

California

Food Stamp Outreach & Access Toolkit Basics for Beginners



California Association of Food Banks
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Food Stamp Outreach & Access Toolkit

Table of Contents

Introduction: About This Toolkit	5
Chapter One: About California’s Food Stamp Outreach Program	6
Chapter Two: Eligibility Basics	8
Chapter Three: Prescreening for Food Stamps	10
Chapter Four: Understanding Income & Deductions	14
Chapter Five: Applying for Food Stamps in California	18
Chapter Six: Client Rights	23
Chapter Seven: County Computer Eligibility Systems	25
Chapter Eight: Outreach Supports and Resources	26
Chapter Nine: Outreach Materials	28
Chapter Ten: Other Government Benefit Programs	30
Chapter Eleven: Useful Websites	32
Chapter Twelve: Questions to Answer Before Starting	34
Chapter Thirteen: Quarterly Reporting	37

Appendices

Appendix A: [Current Outreach Partners by County](#)

Appendix B: [L.A. County Food Stamp Partners](#)

Appendix C: [Food Stamps and SSI/SSP in California](#)

Appendix D: [Food Stamps and Immigrant Households](#)

Appendix E: [DFA285 A1 & A2 California's Food Stamp Application](#)

Appendix F: [SAWS Multi-Aid Application](#)

Appendix G: [Quarterly Report and Change Reporting Forms](#)

Appendix H: [Letter from USDA RE: Indigent Immigrants](#)

Appendix I: [National Immigrant Law Center FSP Handout](#)

Appendix J: [Untangling the Lines](#)

Appendix K: [FRAC's Guide to Disaster Food Stamps](#)

Appendix L: [Student Eligibility Rules & Exemptions](#)

Appendix M: [Self Employment Worksheet](#)

Appendix N: [Summary of Applicant Rights](#)

Appendix O: [State Finger Image System Handout](#)

Appendix P: [Glossary of Terms](#)

Food Stamp Outreach & Access Toolkit

Introduction: [About This Toolkit](#)

Food stamp outreach is an exciting opportunity for organizations to expand their positive impact in the community. Food stamp outreach can also be a very complex when just starting out. The eligibility requirements and application procedures for food stamps are complicated, and it is easy for both clients and outreach advocates to be confused by the process. There is a wealth of information available on food stamp outreach and regulations, but new advocates may not always know where to look.

The California Association of Food Banks (CAFB) created this toolkit to help organizations and individuals new to food stamp outreach successfully navigate the learning process and develop an in-depth understanding of food stamp policies and regulations. It is vital that new outreach programs thoroughly educate and train staff so that they can be effective and knowledgeable advocates who know when and how to refer and assist clients in the food stamp application process.

Rather than provide a comprehensive manual for food stamp outreach, this toolkit is designed to address the need for training by offering a basic orientation to the food stamp system in California and describing the full array of resources and support available for developing an effective outreach program. The hope is that after reading this toolkit, you will have a basic understanding of how food stamps work and know where to look for further information, materials, and guidance.

The Food Stamp Outreach and Access Toolkit will be printed once for widespread distribution to organizations in California working on food stamp outreach and will thereafter be available online at www.myfoodstamps.org. We welcome your comments and suggestions about the toolkit.

Food Stamp Outreach & Access Toolkit

Chapter One: About California's Food Stamp Outreach Program

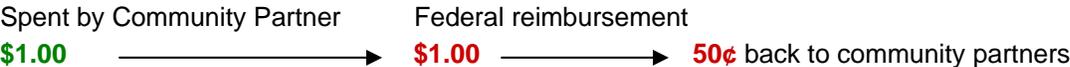


There are several outreach efforts occurring throughout California. Each year, the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) and the California Department of Public Health's *Network for a Healthy California (Network)* submit the Food Stamp Access Improvement Plan to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

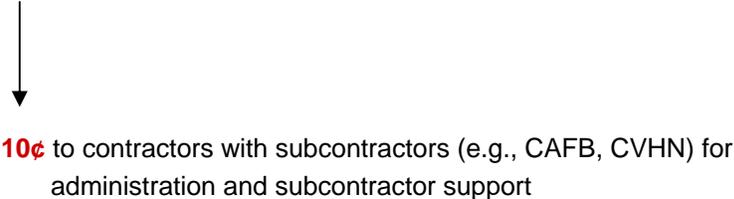
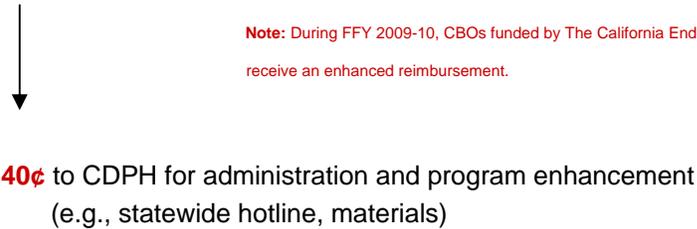
The FFY 2010 Access Improvement Plan includes partnerships with the California Association of Food Banks (CAFB), Catholic Charities of California, Central Valley Health Network (CVHN), the Center for Nutrition and Activity Promotion at CSU Chico, United Farm Workers Foundation, the National Latino Research Center at CSU San Marcos, and all of their subcontractors to conduct food stamp outreach activities throughout California.

For all of the outreach efforts included in the Access Improvement Plan, the USDA provides a 100% reimbursement of the documented and allowable costs. In California, these funds are drawn down through CDSS which in turn has an Interagency Agreement with the California Department of Public Health (CDPH). CDPH draws off a portion of the federal match to help cover the costs associated with the administration of these funds and invest in the overall strength of the statewide outreach plan.

California Food Stamp Outreach Reimbursement Model



Note: During FFY 2009-10, CBOs funded by The California Endowment will receive an enhanced reimbursement.



Because the Food Stamp Program is county-administered in California, it is important for all outreach efforts to involve the partnership of county food stamp programs. In some counties, food stamp outreach campaigns are solely supported by county staff. In others, community-based organizations (CBOs) are funded by county Food Stamp Programs. In Los Angeles, the county pays trained CBOs per approved application.

For a list of food stamp outreach partners participating in the Access Improvement Plan and the counties they are participating in, see Appendix A. For a list of the outreach partners working with the Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services CBO Partners, see Appendix B.

To learn more about food stamp outreach in California, contact CDSS Food Stamp Outreach Coordinator, Detta Hunt at Detta.Hunt@DSS.CA.GOV or by calling (916) 653-6161. To view California's Access Improvement Plan, visit www.networkforahealthycalifornia.net/outreach.

Food Stamp Outreach & Access Toolkit

Chapter Two: Eligibility Basics

The Food Stamp Program has very complicated rules. For some households, determining eligibility can be difficult without collecting a substantial amount of information. The questions and income charts below can help give you an idea if a person or a household may be eligible, but only your county food stamp office can determine eligibility.

Yes/No Someone in the household is a legal resident or citizen.

Yes/No Household has children under 18 or household's assets (not including retirement accounts, automobiles, home that they live in) are less than or equal to \$2000 (\$3000 if a family member is over 60 or permanently disabled).

