

Food Benefits

For Students

**SUCCESS STARTS
WITH THE BASICS**

● FIND OUT TODAY IF YOU QUALIFY FOR
NUTRITIONAL ASSISTANCE THROUGH CALFRESH



Get Help for Yourself and Your Community

Why It Matters



“Being hungry is a barrier to learning. CalFresh is the largest food assistance program in the nation and plays a critical role in ensuring that Californians, including students, can put enough food on their tables to live healthy and productive lives,” says California Health and Human Services Secretary Dr. Mark Ghaly. “These nutrition benefits support students’ ability to focus on their studies. I encourage students to visit:



www.getcalfresh.org/students
for a quick and easy application.”

● THE CALFRESH PROGRAM HELPS STUDENTS THRIVE

By Anne Stokes

According to a 2018 U.S. Government Accountability Office report, college costs have nearly doubled in recent decades, rising faster than federal and state aid. Nationwide, approximately one in three students experience food insecurity. Those numbers are higher in California where roughly 40% of University of California and California State University students make tough financial choices between school, housing and food. For those students, the CalFresh program can provide monthly financial assistance to put food on the table.

“There’s a stereotype of students living off of Top Ramen, but what we don’t talk about is students going without food,” says Jessica Bartholow, legislative policy advocate with the Western Center on Law and Poverty. “What the CalFresh program really does is it allows them to have more of a choice rather than to go without food or having to depend on a food pantry.”

Food insecurity—which the U.S. Department of Agriculture defines as a “lack of consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life”—can have a detrimental impact on grades and often contributes to dropout rates. Bartholow explains one of the best aspects of the CalFresh program is it provides basic food assistance that allows

students to shop for their own food at grocery stores, farmers’ markets and even on-campus eateries.

“This program removes a level of uncertainty from the experience of being a low-income college student,” she says. “(It) can give you some certainty that even though it may not be enough to meet all your food needs throughout the month, it’s still going to be a consistent value you can depend on from month to month.”

And it’s not just students themselves that benefit from CalFresh. Such federal funding can also help support businesses and generate economic activity. According to Bartholow, every

CalFresh dollar spent can generate approximately \$1.50 in economic impact because every dollar saved in food costs can be spent on other taxable items. She also estimates that every billion dollars in CalFresh benefits brought into the state can create 14,000 jobs.

“Every dollar not spent on food is a dollar that can be spent on other expenses that college students have, including tuition, books, travel to and from campus and other basic needs they may have,” she says. “When a person goes hungry because they can’t afford food, that means they’re turning away federal benefits that could be used to stimulate their local economy.”



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Jessica Bartholow

Legislative policy advocate with the Western
Center on Law and Poverty

Taking Advantage of Every Opportunity

● AN EXTENDED OPPORTUNITY STUDENT IN SACRAMENTO SAYS RECEIVING FOOD BENEFITS THROUGH CALFRESH IS “DEFINITELY A LIFESAVER”

By Krysta Scriptor

Paying for your own groceries is a sign of independence, but for students facing economic or social difficulties, it can be a struggle. That’s why CalFresh works with Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS) to provide exemptions for students who meet the requirements.

Jairus Sexton, 23, is a former foster youth and Sacramento native who is attending Sacramento State University. He is grateful for the CalFresh program, which provides him with a steady source of groceries.

CalFresh, California’s SNAP program, has a series of exemptions that allow foster students like Sexton to receive aid.

“It’s definitely like a lifesaver, having it as a backup just in case you’re running low,” Sexton says. “It definitely helps ‘cause there’s times where bills just pile up and you’re just like, man, I don’t have food in my fridge.”

A full-time student, EOPS recipient and Guardian Scholar, Sexton is studying social work and hopes to work either in adoption or with foster youth. He says applying for CalFresh was an easy process.

“I think I got my food stamps approved within—I want to say—a

week, and then I got my benefits probably a week later,” Sexton says. He attributes his easy application process to the Placer Food Bank, where a coordinator there told him exactly what he needed to provide and processed his application for him.

