

Keeping Fresh Affordable



Napa County Health and Human Services Agency helps those eligible have nutritious food throughout the year with CalFresh

To see if you are eligible and to apply online, go to www.c4yourself.com

Putting Healthy Food on Napa's Tables

CalFresh is one part of a community-wide effort to improve public health

by **Natasha vonKaenel**

People should not have to worry about whether they'll have enough money at the end of the month to feed their family or themselves. Low-income individuals and families are often forced to minimize their expenses, and buying high-quality, fresh food can seem like a luxury. CalFresh helps everyone have access to food, with up to \$194 in monthly nutrition assistance for individuals, and even more assistance for families.

Each dollar CalFresh recipients spend at participating farmers markets is matched up to the market's maximum per transaction, doubling their purchasing power and encouraging recipients to buy fresh fruits and vegetables that are better for their health and the health of the community.

Howard Himes, director of the Napa County Health and Human Services Agency, says it's particularly important to encourage healthy eating in Napa, where childhood obesity rates are significantly higher than the national average.

"Obesity is really the entry point for a large amount of other health problems, from chronic disease to brain development and education performance," Himes says. Studies have shown that 18.3 percent of low-income preschoolers in Napa County are already obese, and 42 percent of all fifth-, seventh- and ninth-graders are overweight or obese.

Reducing obesity and improving public health has been the main focus of Live Healthy Napa County, a

partnership of local nonprofit agencies, hospitals and Napa County HHSA.

"Obesity disproportionately affects people living in poverty. They often lack access to fresh food because they live in food deserts," says Dr. Karen Relucio, health officer and public health director at Napa County HHSA. "CalFresh gives people the opportunity to buy fresh fruits and vegetables," Relucio says, lowering their risk of obesity and chronic health problems.

Himes emphasizes that CalFresh also acts as a portal for other programs at Napa County HHSA, connecting people with county resources and preventative programs they may have never realized they were eligible for.

"If someone is struggling with mental health issues or alcohol or drug issues within their family or within themselves, we have immediate structures in place to give them quick access to those services," Himes says.

This includes Medi-Cal, Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), employment services and programs for seniors, who make up one of the fastest growing populations experiencing food insecurity.

In Napa County, over 7,000 residents are currently receiving CalFresh benefits, but Himes says there are roughly 6,000 more individuals who are potentially eligible. Helping those individuals and families supplement their food budget, as well as access other county programs, would greatly improve public health and food security in Napa county.

Howard Himes, director of the Napa County Health and Human Services Agency, says CalFresh acts as a portal for other county programs and services working to treat the whole person, improving the health of the entire Napa community.
COURTESY PHOTO



WHAT'S GOING ON WITH CALFRESH IN NAPA COUNTY?



CalFresh is California's version of SNAP – the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.



The name "CalFresh" replaced "Food Stamps" in 2008. Benefits have been issued on EBT cards since 2004.



In Napa County, approximately **3,689 households** participate in CalFresh, representing over 7,000 individuals.



Recent reports show that there are roughly **6,000 more individuals** in Napa County who may be eligible for CalFresh benefits.



That includes many seniors. In 2013, a study found that **9.5% of seniors** in California 60 years and older were experiencing food insecurity.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the average family of four with two children, using a low-cost food plan, will spend **\$848.10 a month** on groceries.



The average amount of benefits received per household is about **\$200 per month.**



CalFresh benefits apply to **more than just food** – they also go toward purchasing seeds and plants to grow produce for household use.

“ Obesity disproportionately affects people living in poverty. They often lack access to fresh food because they live in food deserts. ”

DR. KAREN RELUCIO
Health Officer and Public Health Director
Napa County Health and Human Services Agency

No More Ramen

Student volunteer prefers berries and granola – and can afford it with CalFresh

by Edgar Sanchez

Before arriving in Napa to serve with AmeriCorps, Phil Wachowiak was concerned. He knew his mission would be rewarding in many ways, but he worried he might have trouble making ends meet.

“I like living in Napa,” the 22-year-old says during a break from tutoring high-needs students at Harvest Middle School. “The only downside is that it’s really expensive to live here.”

The young man from Ann Arbor, Michigan, rents a room in Napa for about \$700 a month — roughly 55 percent of his monthly AmeriCorps stipend. His other expenses, ranging from car payments to allergy medicine, leave only a limited amount for food.

Fortunately, Wachowiak found CalFresh, a program that provides those who qualify with financial help for fresh fruit and vegetables, as well as other nutritious food items.

At the urging of his supervisor at the Napa County Office of Education, he applied for CalFresh last fall. As

a student enrolled at least half-time, his eligibility requirements were somewhat different than the rest of the population. Most students must work a work-study job or a minimum of 20 hours a week to be eligible for benefits.

For Wachowiak, CalFresh has provided the nourishment he needs along with a certain peace of mind.