Yes/No Household has someone who is elderly or disabled or has a gross income that is at or below the monthly income guidelines below. **Note:** Households with an elderly or disabled member do not need to pass the gross income test below.

If the answers to all above questions are yes, the household may be eligible for food stamps. If any answers were no, the household may still be eligible. See rules regarding special populations below:

SSI/SSP Recipients: In the State of California, people who receive Supplemental Security Index Program (SSI/SSP) are not eligible for food stamps because the benefit amount already includes money for food. However, other people living in the household who do not receive SSI/SSP may be eligible to receive food stamps. To find out more about this policy, see Appendix C.

Seniors and People with Documented Disabilities: Most seniors or people with disabilities don't have to pass the gross income test (below). This means that some out-of-pocket medical costs, rent or mortgage costs, dependant care costs and electricity costs can be deducted from the household's income before checking for income eligibility.

Immigrants: The income guidelines below do not apply to households with income earners who are undocumented immigrants. To learn more about applying for food stamps as an immigrant, see Appendix D.

Gross Monthly Income Limit for Food Stamps in California

October 1, 2009 - September 30, 2010

If you have this many persons in your household:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	+1*
Your monthly income is less than:	\$1,174	\$1,579	\$1,984	\$2,389	\$2,794	\$3,200	\$3,605	\$4,010	\$406

** add for each additional household member*

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Chapter Three: **Prescreening for Food Stamps**

Simply using the income guidelines to determine if a family in California may be eligible for the Food Stamp Program is not the most accurate method. For this reason, most outreach programs throughout the state use a prescreening tool. However, any organization that chooses to prescreen should follow the protocol below. For more about prescreening for food stamps or to download prescreening tools, go to <http://www.myfoodstamps.org/screeningtool.html>

California's Prescreening Protocol

During the prescreening process, clients answer a few basic questions pertaining to food stamp eligibility. This process is referred to as "prescreening" to reinforce that it is not a process to determine eligibility and it does not "screen out" potential applicants. While prescreening is an essential piece of California's outreach efforts, it can inadvertently spread incorrect information or inappropriately discourage a person from applying for food stamps. To avoid this, California's outreach stakeholders agreed upon the following prescreening protocol in 2007.

A. About Prescreening

Prescreening only determines whether the client *may* be eligible for food stamps. There are many factors that go into determining food stamp eligibility that this quick assessment does not take into account. Prescreening encourages people who are potentially eligible to apply for food stamps and it saves people time and effort if they are likely not eligible for food stamps. Every client must be informed that only an eligibility worker in a county food stamp office can make a final decision about whether a household qualifies for food stamps.

B. Maintain Privacy

You may learn confidential information, such as names of household members, financial information, medical or employment history while prescreening. When dealing with any confidential personal information, abide by all rules and regulations regarding confidential data. Do not ask more information than necessary. Prescreening can be completed anonymously. Do not ask for a last name, social security number, address, or other personal or identifying information that is not directly required for determining potential food stamp eligibility. If more information is needed later to fill out the application, capture it then. For more about maintaining confidentiality while conducting food stamp outreach, see <http://www.myfoodstamps.org/FSOsecurity.html>.

C. Emphasize Right to Apply

The Food Stamp Program is an entitlement program and everyone has the right to apply. In California, the Food Stamp Program is administered by the county food stamp offices. All people have the right to speak with an eligibility worker and file a food stamp application, regardless of prescreening results. Remember, no one should be required to

be prescreened in order to apply for the Food Stamp Program. People should be informed that by being prescreened, they are not applying for food stamps.

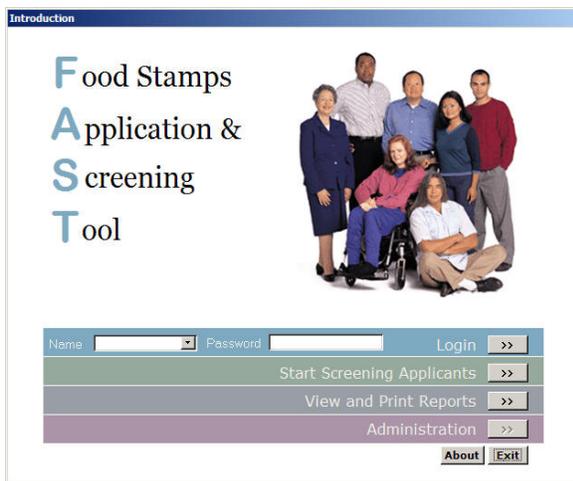
D. Inform of County Eligibility Role

Every client must be informed that only an eligibility worker in a county food stamp office can make a final decision about whether a person is eligible for food stamps.

E. Get Trained Before Beginning Prescreening

Attend a training session on food stamp outreach and prescreening. Contact your county food stamp office or the *Network for a Healthy California* to find a training session in your area. In order to conduct prescreening most accurately and effectively, use a tool such as SuperFAST (Food Stamp Application and Screening Tool). SuperFAST is a computer program that assists in prescreening for potential eligibility, is available at no cost. It can be downloaded at <http://www.myfoodstamps.org/FSOtraining.html>

The Food Stamp Application & Screening Tool



Food **S**tamps **A**pplication & **S**creening **T**ool (F.A.S.T.) is a FREE tool available to any non-profit organization wishing to determine potential food stamp eligibility, assist with the application, and follow-up with applicants. In approximately seven minutes, a client is prescreened and a printable food stamp application (California Form DFA-285 A-1 and A-2), pre-filled with the client's information, is generated.

The current tool also prints a confidentiality waiver and a next steps flyer based on information provided by the county. It directs the client to the closest food stamp office or provides

instructions on applying over the phone. A quick-screen and referral option is also available for call centers and 2-1-1 operations. F.A.S.T. runs in Microsoft Access. Alameda County Social Services Agency has piloted the use of F.A.S.T to transmit an electronic file of the application and supporting documents. CAFB is happy to work with other counties interested in electronic submission of applications using the F.A.S.T tool and secured delivery server.

Benchmark Institute Excel Calculator

This [Excel screening tool](http://www.myfoodstamps.org/docs/FFY0910_Food_Stamp_Calculator.xls) is especially helpful to determine potential eligibility for mixed status households, where some members have legal permanent or citizenship status and others do not. In these cases, the standard income guidelines may not apply as the income of certain household members may need to be prorated. Download the calculator: http://www.myfoodstamps.org/docs/FFY0910_Food_Stamp_Calculator.xls

One-e-App Fast Track to Food Stamps

One-e-App is an online tool that allows application assisters to improve access to a broad range of programs serving low-income families. Because much of the data required to apply are the same across programs, the One-e-App system can provide a single point of entry for multiple programs with a minimal increase in the time it takes to collect application information. Recently, One-e-App added the Food Stamp Program to its long list of programs. Application assisters can use this online tool to help clients apply for the Food Stamp Program. To learn more about how your organization could sign up for One-e-App's Fast Track to Food Stamps, contact Ker Walker at KWalker@oneeapp.org.

