



# NEWS RELEASE

California Department of Social Services



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## **California Receives Federal Bonus for CalFresh Program Access Improvements**

Sacramento - The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) and the County Welfare Directors Association of California announced today that California has been awarded a bonus of \$6.4 million from the federal government for improving access to the CalFresh Program for low income individuals and families. California increased the Program Access Index by more than 3 percent, meaning that in 2014, California was among the best states in the nation at identifying and serving eligible individuals and families not currently enrolled in food assistance.

"We are very proud of our county and community partners for all of their hard work to improve access to this vital program," says Will Lightbourne, director of CDSS. "These efforts are going a long way in helping to keep California healthy."

CalFresh, federally known as the Supplemental Food Assistance Program (SNAP), helps families put nutritious food on their table. The program issues monthly electronic benefits that can be used to buy most foods at farmers markets and food stores throughout the nation.

"Ensuring we reach eligible children, families and individuals who need help buying food is one of the most basic ways we fight deep poverty in our communities," says Frank Mecca, executive director of the County Welfare Directors Association of California. "This award reflects counties and partners' remarkable efforts to improve program efficiency while being committed stewards of the public's resources."

CalFresh is California's largest anti-poverty program providing nutrition support for more than 4 million people. An average CalFresh family receives about \$150 dollars in food benefits per month, per person. In total, CalFresh benefits add approximately \$7 billion to California's economy generating an economic benefit estimated to be more than \$12 billion annually.

The Program Access Index is measured by dividing the number of SNAP participants as reported by the State by the estimated number of eligible people in that State. The number of SNAP eligible people is an estimate developed using U.S. Census data that is based on 125 percent of the Federal Poverty Level.

For more information about how to apply for CalFresh benefits you can go to <http://www.benefitscal.org/>

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