“I literally emailed everything to her and she just scanned it and then sent it off,” he recalls. “So I didn’t really have to do much, which was really good ‘cause I’m always busy with school.”

Sexton qualified for CalFresh in a number of ways, including the EOPS exemption. EOPS provides financial aid and counseling support for disadvantaged youth enrolled in

community college. Sexton was a part of the program while attending Sierra College before he transferred to Sacramento State.

“I definitely took advantage of every opportunity I got,” Sexton says.

For students considering applying for CalFresh, Sexton recommends doing research and ensuring they’re making an informed decision.

“You just do your research, ask questions. That’s what I do, is always ask questions... There’s never too many questions.”



Sacramento State student Jairus Sexton urges students to research their eligibility for CalFresh.

Photo courtesy of Jairus Sexton

CalFresh Made Easy with EOPS

Applying for CalFresh doesn’t have to be hard. If you’re a student who is enrolled in school at least half-time or more, and if you’re a student who is already enrolled in the Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS), good news! You may be eligible for the CalFresh program under the EOPS exemption. The EOPS exemption is one of the many ways students can qualify for CalFresh.

HERE’S WHAT YOU NEED TO APPLY FOR CALFRESH USING YOUR EOPS EXEMPTION:

- Your ID and Social Security Number
- Letter of Eligibility from the financial aid office of your college or from EOPS
- 30 days’ worth of pay stubs, if you’re working
- Number of people in your household (depending on your situation, you may need to provide more information about household members as well)
- Copy of your rent and/or utilities bill if you’re paying rent or utilities



For more information or help applying for CalFresh, contact your college’s CalFresh Outreach team at your campus student center or visit www.GetCalFresh.org.

Receiving Cal Grant funding? You may be eligible for CalFresh.



A Cal Grant is money for college. To qualify, there are minimum GPA and financial requirements, but unlike student loans, grants don't need to be paid back. If you're a student using Cal Grant to pay for school, you're likely eligible for CalFresh as well.

"To qualify for CalFresh, you have to meet an income requirement and a work hours requirement," explains Danielle Muñoz, Sacramento State's CalFresh outreach program coordinator. "If you are a recipient of Cal Grant A or B, that can take the place of the work hours so you can be exempt from the work hours requirement."

AS A STUDENT, YOU MAY QUALIFY IF YOU:

- Meet income requirements
- Work an average of 20 hours a week OR
- Receive a Cal Grant A or B

TO VERIFY ELIGIBILITY, YOU MAY NEED TO SUBMIT VERIFICATION OF YOUR:

- Identity (ID, passport)
- Resident status (Social Security Number or birth certificate)
- Residency (such as a utility bill)
- Income from financial aid such as a Cal Grant



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Balancing School, Work and a Budget

● CALFRESH HELPS A CAL GRANT STUDENT FOCUS ON EDUCATION

By Anne Stokes

Daisy Santiago is a first-generation college student studying mechanical engineering at California State University, Long Beach. Through hard work, she qualified academically for a Cal Grant award that helps pay tuition and living expenses, but she says it's still a struggle to make ends meet. CalFresh helps her put healthy food on the table.

"At my job I don't work that much because I am in six mechanical engineering classes and it's very hard to make my small check cover utilities, rent and food," she says. "It's given me peace of mind knowing that I don't have to stretch out \$30 on food for two weeks. It relieves that stress and helps me just focus on school."

While carrying a full academic load, Santiago also works at the Beach Pantry, an on-campus resource for students who need help with food and other necessities. The pantry shares space with the campus CalFresh outreach coordinator who encouraged her to apply for benefits.

Because of her Cal Grant award, Santiago was eligible.

"I had just transferred out of community college that summer... and the money I had saved up to go to Cal State Long Beach was all gone," she says. "I told (the coordinator) about my situation, how my bank account at the moment had \$25 and I wasn't going to get paid for two weeks. She said, 'Come apply for CalFresh.'"

Being able to afford groceries through CalFresh has allowed Santiago to eat a healthy diet while still focusing on her education.