California's Online Prescreening Tool

The *Network for a Healthy California* partnered with the *Professional Exchange Service Corporation* and a steering committee consisting of the California Association of Food Banks, the Central Valley Health Network, the San Diego Hunger Coalition and the California Department of Social Services to design an online screening tool that can be used by application assisters throughout the state. This online screener is available at www.cafoodresource.org in English and will be launched in Spanish in October 2009. Potential applicants can use this tool anonymously. Application assisters, however, are encouraged to sign on using a password so that they can use the administrative functions. To request a user name for this online tool, email foodstamps@cafoodbanks.org.

Paper Prescreening Tools

Sometimes, outreach providers do not have access to computers where they can use electronic or online screening and application tools such as the ones in this section. It is tempting to rely on income guidelines when these tools are not available. But, for families with at least one elderly or disabled household member or a person who is undocumented but contributes to their household's income, the income guidelines may not be sufficient due to special rules and the prorating of benefits. For this reason, it is always a good idea to have a paper prescreening tool and paper applications. Paper prescreening tools are located at <http://www.myfoodstamps.org/screeningtool.html>

County Online Self-screener

A growing number of California's county food stamp offices are creating their own food stamp self-screener. Riverside, San Bernardino, Merced and Stanislaus counties let clients conduct a self-screen online before submitting an online application at <http://www.c4yourself.com>. San Francisco County allows its clients to self-screen themselves online at <https://benefitssf.org>. Before starting your food stamp outreach program, ask your county if they have a screening tool that they prefer. For more on these and other computer eligibility systems see Chapter Eight of this toolkit.

USDA's Online Prescreening Tool

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has developed an online screening tool, but unfortunately it is not a good place to determine potential eligibility for Californians due to (1) special laws in California that prevent people on Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and the

supplement provided by California's State Supplementary Payment (SSP) from receiving food stamps, and (2) a California program offering food stamps to certain immigrants not eligible for federal food stamps. It is better to use the online screening tool developed just for California at www.cafoodresource.org.

Important note about screening tools: All prescreening tools are updated every October, as this is when the USDA releases new income guidelines. Sometimes, these tools are updated more frequently due to policy changes. Therefore, when using a screening tool, frequently update your tool by returning to <http://www.myfoodstamps.org> and remind people that they should consider applying even if it looks like they may not be eligible. Only food stamp offices can determine food stamp eligibility.

Food Stamp Outreach & Access Toolkit

Chapter Four: **Income, Exemptions & Deductions**

If your organization is providing application assistance to food stamp applicants, you will find that one of the most complicated parts of the application process is understanding how to count income, exemptions and deductions. Though using one of the prescreening options highlighted in Chapter Four will help you maneuver these rules, it is helpful to understand some basic points.

Understanding the Household Unit: The Food Stamp Program is based on a central notion of a household. A “household” is a group of people who “purchase and prepare food together.” There may be more than one household living in a home, even if some of these people are related. However, there are several rules associated with who must and who cannot be included in the household. It is important in order to understand these rules when helping someone apply for food stamps.

- All people who purchase and prepare food together, and can prove this, regardless of whether they are related must be in the same food stamp household.
- People who are married or “present themselves as married” (meaning they have lived together for a period of time or have children together) and live together must be in the same food stamp household regardless of whether they currently purchase and prepare food together. If a married couple lives apart, they must prove that they are separated in order to apply as separate households.
- All children under 22 years of age living with their parents must be included in the food stamp household regardless of whether they purchase and prepare food together.

The only exception to these rules is for people who receive Supplemental Security Income/State Supplementary Payment (SSI/SSP) in California. These people are ineligible for food stamps and they are excluded from the food stamp household.

When someone lives in the home, but is not in the food stamp household, their name, age and relationship are still required to be listed in the application. No other information about these people will be required.

Whose Income Counts and How it Counts: When assisting people to determine whether they might be eligible for food stamps, it is helpful to have an idea of whose income counts and how. However, only a county eligibility worker can determine how or whether to count certain income. Here are some basic rules:

Gross Income: If there is no one in the household who is disabled or elderly, the household income must fall below the gross income limits. In California, the gross income limit is 130% of the federal poverty guidelines. The gross income charts change every October to reflect the changes in the federal poverty guidelines. Below is a list of the income that must be included when considering gross income.

- All earned and unearned income from all categorically eligible members of the food stamp household except income that is paid in court ordered child support.
- A prorated portion of earned and unearned income received from all categorically ineligible people in the food stamp household. People who are categorically ineligible for food stamps but whose prorated income must be counted include: (1) disqualified drug felons (see [Glossary](#)), (2) unqualified immigrants (see Appendix D), or (3) sanctioned adult household members (see [Glossary](#)).
- Remember that for the purposes of gross income, do not count income from SSI/SSP recipients and other people who live in the home but are not in the food stamp household. See Glossary for more information about “cash out.”
- To prorate the income of the categorically ineligible household members, divide the total number of people who are categorically eligible for food stamps by the total number of people who are in the food stamp household.

$$\text{Adjusted income} = \frac{\text{Total \# of eligible household members}}{\text{Total \# of people in the household}} \times \text{Income of ineligible household members}$$

Once calculated, the gross income test can be applied. Remember, only households without an elderly or disabled household member need to pass the gross income test.

Gross Income Chart for October 1, 2009- September 30, 2010

# of Categorically Eligible People in Household	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Prorated Monthly Income is Less Than	\$1,174	\$1,579	\$1,984	\$2,389	\$2,794	\$3,200	\$3,605	\$4,010

Net Income: All households must pass the net income test. Calculating the net income is complicated, and should not be attempted without the use of a food stamp calculator suggested in Chapter Four. Still, it is helpful to understand the basics of how net income is determined. Deductions considered when calculating the net income are below.

- Earned Income Deduction:** 20% of all earned income.
- Standard Deduction:** The Standard Deduction is the amount that is subtracted from each household’s gross income (after earned income deduction) based on how many people are in the home. Below is a chart to explain.

Standard Deduction October 1, 2009 – September 30, 2010

Household Size	1,2,3	4	5	6+
Standard Deduction	\$141	\$153	\$179	\$205

- c. **Dependent Care Deduction:** All documented expenses for the care of children or disabled or elderly adults that are required in order to allow a member of the food stamp household to go to work.
- d. **Medical Deduction:** Any documented out-of-pocket expenses over \$35 for disabled or elderly member of the food stamp household.
- e. **(Excess) Shelter Deduction:** There are various ways in which shelter costs can be calculated based on the food stamp household composition:

Homeless Shelter Deduction: For homeless people, a shelter deduction of \$143 plus additional documented expenses (excess shelter deduction) are considered.

Standard Method for Shelter Deduction: For most households, the shelter deduction is calculated in the following way:

1: Add all of the housing costs including rent, insurance, mortgage and taxes for the primary residence. Note: If the housing costs are paid by someone in the household who is categorically ineligible for the program (see [Glossary](#)), then the housing costs are prorated before they are deducted. Proration is determined by dividing the number of categorically eligible household members by the total number of household members. As a consequence, the deduction is less.

2: Determine whether the household qualifies for the Standard Utility Allowance (SUA), Limited Utility Allowance (LUA) or Telephone Utility Allowance (TUA). The Glossary explains these terms. Below is a chart of these deductions.

