

April 28, 2025

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS LETTER

The purpose of this All County Welfare Directors Letter is to provide County Welfare Departments with guidance on completing and submitting their required Disaster CalFresh plan for Federal Fiscal Year 2026 to the California Department of Social Services by **Friday, July 11, 2025**.

April 28, 2025

ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS LETTER

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS

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

SUBJECT: **COUNTY DISASTER CALFRESH PLANS FOR FEDERAL
FISCAL YEAR 2026**

REFERENCE: [CALIFORNIA WELFARE AND INSTITUTIONS CODE \(W&IC\)
18917\(A\)\(2\); ALL COUNTY LETTER NO. 18-125](#)

The purpose of this All County Welfare Directors Letter (ACWDL) is to provide guidance to County Welfare Departments (CWDs) on completing and submitting their required Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2026 Disaster CalFresh (D-CalFresh) plans to the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) by **Friday, July 11, 2025**.

CDSS will submit the state D-CalFresh plan to the United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) by the annual deadline of August 15, 2025, and upon approval, it will be shared with all CWDs.

Background

County D-CalFresh plans serve as guides for CalFresh's emergency response efforts in the event of a natural or human-made disaster. A comprehensive plan ensures a coordinated response, and timely and accurate issuance of D-CalFresh food benefits to impacted households. Furthermore, county D-CalFresh plans ensure that California counties understand their roles and responsibilities during a disaster, as well as the policies and procedures governing the D-CalFresh program.

As the state oversight agency, CDSS is required to provide FNS with an annual state D-

CalFresh plan at the beginning of every FFY. The plan is based, in part, on information provided in the county plans and informs FNS of California's overall approach to serving new and ongoing CalFresh households affected by a disaster.

Counties are reminded that under [California Welfare and Institutions Code \(W&IC\) Section 18917\(a\)\(2\)](#), all CWDs are required to submit a D-CalFresh plan to CDSS every FFY. The statute also requires counties to establish a mutual aid region, which includes at least two counties. Details on the mutual aid region must be included in the county D-CalFresh plan. The mutual aid section must list all cooperating counties that make up the mutual aid region and detail the level of support that will be provided by, and to, each cooperating county in the event of a disaster.

County D-CalFresh Plan Template and Emergency Response Handbook

For FFY 2026, counties must utilize the most recent version of the County D-CalFresh Plan Template to develop and submit their D-CalFresh Plan. This will ensure that all required D-CalFresh plan components are included in the county's D-CalFresh Plan submission. Counties may use their FFY 2025 plan as a foundation for the FFY 2026 plan. Counties should review their previously submitted plan and update any outdated information.

Any changes to the FFY 2026 plan that differ from the FFY 2025 plan must be highlighted in yellow. Changes may include new contact information for staff or roles and responsibilities, among others.

The [CalFresh Emergency Response Handbook](#) (the Handbook) released in [All County Letter \(ACL\) No. 18-125](#) is a useful tool when developing the county D-CalFresh plan as it provides policy guidance and information on required plan components. Additionally, for added efficiency, the D-CalFresh plan template includes references to the page number that corresponds to the same section in the Handbook.

County D-CalFresh Plan Instructions and Submission Procedure

All CWDs must submit D-CalFresh Plans to CDSS by **Friday, July 11, 2025**. Completed plans must be submitted to DisasterCalFresh@dss.ca.gov on or before the due date. An email submission from a county representative will be considered an electronic signature of the plan, and CDSS will not require further signatures. Questions regarding the planning process or plan submission should also be sent to DisasterCalFresh@dss.ca.gov.

County disaster contacts will receive a Microsoft Word version of the template, via email, immediately following the issuance of this ACWDL. Updated state and federal disaster contact information will also be provided via email.

The CDSS Disaster Response website always has additional resources about D-

CalFresh, including any current or recent disaster operations.

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

Attachment



FFY 2026 County Disaster CalFresh Plan

Annual Plan Template

SECTION 1: COVER PAGE AND AUTHORIZED SIGNATURES

List the CWD Disaster Point of Contacts (POC) who should be contacted with questions regarding CalFresh Disaster Response. If the county would like to add additional Disaster POCs than what is included in the table below, please email DisasterCalFresh@dss.ca.gov.