"I realized I can't be working 40 hours a week when I have six classes to balance and I have internships I have to look for," she says. "I can go out and buy

enough to meal prep. I don't have to buy just essentials; I can buy fruit, I can buy veggies, I can make all these great things and be conscious about my health with CalFresh."

While Santiago qualified through her Cal Grant, she says it's a valuable resource for any struggling student and more students should apply to see if they're eligible.

"With any extra money they have, they don't have to spend it all on groceries, because groceries can get very expensive. The extra money can go toward something like utilities or rent," she says. "Everyone at some point needs some kind of help...and it's something that's definitely helpful."



"I don't have to buy just essentials; I can buy fruit, I can buy veggies, I can make all these great things and be conscious about my health with CalFresh."

Daisy Santiago
Cal State Long Beach student

Eating Healthy on a Budget

● A WORK-STUDY EXEMPTION HELPS A SAN FRANCISCO GRADUATE STUDENT QUALIFY FOR CALFRESH

By Anne Stokes

As a fourth-year dental student at UC San Francisco, Jessica Ton understands the importance of nutrition. As a Bay Area resident, she's also aware that expenses like housing can often edge food out of families' budgets. For Ton, CalFresh benefits help her balance both.

"I was able to pick out fresh fruits and vegetables and I got to cook a lot more than I did before," she says. "It allowed me to plan my meals better. I actually started meal prepping and looking up ways to maximize the food that I bought, as well as being more thrifty."

Ton qualified for CalFresh benefits through her participation in the federal Work-Study program and currently works on campus at the university's financial aid office. Although she's often not able to work 20 hours a week due to her heavy academic workload, she's still eligible due to the Work-Study exemption.

The first time Ton applied for CalFresh benefits, she did so on her own. Even though she was eligible for Work-Study and was in need, she was denied CalFresh benefits. The next year, she went through the Student Financial Services Center on campus, where staff helped her fill out the forms and made sure she had the right documentation.

"I felt that was a huge advantage because we had someone

UCSF student Jessica Ton qualified for CalFresh and is better able to meal-plan and balance her budget.

advocating for us and explaining the process," she says. "Without UCSF being proactive and finding resources for their students, I don't think I would have been able to find this on my own."

Before CalFresh, Ton says she felt like she had less control over both her budget and her ability to eat healthy foods.

"I would kind of just eat as I went along, whether I went to buy food or I would buy food and cook it at home," she says. "In the fast-food industry, fresh food is actually more expensive."

Ton's busy schedule not only includes Work-Study hours and class, but also clinical work. She says being able to meal-plan makes it easier for her, especially on days when she has to work 12-hour shifts.

"I definitely don't have to worry about food not being there because I'm able to plan my meals better by having CalFresh and I'm better able to budget everything," she says. "It made things a lot healthier for me. I actually started prioritizing my diet, my health, I even started exercising a little bit more."

"I'm able to plan my meals better by having CalFresh."

Jessica Ton
UCSF student and CalFresh recipient



Work-Study jobs can qualify you for CalFresh benefits

Work-Study programs provide paid part-time work for undergraduate, graduate and professional students that can help pay educational expenses. Work is typically on campus or related to your field of study.

"Not all federal Work-Study jobs will give you a full 20 hours, but the fact that you're in federal Work-Study will [meet] the work hours requirement," says Danielle Muñoz, Sacramento State's CalFresh outreach program coordinator. "Even if it's just posted to your account and you're searching for federal Work-Study, that as well can make you eligible to be exempt from the work hours requirement."

AS A STUDENT, YOU MAY QUALIFY IF YOU:

- Meet income requirements
- Work an average of 20 hours a week OR
- Are approved for state or federal Work-Study money

TO VERIFY ELIGIBILITY, YOU MAY NEED TO SUBMIT VERIFICATION OF YOUR:

- Identity (ID, passport)
- Resident status (Social Security Number or birth certificate)
- Residency (such as a utility bill)
- Income from financial aid such as a Cal Grant or proof of participation in work exemption program



For more information or help applying for CalFresh, contact your college's CalFresh Outreach team at your campus student center or visit www.GetCalFresh.org online.