October 1, 2009 – September 30, 2010

Utility Cost	SUA	LUA	TUA
Deduction	\$287	\$88	\$20

3: Calculate the “shelter cost difference” by adding the housing costs and the utility allowance for which the household qualifies together and subtracting from the “adjusted income”.

$$\text{Shelter cost difference} = \text{Adjusted income} - (\mathbf{a} + \mathbf{b} + \mathbf{c} + \mathbf{d})$$

4: For most households, calculate the Shelter Deduction by taking either the shelter cost difference or the maximum shelter deduction of \$459. For households with an elderly or disabled household member, deduct the entire shelter cost difference from the adjusted income.

Once the shelter deduction has been subtracted from the adjusted income, the net income calculation is complete. If the food stamp household has an income higher than the net income limits listed below, it is not eligible. This is true even if the household passed the gross income test.

Net Income Chart for October 1, 2009- September 30, 2010

# of Categorically Eligible People in Household	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Calculated Net Income is less than	\$903	\$1,215	\$1,526	\$1,838	\$2,150	\$2,461	\$2,773	\$3,085

Self Employment Income: Remember, not all money earned while self-employed is counted as income. Self-employed individuals may deduct their documented business expenses or 40% of their earnings (whichever is more) in order to determine their net self-employment income to be included in the application.

Budgeting For Benefits:

When determining benefits, the county will calculate expected income for the quarter by adding the total expected income for the current and next two months and dividing to determine monthly average amount.

Example: A mother with three children applies for food stamps on September 15. She reports that her unemployment insurance benefit (UIB) will stop by the end of the month. She has just received \$210 in UIB and is expected to receive one last check sometime at the end of the month. She does not have any other source of income and does not expect any changes in the next two months.

Quarter (application month)	September	October	November
Income	\$420	\$0	\$0
Income Averaging	$\$420 \div 3 = \140		
Budgeted Income	\$140	\$140	\$140

5. Verification

Some details of the application require verification; however, there are usually several options regarding the types of verification that can be used. The applicant is required to provide this information or the case will be denied for “failure to provide.” Community application assisters can play an important role in assisting the applicant to secure necessary documents and ensure they understand the options they have when submitting these. Many CBOs provide clients with assistance in securing verification documents before submitting the application or before the interview. If additional information is needed, the worker will let the applicant know during the interview or through a Notice of Action (NOA).

It should be noted that this process should not keep the application from being submitted in a timely manner. Verifications are not required to submit an application. It is important to note that county eligibility workers will also run the applicant’s information through various computer systems to do a secondary verification of information provided.

6. Eligibility Determination

Once the interview and verification are complete, the county will determine eligibility and send a letter. If the applicant does not comply with requests for an interview or submission of verification within thirty days, the county may deny the application. The applicant must receive a letter of determination stating the reason for denial and information about how to appeal the finding.

Applicants have the same rights, regardless of their county of residence. The California Department of Social Services provides a list of the rights and responsibilities food stamp applicants. For the full list see <http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/foodstamps/PG873.htm>. To view the federal list of rights see http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/applicant_recipients/rights.htm. A summary of these rights are below.

The Finger Image

California law requires that each food stamp recipient be entered into the State Finger Image System (SFIS) before they are approved for their second year of benefits or prior to that date if they come into the food stamp office. Most counties require the applicant and other adult members of the household to come into the office in order to complete the SFIS requirement prior to finalizing the eligibility process.

Waiving the Face-to-Face Interview



Federal law requires that each applicant be interviewed by a county or state employee prior to being approved for benefits. Now, in California and across the country, counties can waive the face-to-face interview for any applicant, regardless of hardship. However, because many counties have not yet exercised this option, many clients do not know that they can request a phone interview. Because there is no place on the paper application to request it, some counties use a *Phone Interview Request or Hardship Card*

that can be attached to the front of an application to alert county caseworkers that an applicant is requesting a phone interview and document the best times and phone number(s) to reach that applicant. Use of this tool has helped educate clients about this option and increased the likelihood that they will be granted phone interviews.

In addition to offering phone interviews as a convenience to applicants, all counties must waive the-face-to-face interview if all members of the applying household who are over 60 or disabled are unable to come into the office. For sample Hardship Cards see http://www.myfoodstamps.org/pdf_files/hardshipcard02.pdf, and Santa Clara County's Hardship Waiver form at http://www.myfoodstamps.org/pdf_files/SCHardship.pdf.

Expedited (Emergency) Food Stamps

Households with very low incomes and few resources may be eligible for expedited service, or "emergency food stamps." Applicants qualifying for this service receive benefits within three *calendar days* of applying. A household qualifies for expedited food stamp benefits by meeting at least one of the following conditions:

- Household gross monthly income is less than \$150, and the total value of "liquid resources" such as cash or checking and savings accounts is less than \$100.
- Housing costs for the month are more than the sum of the household's liquid resources and gross monthly income.

Expedited food stamps are issued for the month of application and sometimes for the next month as well. There is no limit to the number of times a household may apply for expedited service. Whenever conducting outreach and out-of-office screenings, be sure to advise applicants to ask about their eligibility for expedited food stamps, as not everyone who should qualify is always notified by the food stamp office. As with a regular food stamp application, an authorized representative may apply on behalf of a household. Proof of identity, address, and a signature are the only verifications required to receive expedited benefits.

Note that migrant and seasonal farm workers are also eligible for expedited service, with a separate set of requirements. For more on the qualifications needed for migrant and seasonal workers to receive these benefits see the California Food Stamp Guide at http://www.foodstampguide.org/?page_id=107

Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) Card



Food stamp benefits are now distributed through an electronic debit card called an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card. In California, the card is called the "Golden State Advantage Card." For more information about EBT, visit <http://www.ebtproject.ca.gov>. For information about becoming an EBT vendor, visit <http://www.ecologycenter.org/ebt/>. Also available is "An Advocates Guide To EBT", co-authored by the Alameda County Community Food Bank and Consumer's Union, online at <http://www.consumersunion.org/finance/ebt/ebt-rpt1.htm>.

Authorized Representatives

A household may choose an authorized representative to apply for food stamps on their behalf. The authorized representative provides the required household information at the interview and can be a relative, friend, agency worker, or anyone the applicant chooses to represent them. However, soup kitchens or shelters that accept food stamps may not serve as authorized representatives. To designate an authorized representative, the head of household should write a note to the food stamp office that gives permission for the person of their choosing to serve as the authorized representative of the household for the application process. For more on the regulations regarding authorized representatives, see the California Food Stamp Guide at http://www.foodstampguide.org/?page_id=84. Please note that being an authorized representative is not an allowable activity for Food Stamp Outreach funds through the state Outreach and Access Improvement Plan.

Translation Services

All county food stamp offices must provide written materials and free translation services to language groups that comprise at least five percent of the county population. Additionally, food stamp offices must have bilingual staff competent in any language comprising at least five percent of the food stamp caseload in their jurisdiction. Outreach programs may find need, however, for additional services or materials. Please see <http://www.myfoodstamps.org/materials.html> for copies of materials in English and Spanish. English- and Spanish-speaking clients may call the Food Stamp Information Line at 1-877-847-3663 to learn about eligibility and application procedures in their counties. Additionally, USDA Food and Nutrition Services offers free outreach information in many languages at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/outreach/default.htm>.

