



PUTTING
**Healthy
Food**
ON THE TABLE



A PAID ADVERTISING SUPPLEMENT TO SACRAMENTO NEWS & REVIEW

Helping You Eat Healthy

CalFresh makes it easier to live better.

by Jeff Chinn

No one should go hungry. But still, many men, women and children go day-to-day without having enough to eat. For some, it's because they lost a job in the recession. For others, it's because medical bills or prescriptions are crippling their budgets. Whatever it is, many people are working to stretch every dollar and just make it through these tough times.

CalFresh is a program that aims to end hunger and provide access to healthier foods for low-income families. College students, senior citizens, returning veterans, working families — anybody needing assistance — can apply.

Formerly called Food Stamps, CalFresh is California's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) designed to help low-income individuals and families receive the healthy, fresh food they otherwise wouldn't be able to afford. More than 46 million people across the country have SNAP to thank for putting food on their table, according to the USDA Food and Nutrition Service.

The name change and rebranding from Food Stamps to CalFresh took place in 2008 in connection to former Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's push to counter obesity and promote a healthier lifestyle. California chose the name "CalFresh" to emphasize fresh food as a key to the program and to highlight the importance of agriculture to the state's economy.

There are 110,000 people eligible for benefits that aren't getting the help they need.

CalFresh aims to make it easier for Californians to live healthier lives, empowering them to eat better foods and take care of themselves. Whether standard cook-at-home items or plants and seeds to raise your own food are on the shopping list, CalFresh purchases are limited to food.



Better yet, some farmers markets accept CalFresh. This allows people to buy nutritious, locally grown food they may otherwise miss and increases business for those farmers.

Despite the existence of CalFresh, many who could be receiving benefits choose not to apply. A study of SNAP participation by the USDA found that only about half of all eligible Californians are enrolled in CalFresh. Sacramento County fares a bit better than others by having 72 percent of eligible recipients enrolled as of 2011, according to Sacramento County Department of Human Assistance. But, there are still hungry people in the Sacramento region that could be receiving aid. A study by the Food Research and Action Center shows there are 110,000 people eligible for benefits that aren't getting the help they need.

So, why aren't people who need help getting it? The stigmas attached to CalFresh are a key factor in preventing people from seeking aid. Some may see a stigma attached to the act of asking for help or think if they accept CalFresh, people will think less of them or that they have shown weakness.

The CalFresh program has been streamlined so benefits are put on an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card, also known as the Golden State Advantage card. This works like a debit card and eliminates embarrassing moments of delaying a supermarket line while pulling crumpled coupons out of a wallet or purse.

Since 2006, the number of CalFresh recipients in Sacramento County has nearly doubled, according to the county's DHA. The increase seen across the state is 93 percent, according to the California Food Policy Advocates, totaling to more than 3.8 million recipients statewide in 2011. But this number can and should be bigger.



Golden State Advantage Card

Receiving CalFresh is now easier than ever with the Golden State Advantage card, or Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card.

Your CalFresh benefits are automatically deposited to your EBT card each month and used like a

debit card at most grocery stores, neighborhood stores and farmers markets.

During checkout, swipe your card and enter your personal identification number (PIN). The amount spent will be deducted

from your monthly allotment.

If you qualify for CalFresh, you will receive the card in the mail. You will continue receiving CalFresh benefits on your EBT card for as long as you qualify.

Finding Hope When Everything Falls Apart

A family struggles to survive in the wake of challenges.

by Kendall Fields



In 2008, Kelly Smith's* life fell apart. Her 9-month-old son, Jake, stopped showing normal signs of development. He stopped babbling. He stopped smiling. He stopped laughing. He stopped responding to his name. The domino effect continued as the Smith family all became sick with what they thought was the stomach flu. But 5-year-old Emily didn't get better. She would wake up in the middle of the night screaming, her stomach bloated and hurting. Kelly knew something was terribly wrong and rushed her daughter to the hospital. Emily stumped doctor after doctor, as she lay in a hospital bed fighting for her life against a rare stomach virus. While Kelly took leave from her job to stay with her daughter in the hospital and worried about her son's development and her oldest daughter Katie's grades in school, her husband Darryl struggled to keep his contractor job in the shattered economy. Darryl took any hours he could to support his family, but it seemed like the more the Smiths needed money, the less jobs were available.