More Than Just Food

● A FORMER FOSTER STUDENT FOUND AID AND SUPPORT WHILE ATTENDING COMMUNITY COLLEGE IN SOUTH LAKE TAHOE

By Krysta Scriptor

America Mata, 21, a former foster youth, now attends Lake Tahoe Community College. She receives benefits from the CalFresh program.

“When I started going to college, I had no idea that you can get these kinds of resources, especially with my background. I didn’t know how much hope you can get,” she says.

Mata lived with her mother in Los Angeles until 2014, when her mother passed away. Her father couldn’t take care of her, so Mata was placed in the foster care system in South Lake Tahoe. She graduated from Mt. Tallac High School and is now studying psychology at Lake Tahoe Community College.

Mata found out about the CalFresh program through her

supervisor at the college’s Equity Office. She says the program helped her gain a sense of balance in her life.

“Before I started getting help, it was scary. I didn’t want to spend that much money on groceries,” she says. “And I found myself eating out a lot because it’s like a quick meal that you can just throw away when you’re done, you know?”

Mata, who now works as an ambassador for the CalFresh program, says having access to a steady source of nutritious food has helped her eat right and take better care of herself.

She says it’s important for students, especially former foster students, to understand what resources are available for them. “And I know that there’s a pride thing with students,” she adds. “You know, like food stamps, you kind of

don’t want to go there.”

It’s not just food and produce. Mata says working as a CalFresh ambassador has given her a chance to grow within a community and continue helping other students. She regularly does tabling events where students are usually eager to come learn more about the program.

“They approach the table with no hesitation,” she says. “I just want students, especially students in the foster care program, to be able to reach out for food aid with comfort. And if they saw someone who has been in their similar situation, they would be more willing to apply for CalFresh.”

Mata hopes more students find out about the program and tell others who need it. “Just spread the word about CalFresh because it’s there. It doesn’t hurt to try and apply.”



Lake Tahoe Community College student America Mata is now a CalFresh ambassador on her campus.

Photo courtesy of America Mata



“When I started going to college, I had no idea that you can get these kinds of resources, especially with my background. I didn’t know how much hope you can get.”

America Mata
Former foster youth and Lake Tahoe Community College student

Applying for CalFresh as a Foster Youth

If you’re a foster youth, you may be eligible for the CalFresh program. Qualifying for CalFresh has a series of requirements based on income and working hours, but if you’ve received aid from other entities, you may still be eligible via exemptions, even if you don’t meet the other requirements. When in doubt, provide as much information as you can. The more information you provide, the higher chance your application will be approved quickly.

HERE’S WHAT YOU NEED TO APPLY FOR CALFRESH AS A FOSTER YOUTH:

- Your ID and Social Security Number
- Proof of aid received from any other entities, such as EOPS, Foster Youth Success Initiative (FYSI), Cooperating Agencies Foster Youth Educational Support (CAFYES)
- Documentation of foster care status
- 30 days’ worth of pay stubs, if you’re working

- Number of people in your household (depending on your situation, you may need to also provide information on household members)
- Copy of your rent and/or utilities bill if you’re paying either



For more information or help applying for CalFresh, contact your college’s CalFresh Outreach team at your campus student center or visit www.GetCalFresh.org.

Q&A with a CalFresh Rep

● YOU HAVE NOTHING TO LOSE BY SUBMITTING AN APPLICATION—AND SO MUCH TO GAIN

By Thea Marie Rood

With ever-increasing tuition and rent, many college students struggle to make ends meet, so they cut corners the only place they feel they can: at the grocery store. But what if your worry about having enough food in the fridge—nutritious food at that—could be taken away? In many cases, it can be—and it's only a simple CalFresh application away.

Max Vaca is a public assistance specialist with the Health & Human Services Agency in Yolo County and is also the CalFresh representative at UC Davis. He takes a moment

here to give a rundown on what he believes students may not know about the program.

