

APPENDIX F2:

CalFresh Outreach Q&As

Here are some questions and answers about CalFresh. The answers provide more information about the resources available.

What is CalFresh?

CalFresh is funded by the United States Department of Agriculture, also known as the USDA, and is administered through the California Department of Social Services. CalFresh helps low-income people purchase the food they need for good health and nutrition. Your income must meet the federal poverty guidelines. For a family of four this means a monthly salary of no more than \$2,498.¹ Income limits may be different for households with someone who is elderly or disabled, or in households with mixed immigration statuses. Contact your county CalFresh office for more information.

Why is it important to promote CalFresh?

According to federal reports, in fiscal year 2009, only 53 percent of the people who were eligible for CalFresh in California received benefits and the national participation average was 72 percent.² Applying this rate to more recent CalFresh participation figures, approximately 3.5 million people who may qualify for CalFresh are not receiving the benefits.³

In 2011 in California, the average monthly benefit per person was \$147 or almost \$5 per day for food.⁴ Because CalFresh can be used to help buy healthy food, there is more room in a family's budget to pay other bills and buy other necessities. This also helps the local economies.

What Are SNAP & EBT?

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the federal name for CalFresh. Instead of receiving paper coupons, you receive an EBT (Electronic Benefit Transfer) card that looks and acts just like a debit card. Depending on your eligibility, a certain benefit amount is put on the card each month.

Where can CalFresh recipients use their EBT card?

You can buy food at any supermarket, grocery store, and some farmers' markets.

How does CalFresh benefit local economies?

Every \$1 of additional CalFresh money delivered to California communities returns \$1.79 to the local economies.⁵ It is estimated that if everyone who is eligible for CalFresh participated in the program, approximately \$4.9 billion federal SNAP dollars would come into California. This federal money would generate approximately \$8.7 billion in additional economic activity statewide.⁶

How many Californians are hungry and in need of CalFresh?

Many Californians are hungry or live in fear of going hungry. Many of these people have jobs but still lack enough money to provide healthy food for themselves and their families. In 2009, nearly 4 million low-income Californian adults experienced periods of time when they could not afford enough food.⁷

What are the common facts that people tend to misunderstand about CalFresh?

- You don't have to pay back your CalFresh benefits to the government if you are eligible to receive them. Also, your children won't be drafted into the military. In fact, a major reason for CalFresh is to help your children get the healthy food they need.
- If you own cars or the home you live in, or have a job, you may still be eligible for CalFresh. Call 1-888-9 COMIDA or check with your local CalFresh office for more information about eligibility.
- Citizen children can get CalFresh. Children born in the United States are eligible for CalFresh no matter where their parents came from. If you apply for CalFresh on behalf of your children it will not affect your eligibility for legal residence or U.S. citizenship. The county welfare office staff is not allowed to share your personal information with Immigration.
- The CalFresh Program is a nutrition program, NOT a welfare program! CalFresh helps you and your family to buy the food you need for good health.

Are there other benefits for receiving CalFresh?

Yes. When families receive CalFresh their children will also be eligible to receive free school breakfast and lunch at school. Research has shown that children who are not hungry do better in school than children who are hungry.⁸

What are some ways to save time and money on food?

Many grocery stores, farmers' markets, and even flea markets accept CalFresh. You can stretch your food budget by using coupons and buying foods when they're on sale. In addition, plan ahead: Make a weekly meal plan with food that you already have and shop for what you still need. Cook several meals at once and freeze them for later. Make a grocery list, and most importantly, don't shop when you're hungry.

How can you shop and eat smarter?

Choose foods that fit MyPlate (www.choosemyplate.gov). Buy a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables when they are in season. Choose more whole grains such as oatmeal, brown rice, and 100 percent whole wheat breads, tortillas, and pastas. Go lean with protein from dried beans, peas, lentils, nuts, seeds, and fish. Switch to fat-free or low-fat milk. These will provide the nutrients you need, are less expensive, and are healthier too. These are all items that can be purchased with CalFresh.

What are some other ways to save money when shopping for food?

Buy in bulk. Buy store brands instead of name-brand products. They are usually much less expensive, and they are just as good for you. Buy fruits and vegetables in season; they are usually fresher and cheaper.

What is the Network for a Healthy California?

The *Network for a Healthy California* helps low-income Californians to live better by creating innovative partnerships that empower people to increase fruit and vegetable consumption, physical activity, and food security with the goal of preventing obesity and other diet-related chronic diseases.

How does the Network help struggling families put healthy food on their tables?

The *Network* provides information on how to purchase & prepare low-cost meals. The *Network* promotes participation in CalFresh as a means for low-income families to stretch their food budget and increase the purchase of healthy foods.

For healthy recipes to stretch your budget, visit www.cachampionsforchange.net.

¹ Information on Cost-Of-Living Adjustments (COLAs): Maximum Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Allotments, Standard Deduction, Shelter Deduction, Homeless Household Shelter Allowance, Standard Utility Allowance (SUA), Limited Utility Allowance (LUA), Income Eligibility Standards, and CalFresh Tables of Coupon Issuance – Effective October 1, 2012. All County Informing Notice (ACIN) 1-46-12, California Department of Social Services, September 18, 2012.

² Cunnynham, KE, *Reaching Those in Need: State Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Participation Rates in 2009*, Mathematica Policy Research, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, <http://www.fns.usda.gov/ora/menu/Published/snap/FILES/Participation/Reaching2009.pdf>

³ Shimada T., *Lost Dollars, Empty Plates: The Impact of CalFresh Participation on State and Local Economies*, California Food Policy Advocates, February 2012. Accessed November 2012, <http://cfpa.net/CalFresh/CFPAPublications/LDEP-FullReport-2012.pdf>

⁴ Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Data, Annual State Level Data, 2007-2011. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/snapmain.htm>

⁵ Hanson, K., *The Food Assistance National Input-Output Multiplier (FANIOM) Model and Stimulus Effects of SNAP*. ERR-103, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Econ. Res. Serv., October 2010. Accessed November 1, 2012, http://www.ers.usda.gov/media/134117/err103_1_.pdf

⁶ Shimada T., *Lost Dollars, Empty Plates: The Impact of CalFresh Participation on State and Local Economies*, California Food Policy Advocates, February 2012. Accessed November 2012, <http://cfpa.net/CalFresh/CFPAPublications/LDEP-FullReport-2012.pdf>

⁷ Chaparro M.P., Langellier B., Birnbach K., Sharp M., and Harrison G., “Nearly Four Million Californians Are Food Insecure,” Health Policy Brief, UCLA Health Policy Research Center, June 2012. Accessed December 2012, <http://healthpolicy.ucla.edu/publications/Documents/PDF/FoodPBRevised7-11-12.pdf>

⁸ Ibid.