Kelly started using CalFresh so she wouldn't have to worry about how she was going to feed her family. With the burden of supporting her family lightened by CalFresh, Kelly made the tough decision to end her 18-year career working with autistic children. Now, she could dedicate her time to nursing her middle daughter back to health and monitoring her son for what she suspected were early signs of autism. Kelly had never felt more discouraged and alone. How would she take care of all three of her kids and be there for her husband? How would they pay these medical bills? "There were days where I just felt like I couldn't go on," Kelly says. "But ... I knew that where there is a will, there is a way." Kelly worked with a team of specialists and they were able to save Emily's life through a risky intestinal operation. Now, Kelly could focus on her son. Over the next two years, Kelly and Darryl took Jake to see several psychiatrists and doctors; the results of their visits were even more devastating than expected. Not only did

Jake exhibit the signs of non-verbal autism, but also through counseling and observation there was increasing concern that Darryl had Asperger's syndrome.

Kelly* started using CalFresh so she wouldn't have to worry about how she was going to feed her family.

Today, Kelly continues to be the backbone of her family and is still figuring out exactly how to make sure everyone is cared for. With CalFresh, Kelly knows at very least, her family has access to healthy, nutritious foods. The Smiths also frequent farmers markets, like the Oak Park Farmers Market, where Kelly can stock up on the family's favorites: berries, carrots and cauliflower. Kelly adds this fresh food is particularly important for the special diets in her family.

Though Kelly still faces constant challenges with her son's autism, her husband's Asperger's, Katie's grades and the complications from Emily's stomach virus, she says she is confident things will get better. She finds joy in little moments with her children who love the outdoors and says she has mastered the art of turning any outing into an adventure. Kelly urges others who may be struggling to feed their families to consider using CalFresh. "Even if you have a lot of pride and think 'I would never do that,' you should remember, 'This isn't something that was foreseen. This is an emergency that happened.'"

*Kelly, Darryl and their children's names and photos have all been changed to protect their privacy.

Sacramento County *By The Numbers*

Total number of families and individuals receiving CalFresh

Year	Households	Individuals
2008	60,313	148,867
2009	72,703	174,142
2010	81,464	192,532
2011	87,280	202,500

109,331
Children (ages 0-18 years)
Whose Families Receive
CalFresh Benefits

16,923
People 50+ Years
Old Receiving Cal-
Fresh Benefits

7,718
Average CalFresh
Applications Re-
ceived Per Month

Help For Seniors

Seniors in need can put healthy food on their table with CalFresh. There is no shame in asking for assistance, CalFresh is there for seniors who need it. Find out more below.

How does it work?

Benefits are issued through an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card and used like an ATM card at most grocery stores, neighborhood stores and farmers markets.

What can I buy?

CalFresh benefits can be used to purchase fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins and more.

Do I qualify?

If you're a senior on a limited income, you may be eligible. You can have savings, a house and cars and still qualify.

How do I apply?

You can choose to apply online at www.benefitscalwin.org or call your local CalFresh office.*

*See back page for more details on how to apply.



A Fresh Perspective

After losing her job in the recession, a woman changes her attitude about CalFresh. *by Mike Blount*

There was a sense of “shock and hopelessness,” says Linda I.*, speaking about losing her job at a nonprofit organization in 2009. Linda, 52, had always worked — for 30 years in multiple fields, in fact. But for the first time in her life, she wasn’t able to find employment anywhere. Linda found herself among 31 million other Americans, who lost their jobs since the recession began in late 2007.

“I didn’t have an extra income,” Linda says. “I used up my savings account, 401K and IRA while I was looking for work. I was receiving unemployment, but eventually that ran out too.”