What can a student expect to receive if they are approved for CalFresh?

CalFresh can help students by giving them up to \$194 monthly in food benefits for a household of one. It should be noted that due to the public health emergency being a federally declared disaster, California has been issuing emergency allotments to bring all CalFresh households to the maximum allotment amount.

How do you use the benefit? Is it easy? Is it obvious you're on food stamps at the checkout?

CalFresh benefits are issued on an EBT card that is as quick and easy to use as a debit card at the checkout counter. EBT cards can also now be used to purchase groceries online at Amazon and Walmart. This makes it easier for students without transportation to purchase groceries and have them delivered.

Your local grocery store, Amazon and Walmart—that's great. Where else can you use CalFresh?

Students can utilize their CalFresh benefits at local farmers' markets. They can also take advantage of the Market Match program, which allows students to double their money at the farmers' market.

Are there other financial advantages that come along with CalFresh benefits?

Individuals who are eligible for CalFresh can get low-cost internet and discounts on energy services through their local providers.

Is the application process difficult or time-consuming?

Applying for CalFresh is easier than ever before, with no requirement to come into the county office. The overwhelming majority of applications (can be) done entirely online or over the phone. Anyone can quickly submit a CalFresh application on the GetCalFresh or myBenefitsCalWIN sites.

"EBT cards can also now be used to purchase groceries online at Amazon and Walmart. This makes it easier for students without transportation to purchase groceries and have them delivered."

Max Vaca, CalFresh representative
University of California, Davis



Avoid denial of benefits you qualify for

TIMING: RESIDENCY

During the summer, right before fall term starts, the county denies a lot of student CalFresh applications because of residency issues. Until a student has actually moved to the county in which they are applying for CalFresh, applications will have to be rerouted to their current county of residency, where they are likely still living with their parents and will have to include their parents on the application—and may not qualify.

TIMING: EXEMPTIONS

Common exemptions that could make a student eligible for CalFresh are:

- Working an average of 20 hours a week
- Receiving Cal Grants A or B, approved for Work-Study or participating in EOP/EOPS.

But it's important to know incoming freshmen and new students are not subject to this rule until their first day of instruction so they don't need to meet an exemption until then.

TIMING: THE CALFRESH INTERVIEW

Previously, it was mandatory for students to attend an in-person interview, which could easily be overlooked in the whirl of new classes and work shifts. But the current public health crisis allows counties to waive the interview if enough information is provided on the application and mandatory verifications are provided. All applicants are encouraged to complete the full application and attach verifications—such as identification verification and proof of income—while counties have this flexibility.



For more information or help applying for CalFresh, contact your college's CalFresh Outreach team at your campus student center or visit www.GetCalFresh.org.

Apply Now

CalFresh can help you eat better and worry less

1
Apply in 10 minutes

2
Get your EBT card within 30 days

3
Start buying healthy, nutritious food

YOU'LL ALSO BE HELPING YOUR COMMUNITY

Every dollar spent generates \$1.50 in the local economy. CalFresh recipients also help support their neighborhood grocery stores and farmers' markets (where benefits go even further).

Need Help?

Your college or university has staff willing and able to help you apply for CalFresh benefits today.



Or go directly to <https://www.getcalfresh.org>

"At the California Community Colleges, we are committed to putting students first, and that includes doing all we can to help them meet their basic needs. CalFresh plays a big role in allowing students to eat better, worry less and maintain their focus on their educational goals."



Eloy Ortiz Oakley
Chancellor, California Community Colleges

"No student's journey of learning and discovery should end because of food insecurity. CalFresh has been an invaluable resource that's helped thousands of CSU students achieve their educational goals."



Timothy P. White
Chancellor, California State University

"The University of California is committed to supporting increased application assistance and successful enrollment in CalFresh. All 10 campuses have designated staff and peer-student CalFresh leads working at the local level to make a difference with and for our students across the state."



Yvette Gullatt
Vice Provost and Vice President of Graduate, Undergraduate and Equity Affairs
University of California



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