Immigration Status Reporting

Food stamp advocates can help potential applicants understand that children of undocumented non-citizens may qualify for food stamps if these children are citizens or a legal resident. This may raise the concern that undocumented parents applying on behalf of their children might be reported to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and face deportation. However, parents applying on behalf of their children need only provide proof of citizenship for those children. The food stamp office should *not* ask about the immigration status of anyone in the household applying on behalf of eligible citizens, or about other non-eligible members of the household. Anyone applying who is unable or unwilling to provide proof of citizenship will be classified as an “ineligible alien,” and the food stamp office should not assume undocumented status for these persons or share this classification with ICE. For more on the rules of applying for food stamps as an immigrant, see Appendix D or download http://www.nilc.org/ce/nonnilc/imm_eligibility_food_stmps_CA_2006-1-11.pdf

Appeals Process

Any food stamp applicant or recipient can request a fair hearing to any action that affects their benefits. The request should be made within 90 days of the action the household wishes to appeal, and can be made in person, by telephone, or in writing. Appeals in writing are best and only need to include the request for a hearing and, briefly, the reason (e.g., “I was not given the correct amount of food stamps”). The state agency should respond by organizing a hearing, but

must accommodate the schedule of the applicant or recipient. Outreach projects can assist in the appeal process by informing people of their right to a fair hearing, helping to track the appeal time, date and case number, and even by making the appeal on behalf of the applicant. Generally speaking, the appeals process is best handled by legal services. Written fair hearing requests should be sent to the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) State Hearings Division.

Applicants can also seek assistance by contacting free legal services. If they are elderly, the best place to start is with California Legal Assistance Hotline at (800) 222-1753. All others can contact local legal aid. Locations and contacts for many are located at <http://www.lsn.net>.

Food Stamp Outreach & Access Toolkit

Chapter Six: Client Rights

Rights and Responsibilities

The California Department of Social Services provides a list of the rights and responsibilities food stamp applicants. For the full list see <http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/foodstamps/PG873.htm>. To view the federal list of rights see http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/applicant_recipients/rights.htm. Regardless of whether the application is paper or online, applicants should be informed they have the right to:

- Receive an application when they ask for it.
- Turn in an application the same day they receive it.
- Receive their food stamp benefits (or be notified that they are not eligible for the program) within 30 days after they turn in their application.
- Be screened for and receive expedited food stamp benefits within three days, if eligible.
- Not be asked to answer questions unrelated to the program for which they are applying.
- Withdraw their application.
- Apply and participate without including immigrant members of the household.
- Receive assistance in their language without having to provide their own translator.
- Have a fair hearing if they disagree with any action taken on their case.

Note: If applicants believe they have been denied food stamps or had their benefits cut or discontinued for inappropriate reasons, they have the right to a fair hearing and should be referred to legal services. It might be tempting to help that person by resubmitting an application for food stamps, but doing so may prolong the wait for services the household needs urgently.

Application Standards

Federal and State statutes dictate certain requirements for food stamp application materials and procedures in order to ensure full disclosure to applicants about their rights and obligations in the process. Some of the more important elements all food stamp application forms must include are:

- Notification that the information provided by the applicant will be verified and the incorrect information may lead to disqualification for food stamps and possibly legal penalties.
- A description of the expedited services program, with notification of the right to immediately file the application as long as it contains the applicant's name, address, and signature.

- A complete nondiscrimination statement, with instructions for filing a complaint of discrimination to the USDA.
- Notice of the right to file on the same day the household contacts the food stamp office.

Additionally, signs in the food stamp office must notify applicants of the right to file on the same day and the processing standards for applications. In California, the application and all legal forms used in the program must be translated into 22 languages.

Federal Statutes that Apply to Food Stamp Applications

Food stamp applications fall under the regulation of several federal statutes. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination on the basis of most personal background factors, including language and nationality. The U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services and Agriculture jointly decreed in 2000 that this means states may not seek immigration information about non-applying members of a household. Applications also fall under the Privacy Act, which requires informed consent before using information from an application in any computer matching system. To protect privacy, non-applicants in a household are not required to provide a social security number when other members of the household are applying for services. All households applying for food stamps should be provided with information about their privacy rights, as well as a description of how the information they submit will be used.

Application Policies

Food stamp offices are required to follow certain guidelines when accepting and processing applications. To protect client rights, the food stamp office must:

- Accept applications submitted in person, by mail, or by fax. Electronic signatures and documents should be accepted when appropriate.
- Provide a hard copy of the application information and the opportunity for the household to review the information that was recorded electronically when applying via an online application system at a food stamp office.
- Advise applicants that an interview is not required before filling out an application, and that they may file an incomplete application that need only include their name, address, and signature.
- Encourage households to file an application the same day they contact the office.
- Mail an application to any household on the same day it is requested.
- Provide a notice with examples of the types of documents required for verification.
- Inform applicants of the right to designate an authorized representative if they indicate they may have difficulty applying for food stamps.

To learn more about the full rights and responsibilities of clients and food stamp offices, or if you have questions, see <http://www.dss.cahw.net/civilrights/PG597.htm>

Food Stamp Outreach & Access Toolkit

Chapter Seven: **County Computer Eligibility Systems**

California has four computer eligibility systems and each one works differently enough to impact the application process and affect how counties and their partners can work together. Some of the eligibility systems have recently added online systems that allow the public to apply for food stamps through the internet.

Interim Statewide Automated Welfare System (ISAWS)

ISAWS is currently in 35 (mostly rural) counties but is being phased out. Counties using ISAWS are in the process of switching to C-IV. The system is operated by Health and Human Services Agency Data Center. More information: <http://www.isawsconsortium.org/>

Statewide Automated Welfare System Consortium-IV (C-IV)

C-IV is currently used in Merced, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Stanislaus counties. It will be integrated with ISAWS counties (for a total of 39) by early 2010. For more information, visit <http://www.c-iv.org/>.

A project of the Consortium-IV, *C4Yourself* is an online application system that allows applicants in Merced, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Stanislaus counties to send in their applications online. As counties using ISAWS switch to C-IV, this online application system will be available to residents of additional counties. *C4Yourself* development was funded by a USDA grant. For more information visit <http://www.c-iv.org/C4YourselfOverview.shtml> and <https://www.c4yourself.com>.

Los Angeles Eligibility, Automated Determination, Evaluation & Reporting (LEADER) System

Although not a statewide system, this eligibility system used in Los Angeles County is the largest of its kind in the country. For more information see <http://www.ladpss.org/>.

CalWORKs Information Network (CalWIN)

Now fully deployed in 19 of California's larger counties, CalWIN manages information and program determinations for a broad range of the State's social services programs. For more information, visit <http://www.calwin.org/>.

BenefitsSF

Intended for residents of San Francisco County, BenefitsSF is an online application system that allows people to complete an anonymous eligibility prescreening for both food stamps and MediCal and to submit online applications for those programs. Users can create an account to save and resume applications. The system development was funded by a USDA grant. For more information visit <https://benefitssf.org/>.