Linda began going to food banks to put food on the table for her and her son. It wasn’t quite everything she needed — there was no dairy, produce or meat. As a single mother, Linda was thankful for the help, but she needed access to more food items. Still, applying for assistance was not something she was willing to consider. According to Linda, it was an issue of pride.

“I hadn’t had an open mind to it,” Linda explains. “In my generation, I think more so than now, there’s a little more stigma to being on assistance. My parents were a generation that went through harder times— with war and Depression and all of that — so there’s a mentality that was instilled [in me] that you do it on your own. You figure it out somehow.”

Linda recalls her father didn’t even take a Social Security check when he retired. Being on unemployment was especially hard for her, she says. With her situation steadily becoming drastic, Linda says she had a close friend recommend she reconsider applying for CalFresh. Feeling like she had nothing left to lose, Linda took her friend’s advice.

“The first time I used it, I was thrilled I was able to bring home fresh produce,” Linda says.

Linda adds her whole attitude about CalFresh changed. Beforehand, the mention of “assistance” would conjure up the shame of counting out paper coupons while a long line of

people behind sneer. The EBT card was convenient and discreet. Linda says she now cooks more healthy and balanced meals.

“My parents were a generation that went through harder times — with war and Depression and all of that — so there’s a mentality that was instilled [in me] that you do it on your own. You figure it out somehow.”

-Linda I.*

Linda stresses, “Definitely take advantage of CalFresh if you’re in need,” Linda says. “It’s hard enough to be unemployed, but to be starving and unemployed is really stressful. It will give you a little peace of mind.”

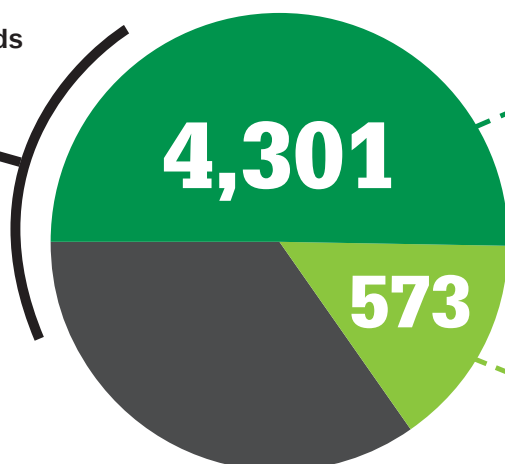
**Linda I.’s last name has been omitted to protect her privacy. Her photo has also been changed.*

Yolo County By The Numbers

Total number of households receiving CalFresh =

8,474

representing almost 17,009 individuals



households with members

under 18

or, 8,732 individuals

households with members

over 60

or, 630 individuals

Applications for food and nutrition assistance have increased

55%

since

2008;

while people receiving CalFresh on an on-going basis have increased almost

144%

during the same time period.

Taking Charge Of The Future

A mother ignores stereotypes and seeks help through CalFresh. *by Kendall Fields*

When Denise Leininger's 12-year-old daughter, who is also named Denise but goes by "Little D," started to ask her mom what she could do to earn money for food for their family, Denise knew she had to do something. In 2010, Denise lost her marketing job and struggled to support her daughter and herself.

"It felt like I lost everything and I just kept asking myself: 'How do I put food on the table?' or 'How do I live and take care of my daughter now?'" the Placer County resident recalls. Denise felt heartbroken and helpless as she watched Little D worry about adult problems that not even Denise knew how to solve. When Little D told her mom she was going to quit playing the sports she was so passionate about to save money, Denise knew it was time to seek help.

But Denise was hesitant to apply for government assistance programs, like CalFresh, because of stigmas perpetuated by society. "I just had low self esteem, I was worried about how I was going to be labeled or tagged because I needed help," Denise says, explaining her fear of being stereotyped like so many other low-income families.

In April 2010, Denise took charge of her future and applied for CalFresh. Once she realized what the program offered, she says, her stress was instantly alleviated.

"The CalFresh program is so easy to follow," Denise says, adding she hopes others will ignore the stigmas and seek help when they need it. "I wouldn't be successful if it weren't for this program."