County Welfare Department (CWD) Name:

Date Submitted to CDSS:

	Name	Title	Phone	Email
Disaster POC #1				
Disaster POC #2				
Disaster POC #3				

Certified By:

The Director of the CWD must sign below to certify that all information in the Annual County Disaster CalFresh Plan for FFY 2026 has been updated and is accurate. Digital Signatures or scanned wet signatures may be used.

Director

Date

SECTION 2: D-CALFRESH ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The D-CalFresh Roles and Responsibilities section is used to provide contact information and responsibilities for several key partners who play a role during D-CalFresh operations.

THE ROLE OF THE COUNTY HUMAN SERVICES OFFICE(S)

Reference [CalFresh Emergency Response Handbook, Roles and Responsibilities During D-CalFresh Operations \(pages 20-21\)](#), and make sure to include all relevant contact information.

THE ROLE OF LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT, FIRE DEPARTMENT, AND EMERGENCY RESPONDERS

Reference [CalFresh Emergency Response Handbook, Roles and Responsibilities During D-CalFresh Operations \(page 22\)](#), and make sure to include all relevant contact information.

LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT

LOCAL FIRE DEPARTMENT

LOCAL EMERGENCY RESPONDERS

THE ROLE OF CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES (CDSS) CALFRESH POLICY, OPERATIONS, PROGRAMS, AND EMERGENCY FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Reference [CalFresh Emergency Response Handbook, Roles and Responsibilities During D-CalFresh Operations \(pages 22-25\)](#), and make sure to include all relevant contact information.

CalFresh Policy

CalFresh Operations

CalFresh Programs/Outreach

Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP)

THE ROLE OF THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICE (USDA FNS)

Reference [CalFresh Emergency Response Handbook, The Role of FNS \(page 26\)](#), and make sure to include all relevant contact information.

SECTION 3: D-CALFRESH READINESS

The D-CalFresh Readiness section is intended to outline the county's "readiness" to operate D-CalFresh when a Presidential Declaration for Individual Assistance is granted and D-CalFresh operations are subsequently approved.

PANDEMIC PLANNING

Detail planning efforts that would mitigate delays or the lack of availability of day-to-day CalFresh services if a pandemic outbreak were prevalent in your county. Additionally, the Pandemic Planning section will detail the continuity of services for when clients are not able to physically attend or visit county offices for services or appointments at an impacted CWD.

DATA

Identify local demographic data that may affect the county's response to a disaster. Include available data and information from sources such as the local office of emergency services, the local sheriff's or fire department, or community-based organizations that can be used to assess language needs and locate persons with disabilities, older adults, and other vulnerable populations. Identify resources for disaster impact such as flood maps or electrical outage data.

MUTUAL AID REGION AND CROSS-COUNTY SUPPORT

Identify counties or regions (at least two or more) that would assist and support during an emergency response. A mutual aid agreement is co-developed between counties and includes information such as primary contacts, roles and responsibilities, and staff support plans between counties with the intention of establishing a foundation for coordinated emergency response efforts. For more information, reference [CalFresh Emergency Response Handbook, Mutual Aid Region \(page 26-27\)](#).

D-CALFRESH RESPONDERS

The primary roles of D-CalFresh Responders are to ensure all D-CalFresh applications are processed within the required timeframe, ensure client access,

and maintain a human-centric approach while operating, whether at a county office or at an offsite application site. Create a master list with all staff that includes current contact information, job classification, and language spoken. It would be beneficial to include a map with all county offices and/or possible D-CalFresh application sites and how many staff each site could accommodate.

APPLICATION SITES

Describe the D-CalFresh application and issuance site selection procedures. Consider options for site location and size, as appropriate, for differences in disaster size and scope. Include any agreements in place for potential sites. If a planned D-CalFresh site is also a local CalFresh office, include a plan for simultaneous D-CalFresh and CalFresh operations. If possible, list the sites with addresses and primary functions. For more information, reference [CalFresh Emergency Response Handbook, Application Site Selection Set-Up \(pages 42-44\)](#).