Food Stamp Outreach & Access Toolkit

Chapter Eight: Outreach Supports and Resources

There are a few essential food stamp outreach program supports that can help organizations to begin or improve their outreach programs. For more information about these food stamp outreach tools, you can visit <http://www.myfoodstamps.org>.

Food Stamp Information Line – Línea de Información



1-877-847-FOOD
1-888-9-COMIDA

The Food Stamp Information Line is a statewide toll-free phone number offering callers information about how to apply for food stamps in their county. This pilot information line was launched in March 2006 as a partnership between the California Department of Social Services, the California Department of Public Health's Network for a Healthy California, the California Association of Food Banks and partner organizations, Professional Exchange Services Corporation, various 2-1-1 organizations and county food stamp offices. For more information, contact CAFB at foodstamps@cafoodbanks.org.

Food Stamp Outreach Web Tool: www.myfoodstamps.org



- Apply for Food Stamps
- About Outreach
- Information Line
- Outreach Guide
- Funding For Outreach
- Outreach Essentials
- FSP In the News
- Research and Stats
- About This Site
- Contact us

In 2007, CAFB partnered with the Congressional Hunger Center (CHC) to create www.myfoodstamps.org, a comprehensive resource for outreach workers, food assistance advocates, and potential program clients in California. Visit today to learn about eligibility rules, outreach strategies, statistics and trends in food insecurity, the anti-hunger efforts of local organizations and governments, and how you can help end hunger in California.

In 2008, CAFB once again partnered with CHC to produce a Spanish-language version of this website available at <http://www.misalimentos.org>.

California Food Stamp Guide

Whether you are applying for food stamps or helping someone else apply, the California Food Stamp Guide (<http://www.foodstampguide.org>) is a useful tool with search features that help you find relevant federal and state legislation. You can also browse by topic to read detailed but accessible overviews of the regulations related to various stages of the application process.

Benchmark Institute Training and Listserv



Providing outreach training and hosting the state's outreach listserv, Benchmark Institute has become a valuable resource for outreach practitioners across the state. To sign on to the listserv and receive notice of the annual training, go to

<http://fs10.formsite.com/CAFB/form907773838/index.html>.

Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) Toolkit

FRAC offers an extensive Guide to Food Stamp Outreach for advocates, online at http://www.frac.org/html/federal_food_programs/programs/fsoutreachprg.html. You may also fill out an order form at <http://www.frac.org/pdf/flyerfsp.pdf> to buy a hard copy. If you are a Food Stamp Outreach Coordinator, FRAC's e-newsletter is an invaluable source of the most up-to-date information from across the country (sign-up is free).

USDA Outreach Website

The USDA's website on the Food Stamp Program includes information on outreach strategies, outreach flyers and brochures you can order for free, and an outreach toolkit. They also provide radio and television Public Service Announcements (PSAs) available for download and use: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/default.htm>.

California and Federal Food Stamp Regulations

Sometimes it is necessary to clarify questions about eligibility or program procedures by going directly to the regulations. The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) and USDA provide the complete regulations for online at <http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/ord/PG241.htm> and <http://www.fns.usda.gov/FSP/rules/Regulations/default.htm>.

Current Food Stamp Outreach Partners

For a current list of the food stamp outreach partners working with the [Network](http://networkforahealthycalifornia.net) for a Healthy California, visit <http://networkforahealthycalifornia.net/outreach>.

California County Welfare Departments

CDSS provides a list with the contact information for the local welfare or social service office where people can apply for food stamps in each county <http://www.cdss.ca.gov/foodstamps/PG839.htm>.

Food Stamp Outreach & Access Toolkit

Chapter Nine: Outreach Materials

There is a growing set of materials available to support food stamp outreach efforts in California and beyond. Below are some materials that are available for free.

USDA Outreach Materials

The USDA has a new site where you can order or download outreach materials. Go to <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/default.htm> and select the third item on the list entitled “Food Stamp Materials for Order or Download.” The USDA also offers radio and television PSAs for use by state and local programs. To request a copy of a television PSA, send an email to SNAPoutreach@fns.usda.gov.

CAFB Food Stamp Outreach Materials Library

CAFB has compiled a library useful outreach materials created by our subcontracting agencies. Because they were created, in part, with USDA funds, any of them may be used as a template. Many of the materials are available in multiple languages at <http://www.myfoodstamps.org/materials.html>.

California Food Policy Advocates Outreach Materials

California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA) publishes several guides and information sheets that may be helpful for food stamp outreach. They are available for order online http://www.cfpa.net/foodstamps/kit/outreach_material_descriptions.htm.

Making America Stronger: U.S. Food Stamp Programs

On the 30th anniversary of the 1977 Food Stamp Act, the [Center on Budget and Policy Priorities](#) produced **Making America Stronger**. This short film commemorates the 30th anniversary of the reforms achieved by the Act by telling the story of how food stamps dramatically reduced severe hunger in our country, how the program continues to help Americans in need, and how this essential program can achieve more. Watch the video online at <http://www.myfoodstamps.org/FoodStampVideo.html>

Food Stamp Telenovela: *La Flor del Sin Nombre*

A USDA-supported collaboration between UC Berkeley and the California Institute for Rural Studies, **La Flor del Sin Nombre** is a Spanish-language hour-long telenovela that promotes improved nutrition and educates about food stamp access. Watch the telenovela online on YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ra5I7V4KQR8>.

The Business Case for Increasing Food Stamp Participation

Why should your local businesses care about food stamps? The Business Case for Increasing Food Stamp Participation, published by the USDA, explains that one reason is that it helps the local economy, as well as the clients. In your effort to involve a wide variety of people in your

outreach efforts, be sure to use economic arguments to convince business leaders and other stakeholders. Available at: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/outreach/business-case.htm>

Toolkit for Elected Representatives and Community Organizers

The Outreach Toolkit for Elected Representatives and Community Organizers is a comprehensive document that provides information and tools to help you engage your elected officials and give your outreach campaign some publicity. It can be downloaded from http://www.myfoodstamps.org/pdf_files/OutreachOffs.pdf.

Successful Food Stamp Innovations

Successful Food Stamp Innovations, compiled by the American Public Human Services Association, offers case studies of innovations in the Food Stamp Program that are simultaneously increasing participation and program integrity. These case studies show what states across the nation are doing to improve efficiency in the Food Stamp Program. Food Stamp Outreach Coordinators can use this in their advocacy for administrative changes on the local level. Download at:

<http://www.aphsa.org/Policy/Doc/Successful-Food-Stamp-Innovations.pdf>

Food Stamp Office Resource Kit

The Food Stamp Office Resource Kit has been shipped to most of California's 58 counties; the kit includes the "Good Food TV" video in VHS and DVD formats and a kiosk housing a poster, bilingual recipe cards and brochures in English and Spanish.

The Kit brings nutrition education into food stamp offices to provide clients with demonstrations, tips and recipes that will help them purchase and prepare low-cost nutritious meals and snacks for themselves and their families. This information, combined with the increased food purchasing power of food stamps and the myriad of other services and community activities, will promote better health among low-income Californians. You can view the English and Spanish versions of the 20 minute video and the other components of the resource kit by visiting <http://www.goodfoodtv.org/>.