In addition to being able to provide healthy food choices, the biggest benefit of the CalFresh program for Denise is seeing her daughter "just get to be a kid." "I'm just so excited to see what her future holds, to watch her grow into a young woman."

Now, Denise feels empowered and is driven to be a strong role model for Little D, who will be entering high school in the fall. She turned the loss of her job into an opportunity to start fresh and went back to school to study nursing. With the encouragement of her CalFresh caseworker, Denise is studying at American River College and gearing up to become an ER nurse.

"I'm lucky to have a [caseworker] who is so compassionate and really is there for me," Denise says. "I know that after I get through this chapter of my life, I will continue to talk to her."

"It felt like I lost everything and I just kept asking myself: 'How do I put food on the table?'"

-Denise Leininger

Denise's new sense of confidence has surely rubbed off on her daughter, who was recently accepted into her future high school's competitive AVID program to prepare for college.

Little D says she sees a big difference in her mom too, now that CalFresh has alleviated some of the burden of their living costs. "She's not as stressed out anymore." And, Little D adds she is proud of her mom for showing her with determination and resourcefulness, you can be successful.

Today, Denise and Little D's biggest worries are their GPAs and the possibility of going to college at the same time. "It's a great feeling to be here," Denise says, beaming. "It's humbling to look back and see where we were, where we are now and to think about where we are going."



Denise Leininger (left) and her daughter "Little D" (right).

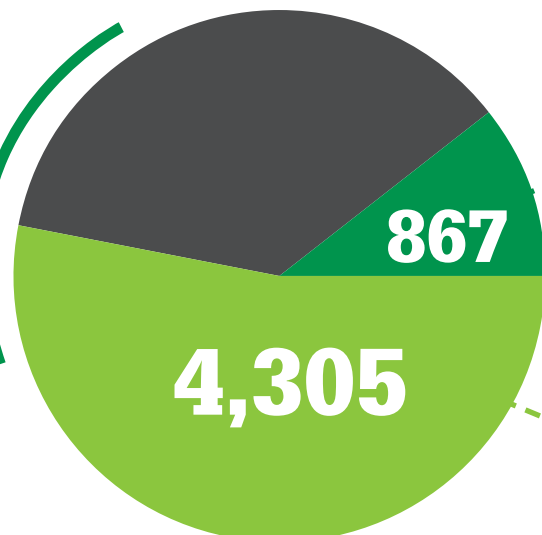
Photo: Priscilla Garcia

Placer County *By The Numbers*

Total number of households receiving CalFresh =

8,097

representing almost 20,000 individuals



households with members

over 55

or, 1,001 individuals

households with members

under 18

or, 12,915 individuals

Applications for food and nutrition assistance have increased

200%

since

2008;

while people receiving CalFresh on an on-going basis have increased almost

300%

during the same time period.

CalFresh Myths & Facts

Sacramento County caseworker
Elizabeth Oakland dispels common
myths about CalFresh.



- MYTH

CalFresh benefits are stamps or coupons that you must tear off and redeem in the checkout line.
- FACT

While CalFresh (formerly known as Food Stamps) used to come in coupon books, today they are distributed through a plastic EBT card that looks and works like a debit card in the grocery store.
- MYTH

You must go to the county welfare office for an interview to apply.
- FACT

You can apply for CalFresh online at www.benefitscalwin.org or you can request an application from the county where you reside to be mailed to you. The county will contact you for a telephone interview.
- MYTH

I can only use CalFresh to buy food at a grocery store.
- FACT

You can use CalFresh to buy food at markets, grocery stores and farmers markets who accept CalFresh Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards. Homeless individuals may qualify for the Restaurant Meals Program and use CalFresh to purchase meals.

- MYTH

College students do not qualify for CalFresh.
- FACT

CalFresh does have student eligibility rules; however, there are certain situations in which a student may be eligible.
- MYTH

People who are working cannot receive CalFresh.
- FACT

You can work and be eligible for CalFresh. The income and resources of each household member are used to determine the amount of CalFresh benefits you could receive.
- MYTH

I cannot get other government assistance if I receive CalFresh.
- FACT

You may qualify for CalFresh while receiving other government assistance. Your income from other programs may be used to determine the amount of CalFresh you'll receive.

