



Take Another
Look at
cal fresh

*Yolo County Health
and Human Services
Agency*



The New CalFresh

Getting nutrition assistance has never been easier for Yolo County residents

by Elaine Goodman

Many people fall on hard financial times at some point in their lives. When that happens, Yolo County is here to help with a variety of social service programs — including CalFresh, which gives those who qualify extra money to buy groceries.

The money can be used to put healthy food on the table. It also helps stretch the household budget to cover other expenses, such as rent, while recipients get back on their feet.

“At times in our lives, we all need help to get over the hump,” says Joan Planell, director of Yolo County’s Health and Human Services Agency.

All around us are neighbors, friends and coworkers who are struggling to put food on the table and who may be eligible for CalFresh benefits. Homeless people are just one example; immigrant families, older residents and college students are others. Even those with jobs might not be getting enough to eat.

“That’s not OK,” Planell says. “Healthy eating is a goal for all of us. Not just the amount, but the quality of the food.”

WHY CALFRESH?

The “fresh” in CalFresh could apply as much to the way the program is run as it does to the healthy food it provides. Yolo County’s CalFresh is

much different from food stamp programs of the past.

CalFresh participants receive their benefits on an electronic benefits transfer (EBT) card, which looks like a credit or debit card and can be used discreetly at grocery stores.

The CalFresh application process is streamlined as well. There’s no need to stand in line at the county office or even to visit the county office at all.

Applications can be mailed in or filled out online at www.mybenefitscalwin.org.

Of course, those who prefer to visit a Yolo County office can stop by locations in Woodland, Winters or West Sacramento. Several nonprofits in the community can also help with the CalFresh application process.

WHY WAIT?

Many people who think they won’t qualify for Yolo County’s CalFresh benefits may in fact be eligible. College students, immigrants, homeless individuals, working families — all are groups that may qualify if they meet certain criteria.

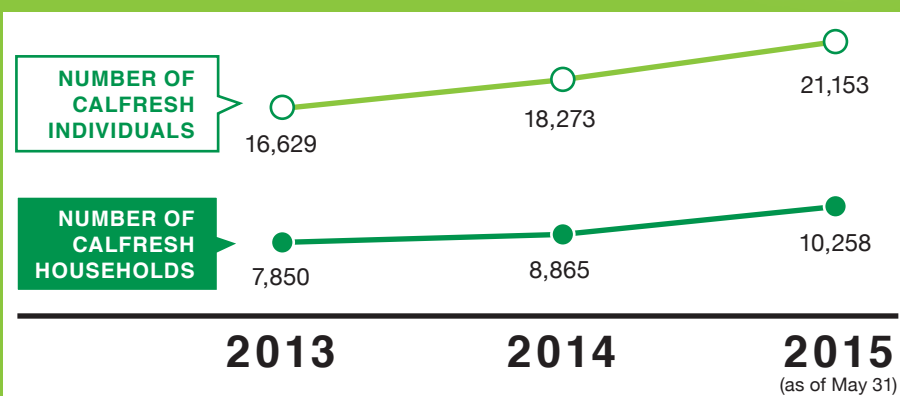
Getting help doesn’t have to take a long time. Benefits are typically received within 30 days for those who qualify. In emergency situations, benefits may be available within three days.

There’s never been a better time to get nutrition assistance through CalFresh.

“Healthy eating is a goal for all of us.”

Joan Planell
Director, Yolo County
Health and Human
Services Agency

YOLO COUNTY CALFRESH PARTICIPATION ON THE RISE



YOLO COUNTY CALFRESH DEMOGRAPHICS (2014)



Making Ends Meet

by Mike Blount

Willie Harris says CalFresh helps his family by supplementing their income, so they can use their money to pay bills and rent.
PHOTO BY CHARLES GUNN



Man uses CalFresh benefits to help feed his family

When Willie Harris was laid off from his job as a warehouse supervisor for a metal screw manufacturer in 2008, he was devastated. The economic downturn caused the construction industry to slow down, which led to layoffs. Even though he had skills — including driving a forklift, managing freight and controlling inventory — he had trouble finding work.