PROCEDURES TO REDUCE APPLICANT HARDSHIP

Describe the steps that will be taken to reduce hardship for D-CalFresh clients and existing caseload. Specifically, include provisions for security and human needs. Counties need to make every effort to reduce hardship for D-CalFresh applicants and for their existing caseload by providing eligibility services in areas close to or adjacent to the affected areas. For more information, reference [CalFresh Emergency Response Handbook, Procedures to Reduce Applicant Hardship \(pages 47-49\)](#).

PROVISIONS FOR SERVING LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY (LEP) APPLICANTS

Describe how the county will provide meaningful access to D-CalFresh applicants who are LEP through the use of bilingual staff, interpreters, and translated documents. For more information, reference [CalFresh Emergency Response Handbook, Provisions for Serving LEP \(page 47\)](#).

REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS

Describe the county's plan to provide reasonable accommodations ensuring access for vulnerable populations, such as older adults and persons with disabilities. For more information, reference [CalFresh Emergency Response Handbook, Measures to Ensure Access \(pages 44-46\)](#).

ELECTRONIC BENEFITS TRANSFER (EBT) CARD STOCK

Describe the plan for securing sufficient EBT card stock as well as unique,

Disaster EBT cards, when applicable. This section must also include the total number of EBT card stock the county regularly has on hand. For more information, reference [CalFresh Emergency Response Handbook, EBT Card Stock & EBT Issuance \(pages 56-58\)](#).

DISASTER RESPONSE TRAINING

Describe what types of training will be given to staff and the timeline for completion. D-CalFresh training should, at minimum, be provided to all D-CalFresh Responders, but it is highly encouraged that all program staff be included in the training. For more information, reference [CalFresh Emergency Response Handbook, Pre-Disaster Training \(pages 27-28\)](#).

PUBLIC INFORMATION AND OUTREACH

Describe the public information strategy to ensure that accurate, clear information reaches disaster affected populations quickly and in languages the understand. Describe procedures to notify retailers of D-CalFresh implementation and special D-CalFresh waivers such as the allowance of hot food purchases. For more information, reference [CalFresh Emergency Response Handbook, Public Information and Outreach \(pages 41-42\)](#).

CERTIFICATION PROCESS

Describe the specifics of the certification process including potential application sites, staffing, separation of eligibility and issuance, and how application sites will manage large crowds. If online applications are to be used by workers or clients, describe that process and back-up systems in place if technical issues are encountered. For more information, reference [CalFresh Emergency Response Handbook, Interview and Certification \(pages 51-52\)](#).

ISSUANCE PROCESS

Describe how D-CalFresh benefits will be made available within 72 hours of application (or seven days from the date of application for questionable cases) without compromising service to the ongoing CalFresh caseload. Each county must be prepared to issue D-CalFresh benefits through the California Statewide Automated Welfare System (CalSAWS) and the state's EBT system. For more information, reference [Please reference CalFresh Emergency Response Handbook, D-CalFresh Issuances \(pages 53-54\)](#).

SYSTEMS AND EBT PRINTER CONTINGENCIES

Describe the county's contingency plan and alternative procedures when the systems and/or EBT printers fail or go offline. Additionally, describe how the

county will prepare and respond when an EBT printer fails, especially if operating at application sites not located at county offices.

SECURITY AND FRAUD PREVENTION PLAN

Describe special procedures for handling applications submitted by county employees or determined questionable, and a screening process to check all households for duplicate participation. For more information, reference [CalFresh Emergency Response Handbook, *Fraud Prevention* \(pages 58-60\)](#).

DAILY REPORTING

Describe how staff will meet the daily reporting requirements and detail the methods that the county will use to ensure all the appropriate data is included and submitted on a timely basis. For more information, reference [CalFresh Emergency Response Handbook, *Daily Reporting D-CalFresh* \(page 64\)](#).