Food Stamp Outreach & Access Toolkit

Chapter Ten: Other Government Benefit Programs

Many food stamp users may be enrolled in a number of other government benefit programs, or may at least be eligible for additional services. It helps when doing food stamp outreach to be knowledgeable of the full scope of social support services of which food stamps are but one important part.

We recommend studying the chart on government benefit programs included on the next page for a basic overview of the different programs. For a more in-depth description, see the federal government webpage on social security programs at <http://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/progdesc/sspus/>.

Linking Food Stamp Outreach to Other Outreach Efforts

Because many people enrolled in other government benefits programs may be eligible for food stamps, the opportunity exists to link outreach efforts for those programs with food stamp outreach. When done properly, this networking of outreach efforts can be effective in reaching new clients, but it requires careful oversight to ensure proper training so that outreach referrals to benefit services are made correctly.

For a list of potential areas for linking outreach and suggested resources for guidance, see the myfoodstamps.org page at: <http://www.myfoodstamps.org/FSOother.html>.

SSI/SSP and Food Stamps in California

SSI/SSP recipients are not eligible for food stamps in California. However, food stamp outreach practitioners still encounter many SSI/SSP households who might be food insecure. Some of these clients might also be housing insecure or homeless, in which case they should at least be eligible for a Restaurant Meals Allowance. For more information on SSI/SSP and food stamp benefits in California, please see Appendix C.

Government Benefits Chart

	TANF CalWORKs (Title IV A.)	Social Security (Title II)	Supplemental Security Income (Title XVI)	General Assistance or General Relief	Food Stamps	Medicare (Title XVIII)	Medicaid Medi-Cal (Title XIX)
Category Eligibility (Who)	Child w/o parental support or care Living with caretaker relative Depnived = - death - absence - unemployment - incapacity	Aged/Blind/Disabled & their dependent children; Aged/Blind/Disabled widows, widowers, divorced spouses or insureds	Aged/Blind/ Disabled	Single Adults Some families	Household = people who buy and prepare food together	- 65 years old and eligible for SSA or RIR retirement (through spouse or self); - Disabled and have received Title II disability benefits for 24 months - 50+ and disabled widow/widower receiving SSA through spouse for 2 years - End-stage kidney disease	- Linked to: CalWORKs, SSI - Pregnant women & children - CalWORKs/SSI eligible (but not receiving); - Categorically eligible but not financially eligible for CalWORKs or SSI
Financial Eligibility (Need)	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Where to Apply	CWD	Social Security Field Office http://www2.socalsecurity.gov or 1-800-772-1213	Social Security Field Office http://www2.socalsecurity.gov or 1-800-772-1213	CWD	CWD http://www.dhs.ca.gov/etw/foodstamp/CSSTZ.html	Social Security Field Office http://www.socalsecurity.gov 1-800-772-1213	CWD
In Home Supportive Services		Unemployment Insurance Benefits	State Disability Insurance	Foster Care Benefits	Earned Income Credits	Cash Assistance Program for Immigrants	Veteran's Benefits
Category Eligibility (Who)	- Blind, disabled, or over 65 - Need homemaker chore services to remain safely in home.	- Unemployed thru no fault of their own - Available for work - Physically able to work - Earned enough wages during employment base period	- Cannot work for a temporary period due to illness or injury not related to work or pregnancy - Earned enough wages during employment base period	Children — • removed from home b/c of abuse, neglect, or abandonment & in the care of a county child welfare agency; • adjudicated delinquent and ordered into placements • voluntarily placed by their parents, or • living with non-related legal guardians.	- State and Federal Income Tax Filers (even if no taxes owed) - Earned Income Tax Credit for low income workers - Child & Dependent Care Tax Credit	- Blind/Disabled, or over 65 non-citizens who are not eligible for SSI - SSI application denied or in process	Warlike service and permanently & totally disabled or 65 years old spouse, widower, children of veil
Financial Eligibility (Need)	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No, but need must be shown for some cost free care and other services
Where to Apply	CWD	Employment Development Department https://eapn/4u/eodd.ca.gov or 1-800-480-3287	Employment Development Department https://eapn/4u/eodd.ca.gov or 1-800-480-3287	County Child Welfare Agency	Internal Revenue Service; State Franchise Tax Board	CWD 1-877-481-1044	Dept of Veterans Affairs (VA)

This chart was created by the Benchmark Institute, a leader in benefits training in California and the host of the Food Assistance Skills Training for organizations participating in California's Access Improvement Plan.

Food Stamp Outreach & Access Toolkit

Chapter Eleven: **Useful Websites**

USDA, Food and Nutrition Service's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

www.fns.usda.gov/snap/

This website includes information on outreach strategies, outreach flyers and brochures you can order for free, and an outreach toolkit.

Center for Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP)

www.cbpp.org

This site contains research on budget and tax policies. Under the Areas of Research section of the website, there is information on all types of federal assistance programs. To learn more about food stamp outreach, proceed to the Food Assistance category. To learn about how to coordinate with outreach efforts on the Earned Income Tax Credit, proceed to the Earned Income Credit category. To order a free toolkit on EITC for your organization, contact CBPP.

Food Research and Action Center (FRAC)

www.frac.org

The FRAC website features numerous comprehensive studies and toolkits for programs relating to food stamps and hunger issues. If you are a Food Stamp Outreach Coordinator, FRAC's e-newsletter is an invaluable source of the most up-to-date information from across the country (sign-up is free).

Bread for the World

www.bread.org

Bread for the World website's Take Action section recommends strategies for mobilizing your community for advocacy purposes, including sample letters to government leaders.

World Hunger Year (WHY)

www.worldhungeryear.org

WHY supports a number of projects and campaigns focused on combating the root causes of hunger and poverty around the world. In particular, see the USDA National Hunger Clearinghouse, a database of organizations promoting community-based solutions to hunger and poverty. Organizations may join the Clearinghouse, free of charge, to receive access to a central database, the National Hunger Hotline, and the Clearinghouse Connection newsletter.

Benchmark Institute

www.benchmarkinstitute.org

Benchmark Institute provides extensive information on legal matters pertaining to public benefits. Additionally, Benchmark Institute provides an annual food stamp outreach training.

California Association of Food Banks (CAFB)

www.cafoodbanks.org

The California Association of Food Banks offers information about hunger and poverty in addition to program and policy efforts to reduce hunger.

California Department of Social Services (CDSS)

www.cdss.ca.gov

The California Department of Social Services is the administering agency for the Food Stamp Program in California. On their website, you can find recent statistics, program information, forms and other useful particulars.

California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA)

www.cfpa.net

The California Food Policy Advocates plays a coordinating role for many legislative efforts to improve the Food Stamp Program in California. For information about upcoming legislation or Food Stamp Program analysis, this website is essential.

California Hunger Action Coalition (CHAC)

www.hungeraction.net

The California Hunger Action Coalition is a broad-based anti-hunger grassroots organization. CHAC organizes a day of action at the capital every year that is free for all participants. The website offers clear and simple ways to respond to hunger.