Harris, 55, says he was able to keep food on the table by visiting one of the family resource centers operated by Yolo County Children's Alliance, which provided canned goods to him and his wife. He was able to pay his bills and rent for a couple of years while receiving an unemployment check. But when those benefits ran out, he knew he needed to do something different.

"I always knew that CalFresh would help you out if you were in need," Harris says. "At the time, I was still looking for work and cash was really scarce. I was collecting cans and scrap metal to recycle. That's when I decided to apply."

Harris says applying for CalFresh was easy. He visited the county office at the end of 2010 and had his benefits in less than 30 days. Having CalFresh meant that Harris could spend what little cash he had on more than food.

"When I sat down to pay bills, I didn't have to worry

about where my food was going to come from," Harris says. "I just would not have been able to afford it. I was able to buy things like meat, fruit, vegetables and milk — healthy stuff. Because of our age, we're much more concerned about eating healthy. Because of CalFresh, we can do that."

Initially, Harris had to report his income to CalFresh every month. But now the program only requires him to report every six months. Harris says it is much more convenient for him because he occasionally gets work through a temp agency, but he doesn't know which days he will work. Now, he has much more time to report changes to his income.

Harris believes that because of CalFresh, he and his wife were able to stay in their home.

"I didn't want to move, but without CalFresh I wouldn't have been able to afford rent," Harris says. "It's definitely gotten me through some tough times."

Today, Harris and his family are doing well. He is getting more temporary work and they are still eating healthy. Harris says he encourages anyone who is eligible to apply for CalFresh.

"If you need it, you should definitely apply," Harris says. "We appreciate the program because it helps a lot of people be able to buy food, so they have more money to pay all of their bills. It's a good program."

"We appreciate the program because it helps a lot of people be able to buy food so they have more money to pay all of their bills."

Willie Harris

CALFRESH FACTS

Think you make too much to qualify for CalFresh? Think again. A family of four with monthly gross income of \$3,976 or less could qualify for assistance. Here are some other facts about Yolo County CalFresh that you might not know:

- A household can be one person, a group of people, a family, or any combination of people that buy and prepare food together.
 - Children living with their parents are considered part of the same household until age 22.
 - Many legal noncitizens are eligible for CalFresh benefits. Even if you can't get CalFresh benefits for yourself, other members of your household may be eligible.
 - Benefits are based on household size and household income, with deductions allowed for certain expenses such as housing.
 - Other assets, like a car or bank account, are not considered when applying for assistance.
 - CalFresh participants will only have to turn in a report once every six months.
- » CALFRESH IS FOR WORKING FAMILIES. VISIT WWW.MYBENEFITSCALWIN.ORG TO APPLY.

A Bright Future Ahead

CalFresh keeps medical student healthy while she is in school

by Mike Blount



Lucero Barajas says CalFresh helps her eat healthy while she is in school. Barajas is studying to become an oncologist so she can help people with cancer.
PHOTO BY CHARLES GUNN

"I feel much better because I have more energy and I'm not stressed with having to figure out how I'm going to make it through the month."

Lucero Barajas

Lucero Barajas' family came to the United States when she was 10 years old. Though they had very little money and barely survived on the salary her father made working at a vineyard, they were always able to eat, thanks to food banks and the generosity of people in the community where they lived.

"We never ate anything fancy," Barajas says. "A typical meal was rice and beans — maybe some meat. Churches would give us food, too. We'd get things like instant noodles and day-old pastries. We never had anything fresh or really nutritious, but we always had food to eat."

Though the family was likely eligible for CalFresh, Barajas says her father resisted asking for assistance. Years later when Barajas went to college at UC Davis, she carried that same sense of resistance.

