

March 30, 2018

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS LETTER (ACWDL)

FROM: TODD BLAND
Chief Deputy Director

SUBJECT: **CALFRESH AWARENESS MONTH IN MAY**

May is **CalFresh Awareness Month** and the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) is encouraging counties to join in the celebration. As the largest Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in the nation, California is proud to play a critical role in reducing hunger and improving health by providing nutrition assistance to low income households through CalFresh. I hope all counties will join me in emphasizing the beneficial impact of CalFresh by hosting a **CalFresh Awareness Month** event or series of events in your county, and spend the month highlighting some of the important work each of you are already doing to make people's lives better.

Just in time for the celebration, CDSS has launched the *Healthy CalFresh Initiative* for county social services departments and other community partners to work together on any of three ready-made campaigns: *Get More at the Farmer's Market*, *ReThink Your Drink Event-in-a-Box*, and *Eatfresh.org*. This is an easy and unique way to leverage the great work that is already being done in counties across the state. For more information on the *Healthy CalFresh Initiative*, please visit the following link:

<http://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/CalFresh/Supplemental-Nutrition-Assistance-Program-Education/CalFresh-Initiative>

CDSS is again encouraging counties to focus **CalFresh Awareness Month** efforts on alleviating senior, child, and student hunger by strengthening partnerships with the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program, school meals programs, First 5 agencies, and Medi-Cal programs. These partnerships are the critical foundation in developing coordinated plans to connect children to all available nutrition and medical services. We are also encouraging counties to continue to increase overall program participation by supporting public and private partnerships that work together to reduce food insecurity in our state.

CalFresh Awareness Month is also an appropriate time to think about messaging public charge to our potentially-eligible CalFresh population in California. People who are eligible

for our services but not currently enrolled in the program need to know that applying for CalFresh does not affect their immigration status, and public charge rules do not apply to food assistance programs such as CalFresh, WIC, and school meals programs.

This year we are again sharing events that counties are planning as part of **CalFresh Awareness Month** by featuring them on the CDSS website. CDSS will post information on the CDSS Facebook page and provide a hashtag for the counties to promote on their own social media channels. To be featured on the CDSS website, please email a list of CalFresh events your county is planning for May to the CalFresh Outreach inbox at CalFreshAccess@DSS.ca.gov so we may add these to our statewide event calendar.

Together we can increase the number of families that receive assistance to purchase the food they need and improve the health and wellbeing of children. I encourage all counties to work with their local community-based organizations, including food banks, faith-based organizations, schools, and health clinics, to promote and enroll families in CalFresh. For information on agencies in your community that provide CalFresh Outreach application assistance, please visit the CalFresh Outreach website at: http://www.cdss.ca.gov/calfreshoutreach/res/9_AttachmentC_by%20County.pdf

Thank you in advance for your proactive efforts to address hunger and food insecurity through collaboration with other agencies for the betterment of all of 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.