Food Stamp Outreach & Access Toolkit

Chapter Twelve: Questions to Answer Before Starting

You should try to figure out as much as you can by talking to other CBOs conducting food stamp outreach before talking to your county. To find out which CBOs are already doing outreach in your community, see the list in Appendix A. For additional information about your county's food stamp program, review the following websites:

County Survey: To see a copy of the annual survey conducted every year, go to: <http://www.cdss.ca.gov/research/PG351.htm>

County Website: To find your county's website page pertaining to food stamps, you can go to <http://www.myfoodstamps.org/apply.html> and select the county.

Once you have done your research, you should consider asking the following questions, or clarifying any answers you do have. Remember that requesting all of this information at once may not be the best strategy.

- 1. Who are the county staff involved with management of the Food Stamp Program and outreach in that county?**
 - What are their titles and the programs or program areas they work on?
 - Who will be your primary contact?
 - Will there be times that you would work directly with a district director (for the large counties)?
 - What is the best way to communicate with this staff person?
- 2. What eligibility system does the county use (CalWIN, LEADER, C-IV, ISAWS)?**
- 3. Does the county use multiple aid workers (eligibility workers that are qualified to approve applications for multiple programs) or single program specialists (who only determine eligibility for one program) or both depending on the situation?**
- 4. What are the current options that a person has to submit applications and complete the application process in the county?**

In Person:

- What are the procedures if someone comes to apply in person?
- Does this process vary by office?
- Are there rules about which offices a person should go to?
- If so, what are those rules?
- Does the process differ if the person is already receiving MediCal?
- Are there specific instructions for people applying for expedited food stamps?

Out of Office:

By Mail:

- Are there written instructions for submitting an application by mail?

- If a client prints an application off the state website or if they get a copy of an application at a local CBO, what is the best process for submitting the application to the county by mail?
- Does the county encourage mail-in applications? How?
- Does the county offer paper applications at its office?

By Phone:

- Does the county have a call center? If so, what services are offered through the call center and in what languages?
- Does the county have an IVR system? If so, what information can someone learn through the IVR system?
- Does the county encourage over-the-phone interviews? If so, what percentage of the applicants are offered an over-the-phone interview? What are the criteria for offering an over-the-phone interview in the county and does the county expect that this will change soon?
- What instructions should be given to someone wanting a phone interview?
- What are the challenges to securing the phone interview and has the county implemented strategies to overcome these challenges?

Online:

- Does the county have an online application? If so, what is the URL?
- What is the process for clients to submit their applications online?
- Is there a process to request phone interviews or submit documentation using the online application?
- After submitting online, what are the next steps?
- What services does the online application provide?
- Does this service allow expedited applicants to submit an application?

County Worker Outstation:

- Does the county outstation workers or have an internal outreach unit?
- If so, where, when and how often do workers go out?
- What do the county workers do when they are out?
- Does the county partner with CBOs to better utilize outreach workers while they are out? If so, how?
- Is there an opportunity for you to collaborate with CBO outreach efforts?

CBO Partnerships:

- Does the county partner with CBOs to increase the number of locations where people can apply for food stamps?
- If so, which CBOs?
- Do CBOs hand deliver, fax or send completed applications by secured server to the county?
- Do CBOs schedule interview appointments?
- Do CBOs submit supporting documents with the application on behalf of client?
- Do CBOs complete part one (DFA 285-A1) of the application? Do CBOs also submit the statement of facts and/or rights and responsibilities?
- Do CBOs use a prescreening or electronic application tool (like One-E-App or the CAFB's Food Stamp Application and Screening Tool)?
- What kind of training do you offer your CBO partners? How often?

5. **Does the county have a waiver of confidentiality form that they would prefer to be used by you or should you use a statewide one?**
6. **What will be the best strategies to ensure continuity and quality in the outreach effort?**
 - How should ongoing training be handled?
 - Would having regular meetings be useful?
 - Will the county be able to track outcomes of the cases, including denial codes, provided the CBO has waiver of confidentiality? How often?
7. **Are there target populations for whom the county would like to increase access?**
 - Has the county partnered with CBOs that have established relationships with those populations? If so, which CBOs?
 - Does the county have the translation services to reach the target populations?
8. **Has the county implemented recent policy changes that will increase access to the program? Below is a list that is relevant as of October 2009.**
 - **Narrow Categorical Eligibility:** Allows households with children under 18 to be eligible regardless of resources.
 - **Electronic Signature:** Allows people to sign their application or report documents using IVR, Web-based applications or other electronic tools.
 - **Over-the-Phone Interview:** Allows all applicants to complete their interviews over the phone.
 - **Waiver of Finger Image at Time of Interview:** Though adult members of the food stamp household are required to get their finger imaged in order to receive food stamps in California, the state allows counties to waive the finger image up to the second year of benefits.
9. **What is the county doing, if anything, to promote the new childcare deduction rules? If nothing, how can community partners assist with this?**
10. **Is there anything else that is important to know about how the Food Stamp Program works in this county?**

Food Stamp Outreach & Access Toolkit

Chapter Thirteen: Quarterly Reporting and Change Reporting

California requires a Quarterly Report to remain on the Food Stamp Program, federally known as SNAP. For most food stamp recipients a Quarterly Report, or QR7, will be required every three months. Each month, tens of thousands of people fall off the program because they do not submit a timely quarterly report; others find themselves having to pay back an overissuance resulting from a failure to submit a required change report. If conducting food stamp application assistance, it will be helpful to the county and to the applicant if you educate people of their responsibility to report. Here are the basics:

Benefits Calculated For Three Months: Food stamp benefits are issued at the same level for three months. Income/deductions are anticipated and averaged over three months, divided by three months then multiplied by 2.167 if income is biweekly or 4.33 if is weekly.

Mandatory Mid-Quarter Reporting Responsibilities: Regardless of whether a household is a Quarterly Report or Change Reporting household, there are certain circumstances that require the submission of a mid-quarter change report. These include:

- Change of address; and
- Able-Bodied Adults without dependents (ABAWD) hours decrease below 80 per month.

Voluntary Mid-Quarter Changes: Voluntary mid-quarter changes will only be acted upon if the change results in an increase in benefits.

County Initiated Changes: County initiated changes may decrease benefit amounts.

Exemptions From Quarterly Reports: Some households are exempt from submitting a QR-7 (homeless, seniors and/or disabled, migrant or seasonal farm workers). These households are considered Change Reporting (CR) households. The following must be reported within 10 days:

- Monthly-earned income starts, stops or changes by more than \$100;
- Monthly-unearned income starts, stops or changes by more than \$50;
- Changes in household composition (someone moves in or out);
- Change of address; or
- Resources exceed the \$2000 or \$3000 limit.

When a CR household reports changes, county workers:

- Have 10 days to act on the reported change; and,
- Must give a 10-day notice before taking any negative action.

CR households can use the form, DFA 377.5, Food Stamp Household Change Report, to report changes. Changes can be reported using this form in person or by phone. It is advisable that people receive confirmation of reporting the change so as to ensure that an overpayment is not assigned in error.