Barajas only had a budget of \$50 to spend on food every month. She would buy things like pasta, bread and fruit, but it was difficult to make the small amount of food last for an entire month. After three months of struggling, she started visiting a food bank located on campus to get canned goods.

"One day, there was a social service worker there who was giving out information about CalFresh," Barajas says. "It was the first time in my life that I was without income because I had to leave my job to go to school. I decided that I would apply because I needed to do something."

Coincidentally, Barajas previously worked at a nonprofit where she referred many of her clients to apply for CalFresh.

"It was difficult to accept that I was in a situation where I needed help," Barajas says. "I'm comfortable now realizing that I can't do it on my own."

The social service worker was shocked to find out Barajas was living on just \$50 a month for groceries and helped her fill out the paperwork. She was approved for benefits at the end of 2014. Barajas says CalFresh has drastically changed her life.

"I feel much better because I have more energy and I'm not stressed with having to figure out how I'm going to make it through the month," Barajas says. "I don't have to worry about putting items back when I'm checking out at the grocery store. Instead of just eating starch, I can buy things like vegetables and things with protein. CalFresh gives me peace of mind."

Barajas, 31, will be applying to medical school in the fall. She encourages any person in need to apply for CalFresh.

"It's OK to make use of the services that are available, regardless of your background," Barajas says. "There's a stigma around using services like CalFresh, but people lose their job unexpectedly or find themselves in tough situations. It could happen to anyone. CalFresh can make such a huge difference in being able to eat healthy."

HEALTHY FOOD 101

Think you have to be a "starving student"? Think again. There's no reason to go hungry. If you are in college and meet certain income requirements, you may be eligible for CalFresh benefits. Here are some other facts:

- Students who work an average of 20 hours per week or 80 hours per month in paid employment are eligible.
- Students who are approved for federal/state work study for the current term and anticipate working in the current term are eligible.
- Students who have primary responsibility for the physical care of a dependent household member under age 6 are eligible.
- Full-time students who are a single parent with responsibility for a child under age 12 are eligible.
- Students who are physically or mentally unfit for employment are eligible.

» CALFRESH IS FOR STUDENTS.
VISIT WWW.MYBENEFITSCALWIN.ORG TO APPLY.

There When She Needed It

Formerly homeless woman thankful for CalFresh benefits

Brenee Spears used her CalFresh benefits for food when she was homeless. Spears is thankful for the program, which also helped her eat well when she became pregnant.
PHOTO COURTESY OF BRENEE SPEARS

by Mike Blount

By January 2013, Brenee Spears had just a few days left before she became homeless. Spears, now 24, was working part time at a minimum wage job, but couldn't afford rent after her employer cut her hours. Unable to renew her lease, Spears had no choice except to leave her apartment. She had no money tucked away in a savings account and she didn't want to be a burden to her family and friends. For two years, Spears was homeless.

It was one of the worst experiences of her life.

"You never know where you are going to sleep," Spears says. "You're just out in the open. Cops would wake me up in the middle of the night to tell me to move. I couldn't sleep at the shelter because I had a dog. I couldn't go look for another job because my priority was just surviving. It was terrible."

Spears was eating at the shelter during the day and going to food banks, but she had to wait in

lines for hours. Once she became pregnant, she knew she needed to do something more for herself and her baby.

"When I was younger, my mom and I had food stamps," Spears says. "I knew about them. I had food stamps before I became homeless for a while. But when I got pregnant, I decided I needed to get food stamps again."

Spears went to the Yolo County Department of Employment and Social Services and applied for CalFresh. She says the process was easy, and because she was homeless and pregnant, she was able to get emergency assistance in just three days. Spears received an EBT card, which she used at grocery stores. Spears says the benefits have been a lifesaver.

"I used my CalFresh benefits to buy a lot of fruits and vegetables," Spears says. "I ate things like grapes and spinach. I also used it to purchase bottled water. It meant a

lot to me. It changed the way I was eating. I became healthier while I was pregnant and that allowed me to keep my baby healthy."