ELIGIBILITY Who qualifies for CalFresh benefits?

If you have this gross monthly income or below, you could be eligible for benefits.



For each additional family member, add \$414



Creating A Healthier Lifestyle

Sacramento County Public Health Officer Dr. Olivia Kasiroye speaks about CalFresh, county health and her goals.

by Kendall Fields

What do you see as the biggest problem areas in Sacramento County in terms of health?

Obesity and access to healthy foods are among the biggest issues we are trying to combat. Recent studies show that obesity rates have tripled in the United States, particularly among children. And we know that if you have problems with childhood obesity, then you are more likely to have complications and other chronic conditions later in life.

There are so many factors that contribute to this obesity epidemic — the availability of food and beverages and the cost of the nutritious types of food compared to things like fast food, the lack of exercise and sedentary lifestyles among people in our community. And all of these factors are increased in low-income families.

How can CalFresh help these low-income families?

CalFresh is a great educational tool for these lower-income families, some of which don't even know what they are eating is bad [for them]. The overall nutrition education level in the community is not adequate and through the CalFresh program, we can foster good, healthy eating habits.

“My goal for the CalFresh program is to make the healthy choice the easy choice and to increase access to fruits and vegetables for everyone.”

Why should we start looking into our children's health and focusing specifically on childhood obesity?

We should start looking at our children because they are just forming their habits and we know habits get harder to break when you get older. The goal is to create good habits through education and access to nutritious foods.

How can we as a community combat the obesity epidemic?

It starts by realizing that it is a problem and being aware of the risks associated with obesity. Then people need to make changes at several levels. First they need to calculate their Body Mass Index (BMI) and find out if they are healthy. Then people need to take a look at their diets and lifestyle. They need to make healthier choices, stay away from bad foods and drinks, and start exercising. It's important to watch everything that you consume as far as nutrition goes. A 20-ounce bottle of soda has as much as 17 teaspoons of sugar.

People need to take advantage of resources around them as well. We have so many parks in Sacramento. They are low cost and are a nice opportunity for people to get outside and get active.

What are some of the benefits of good nutrition?

The biggest benefit is that you will have better health. You are less likely to develop complications such as diabetes and obesity. It's important for people to realize what they are eating directly affects their health. People need to be proactive.

What is your goal for the program?

My goal for the CalFresh program is to make the healthy choice the easy choice and to increase access to fruits and vegetables for everyone, so we can see a reduced rate of obesity and complications connected to it, and an overall improvement in county health.

Dear Readers:

I am proud to support continuing efforts by local stakeholders and advocates dedicated to preventing hunger and improving healthy food options throughout our region.

Information presented in this publication is designed to help shed light on a significant resource available in our community – CalFresh, formerly known as Food Stamps.

In this challenging economy, more and more people are forced to make difficult decisions about their household budgets and how best to feed themselves and their families. CalFresh is a nutritional assistance program that helps qualified individuals access healthy food, including children and senior citizens. In tough times, it might mean the difference between affording medication and a meal, health and hunger.

Many people may not realize that CalFresh is available as a supplemental nutritional assistance benefit. If you believe you might be eligible, and you’re looking for ways to acquire the food you and your family need, I encourage you to call 2-1-1 for more information, or visit www.benefitscalwin.org.

No one should go hungry. CalFresh can ensure that you and those you care about receive the nutrition they need.



Phil Serna
Sacramento County Supervisor



How Do You Apply?

CalFresh aims to increase access to healthy foods so you can stop worrying about your grocery bill and focus on improving your health and nutrition. In certain situations, you may qualify to receive emergency CalFresh within three days. Applying for CalFresh is easy.

Apply online at www.benefitscalwin.org or call to request a CalFresh application or find out where to apply in person:

Sacramento County
(916) 874-3100
(209) 744-0499

Placer County
(888) 385-5160

Yolo County
(855) 301-8524

