetCalFresh application assistance tool for the submission of CalFresh applications under "joint processing" rules. Over time, GetCalFresh has expanded services provided to support the submission of semi-annual reports, unique application flows for target populations, such as college students, multi-lingual live chat, and more.

Since CDSS partnered with Code for America, GetCalFresh has facilitated the submission of over 6.7 million CalFresh online applications. It provided a single, statewide point of entry for Californians with low-income looking to submit a CalFresh application, at a time when California was only beginning the transition to a statewide online application portal.

In October of 2023, the California Statewide Automated Welfare System (CalSAWS), in collaboration with the California Health and Human Services Agency, CDSS, California Department of Health Care Services, California Office of Technology and Solutions Integration, and other partners, implemented BenefitsCal, its public-facing benefits management system, statewide. BenefitsCal is an automated system that supports applicants and recipients of public benefit programs such as CalWORKs, CalFresh, and Medi-Cal. BenefitsCal is available in all 58 counties and allows recipients to apply for, maintain, and renew benefits for these programs.

PHASED PLAN TO SUNSET GETCALFRESH

With BenefitsCal now available statewide, the CDSS is working with Code for America, CWDs, and CalFresh partners to responsibly sunset all GetCalFresh services by September 30, 2025. This effort aims to minimize customer impact, maximize the number of customers served by BenefitsCal, and reduce any impact on county workload.

GetCalFresh will sunset in phases, meaning features or components of the application assistance tool will gradually be removed between now and September 30, 2025. Individual GetCalFresh components that will sunset include: the modified GetCalFresh online application assistance tool for SSA, the SAR 7 Eligibility Status Report (SAR 7) feature, digital outreach, the CalFresh online application assistance tool, Community Based Organization (CBO) tools, document upload functionality (both in-application tool and post-application tool, referred to as “LaterDocs”), customer messaging and support services (i.e. live chat, text, and email), and data dashboards.

The CDSS and Code for America will coordinate with customers and partners in the months before sunsetting each GetCalFresh feature. Customer communications may be shared through messaging and support services, and/or posted on the GetCalFresh.org website. Partner communications may be shared through email, CDSS public meetings, and/or posted on the GetCalFresh website. Additionally, the CDSS and Code for America will monitor customer and partner impact after sunsetting each feature. The Code for America customer success team will continue responding to and assisting customers through text, email, and live chat until the GetCalFresh application assistance tool officially sunsets on September 30, 2025.

TIMELINE

Feature	Sunset (End) Date
The SSA application assistance tool used for joint processing of CalFresh applications by the SSA and CWDs will transition from GetCalFresh to BenefitsCal.	September 30, 2024
The SAR 7 feature, including SAR 7 LaterDocs.	December 2024
Digital outreach and informational media campaigns through GetCalFresh.	March 2025
The application assistance tool, including the CBO portal, and the in-application document uploader tool.	June 2025
The LaterDocs feature, data dashboards, CBO tools, customer success services (customer text, email, and live chat features), and the GetCalFresh website.	September 30, 2025

The CDSS does not expect significant impacts to county eligibility worker processing as a result of this transition. Changes to the timeline will be communicated to customers and partners as needed.

If you have any questions or need additional guidance regarding the information in this letter, contact the CalFresh Outreach Unit at CalFreshAccess@dss.ca.gov.