

CALFRESH OUTREACH NEWSLETTER

SPRING/SUMMER 2026

CalFresh Outreach

[kal-fresh out-reech] noun • California

the art of meeting people where they are
and helping them access food benefits
they may not know they qualify for

see also: application assistance,
community partnerships

Message From the Nutrition Programs Branch Director

Our CalFresh Outreach partners are at the center of Department's program access strategy. Every day, you help individuals and families access food support and navigate systems that can often feel complex.

Your efforts strengthen communities. You build trust, assist with breaking barriers, and connect individuals and families to essential resources. This work matters, and it makes a real difference.

As federal policies and requirements continue to change, your role remains critical. Clear and strong communication, partnerships, and a shared commitment to service are essential to ensuring eligible households receive the support they need.

Thank you for your continued dedication to CalFresh Outreach and for the impact you have on our communities.

-Brian Kaiser



Changes to Work and Community Engagement Requirements and ABAWD Rules

Recent federal policy changes may affect work and community engagement requirements for some CalFresh recipients. Outreach partners play an important role in helping clients understand these updates and maintain their benefits.

Able Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) must meet certain work and community engagement requirements to receive CalFresh for more than three months in a 36-month period.

Key Things to Know:

- Adults ages 18-64 may need to meet work and community engagement requirements to keep receiving CalFresh benefits, unless exempt
- Participants must work, volunteer, or participate in an approved program for 80 hours per month
- Counties may offer employment and training programs to help participants meet the requirement (see [CalFresh Resource Center Policy Guidance](#) for guidance on Local Programs that Increase Eligibility)

Common exemptions may include:

- People experiencing homelessness
- Individuals with physical or mental health condition
- People who are pregnant

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Outreach partners can support clients by:

- Explaining the work and community engagement requirements in simple language
- Helping clients report exemptions when applicable
- Connecting clients with the county employment and training services
- Encouraging clients to respond to county notices quickly

Clear information and early support can help prevent interruptions in benefits. Partners are encouraged to stay connected with county staff and review program updates as they are released.

CDSS has developing resources to help outreach partners support individuals who may be impacted by the new work and community engagement requirements. Resources include the CalFresh Work and Community Engagement Requirements Outreach Digital Toolkit, available in all CDSS threshold languages, a pre-screening tool to help individuals understand whether they may be required to meet the new requirements or qualify for an exemption, and a guest speaker webinar series focused on work and community engagement activities. Additional outreach materials and support will continue to be shared as they become available.

For the latest guidance on CalFresh Work and Community Engagement Requirements and ABAWD policy, visit the [CDSS CalFresh Work and Community Engagement Requirements webpage](#). See ACL 25-93 and ACL 25-93E for the most current guidance.

Non-citizen Eligibility Updates Related to H.R. 1

Recent federal changes under H.R. 1 may impact CalFresh eligibility for some non-citizens. Outreach partners play a key role in helping individuals and families understand how these updates may affect their households.



Overview

Beginning April 1, 2026, certain lawfully present non-citizens may no longer qualify for CalFresh based on federal eligibility requirements.

Key points to understand:

- Some lawfully present non citizens may no longer qualify for CalFresh
- Eligibility may depend on immigration status or other federal criteria
- Changes may also affect how benefits are calculated for mixed status households

What partners should communicate:

- U.S. citizens and eligible household members can still apply, even if others in the household are not eligible
- Individuals who are not applying for benefits are not required to provide immigration status
- Personal information is used only to determine eligibility
- Eligibility is determined on a case by case basis, and individuals should not assume they are ineligible without speaking to a county eligibility worker

How partners can support clients:

- Encourage clients to apply if they believe someone in the household may qualify
- Connect clients with trusted legal or immigration resources when needed
- Assist clients by reviewing notices and responding to any requests from the county
- Share updated materials from the CalFresh Outreach Partners Page
- Provide additional food benefit resources, such as the [California Food Assistance Program](#)

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Clear and accurate information can help reduce fear and confusion as these changes are implemented. CDSS is developing additional outreach materials to help partners communicate eligibility changes and support individuals and families who may be impacted. Partners are encouraged to continue using current CDSS guidance and watch for additional outreach resources as they become available.