“CalFresh is a wonderful opportunity for people that qualify,” says Wachowiak, who receives \$194 a month from CalFresh. “It takes the stress out of my life and gives me more energy that I can use ... at my job.”

Wachowiak earned a Bachelor’s of Science in biochemistry at the University of Michigan in only three years. He joined AmeriCorps last summer.

At Harvest Middle School, he tutors and mentors teens and pre-teens four hours a day through the Advancement Via Individual Determination program.

Wachowiak also helps his students with homework as part of the After Class Enrichment Program. And he

recruits others, including peers at Napa Valley College, to be volunteer mentors at Harvest Middle School.

In August, Wachowiak will return to the University of Michigan to pursue a masters in physiology.

“My goal is to become a doctor, a general practitioner,” he says. “I want to practice where there is a great need and I can be of most help.”

California may be that place.

For now, Wachowiak is enjoying his time in Napa and sampling a bounty of healthy foods, such as berries and granola.

“Without CalFresh, I’m sure I would be eating a lot more Ramen noodles and peanut butter sandwiches,” he quips.

Phil Wachowiak, tutor of high-needs students in Napa, was worried about making ends meet, until he applied for CalFresh.

PHOTO BY ROBIN CRAIG

“
[CalFresh] takes
the stress out of
my life.
”

Phil Wachowiak, 22
CalFresh recipient

ELIGIBLE FOR CALFRESH?

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

 1 person with \$1,962 gross income	 3 people with \$3,350 gross income
 2 people with \$2,656 gross income	 4 people with \$4,042 gross income

- Households with an **elderly or disabled** member are eligible for higher income deductions which may increase their CalFresh benefits.
- Non-citizens** may qualify if they are legally permanent residents, collect disability or are minors with permanent residence under the Immigration and Naturalization Act.

CHANGES

- Eligibility for some households is no longer based on property or resources. Retirement accounts, bank accounts, vehicles, cash and other possessions of value would no longer be considered in the eligibility determination.
- Formerly excluded drug felons are now eligible to participate in the CalFresh program.

FIND OUT!

CalFresh is available to many residents who don’t realize they could qualify. The best way to see if you are eligible is to apply online.

To see if you are eligible and to apply online, go to www.c4yourself.com

Most people qualify for modified categorical eligibility, with a maximum gross monthly income calculated at 200% of the Federal Poverty Level, shown above.

Helping Everyone Enjoy Napa's Bounty



You can use CalFresh benefits at most stores that sell groceries.

For a complete list of retailers, visit www.fns.usda.gov/snap/retailerlocator.

Napa County is known around the world for having fresh, high-quality produce, and CalFresh helps ensure all Napa residents have the chance to enjoy it. CalFresh provides supplemental nutrition assistance to help feed individuals and families. Recent estimates suggest there are more than 6,000 individuals in Napa County who are eligible for CalFresh assistance, but many don't realize they qualify.

The more residents Napa County has receiving CalFresh benefits, the better it is

for everyone in Napa. Many find out that they are eligible for other social services, including Medi-Cal; the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program; CalWORKs or General Assistance.

CalFresh assistance and other assistance programs put money into Napa's local economy, and ensure that more individuals and families are putting good, healthy food on their tables — all year round. This makes the Napa community happier, healthier and a better place to live and grow up.

Contact Us Today!

Napa County HHSA Office
2751A Napa Valley Corporate Dr.
Napa, CA 94558



Or go online to
www.c4yourself.com

HOW TO APPLY FOR CALFRESH



WHO QUALIFIES?

- Napa County residents
- Must meet income requirements for family size (see page 3)
- For most households, it's OK if you have cash on hand, in the bank, own property or a car
- Can still qualify with a drug felony conviction
- Full-time college students have special requirements, but if you work or care for a dependent you may qualify



HELPFUL DOCUMENTS

One form of identification, preferably a driver's license. Library cards, school or work identification, a pay stub or a check cashing card may also be accepted. If available, bring documentation of the applicant's address within Napa County.

Social Security numbers for household members, or documentation showing that an SSN has been applied for.

Documentation of immigration status and immigrant sponsorship.

Income documentation, such as pay stubs or letters from employers, for anyone in the household who receives income. Applicants don't need to provide documentation of their monthly expenses, but those who do might qualify for a larger benefit.



GET STARTED!

If you think you might be eligible for benefits, don't wait. Apply now! Right now, all applicants that qualify for CalFresh benefits are automatically eligible for Medi-Cal, and many others find that they are eligible for the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program, CalWORKs or General Assistance.

Apply online:

- Make an account at www.c4yourself.com
- Submit your application and upload your required documents
- A staff member will contact you shortly for a phone interview
- Check the status of your application on the C4Yourself website and get up-to-date information about your benefits and upcoming deadlines

Apply in person:

- Bring in your personal documents
- Fill out your paperwork
- Work with a staff member to make sure your application is complete

That's it! If everything is in order, applicants may even receive CalFresh benefits that same day!