Local Programs that Increase Employability (LPIE) Streamlining

Beginning **June 1, 2026**, students enrolled in an Associate's or Bachelor's degree program at a California Community College (CCC), California State University (CSU), or University of California (UC) campus will automatically be considered participants in a Local Programs that Increase Employability (LPIE).

This change streamlines the student eligibility process for CalFresh and creates a more consistent approach across California's institution of higher education systems. Eligibility workers will no longer need to confirm whether a specific degree program appears on the List of Approved LPIEs.

The update is expected to improve access and reduce administrative barriers for both students and campuses.

Key Impacts

- Makes it easier for students to access the LPIE student exemption
- Reduces application processing time for eligibility workers
- Reduces administrative burden for colleges and universities
- Supports increased CalFresh enrollment among eligible students

This change reflects ongoing efforts to simplify the application process and improve food access for college students across California. Outreach partners are encouraged to share updated information with students, campus staff, and community partners to help increase awareness of available food benefits.

For the latest information on CalFresh eligibility changes related to H.R. 1 and non-citizen eligibility, visit the CDSS All Partner H.R. 1 CalFresh Implementation Advisory Group webpage: cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/cdss-programs/calfresh-resource-center/meetings-and-conferences/all-partner-hr1-advisory. See ACL 25-92 for the most recent guidance.

Supporting Older Adults Through the Interview Process

Older adults may face barriers such as hearing challenges, limited mobility, or confusion about CalFresh program requirements. CalFresh outreach partners play an important role in helping older adults prepare for their CalFresh interview.

Helpful strategies include:

- Review the application with the client before the interview
- Help clients gather verification documents in advance
- Encourage the client to write down questions for the eligibility worker
- Offer quiet spaces for phone interviews, if possible
- Remind clients that they can request reasonable accommodations

Preparation can make the interview less stressful and increase the chances of a successful application.

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Preparing for Disaster CalFresh Season

As California enters wildfire and disaster season, outreach partners serve as a critical link between communities and resources for food assistance. When Disaster CalFresh (D-CalFresh) is activated, partners can help share information, distribute multilingual materials, and connect impacted households with available food assistance resources.

When activated, D-CalFresh can assist households that experience disaster related expenses such as, income loss, property damage, or limited access to food as a result of an emergency.

When D-CalFresh is activated, outreach partners may be asked to:

- Share timely and accurate D-CalFresh information with affected communities
- Distribute multilingual outreach materials
- Educate communities on application dates, locations, and eligibility criteria
- Support local outreach efforts in coordination with county and state partners
- Help connect disaster affected households to available food assistance resources

Preparing before a disaster occurs can help ensure communities receive critical information quickly. Outreach partners are encouraged to review their emergency communication plans and maintain up to date contact information for staff and partners.

For more information about D-CalFresh, visit the CDSS Disaster CalFresh webpage.

Partner Success Story

2-1-1 San Diego

"A client contacted the CalFresh info line for help completing her application after experiencing delays caused by incorrect employer-reported information affecting her eligibility. She was unemployed, living with her partner and child, and not receiving unemployment benefits.

Enrollment Center staff provided detailed application guidance, clarification of requirements, and consistent follow-up support to ensure the client understood each step of the process. The client was supported through completion of her application and eligibility determination.

The client stated: "Patrick... was so helpful! Clear and understandable... very sympathetic and caring... definitely should be more agents like him."

CalFresh Awareness Month (CFAM) Highlights

This year's CFAM showcased the dedication of outreach partners across California. Throughout May, partners hosted more than **100 outreach events**, including resource fairs, food distributions, school and community events, enrollment clinics and application assistance workshops. These efforts helped raise awareness of CalFresh benefits, connect eligible individuals and families to nutrition assistance, and strengthen partnerships within the community.

Thank you to all who participated and helped make this year's CFAM a success.

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