A few months later, Spears was able to move into her sister's home. In January 2015, she gave birth to her son. A home visitation program through Yolo County Children's Alliance is teaching her about parenting. Spears says she's looking forward to getting back out on her own in the future. Until then, she's thankful she has CalFresh benefits to keep her and her son eating healthy.

"If you need CalFresh benefits — especially if you're pregnant — you should apply so you can get healthy food," Spears says. "It's important to stay healthy. Having CalFresh benefits means you don't have to worry about where your next meal is going to come from."



"Having CalFresh benefits means you don't have to worry about where your next meal is going to come from."

Brenee Spears

A VITAL RESOURCE

Think CalFresh doesn't help the economy? Think again. Unlike "free food" handouts, CalFresh money is spent at local stores and farmers markets, bringing more revenue into the local economy. CalFresh provides a vital resource to homeless individuals. Here are some other facts about CalFresh benefits for homeless individuals:

- You do not need to have a photo ID. You can also use a work or school ID, paycheck stub, birth certificate, voter registration card, health benefits ID or have a personal contact confirm your identity.
 - You do not have to have a mailing address.
 - You are still eligible for CalFresh benefits if you receive free meals at a shelter.
 - You do not need to have a kitchen or a place to cook or store food to receive benefits.
 - You do not have to report to CalFresh every quarter about your income or living situation.
- » CALFRESH IS A SAFETY NET.
VISIT WWW.MYBENEFITSCALWIN.ORG TO APPLY.



“CalFresh helped us out a lot. We were able to buy things like squash, bread, milk and meats.”

Liliya Ignatesko

Liliya Ignatesko and her family came to the United States after being persecuted for their religious beliefs in Ukraine. Ignatesko says CalFresh helps her family be able to afford fresh and healthy food.
PHOTO BY CHARLES GUNN

Starting Over

by Mike Blount

CalFresh benefits helped woman after immigrating to U.S.

Life was much different for Liliya Ignatesko and her family in her native Ukraine. During the '90s, an anti-Christian sentiment had been growing in the small village they lived in. Ignatesko says they were regularly questioned about their religious beliefs. Because her family did not accept communism and renounce their faith, they were harassed daily and denied opportunities. They were outcasts in their own country.

The hatred others had for her family culminated in one night of terror. A group of policemen came into their home in the middle of the night. Ignatesko's mother was arrested and questioned, and she was sent to live in Siberia as punishment. Her family was eventually reunited, but they all agreed they had to leave Ukraine as soon as possible.

Each member of the family was able to immigrate to the U.S. through a company that purchases plane tickets for refugees. The company allowed them to pay back the cost of the tickets over time. Ignatesko's brother moved to the United States first in 1995. Both of her parents came two years later in 1997. In 2001, Ignatesko was able to join the rest of her family in California. Though they were thankful to be in the U.S., they had few resources.

“We had nothing when we arrived,” Ignatesko says. “We had to pay on our plane tickets for three years. There were quite a few months that we slept on the floor. We were thankful to get help from the government and people in the community.”

Through a nonprofit that helped the family purchase some furniture, they were directed to apply for welfare and CalFresh. Within two weeks, they were approved for both services. Ignatesko says CalFresh, in particular, helped her family immensely.

“We've had a lot of hard times, but luckily there was welfare and CalFresh,” Ignatesko says. “CalFresh helped us out a lot. We were able to buy things like squash, bread, milk and meats.”

Even though the family is far away from their roots, they still celebrate their culture by eating traditional foods. CalFresh helps them purchase the ingredients for those dishes.

Today, Ignatesko is working part time at In-Home Supportive Services taking care of elderly patients. She says her family is doing much better because of CalFresh, but they still struggle. However, Ignatesko is happy to be living in the U.S. where they can worship freely.

“Though things are still tough, we are doing our best,” Ignatesko says. “We are so thankful for all the people here who have helped us — friends, family and people in the community. We are very thankful for the help from the government like CalFresh.”

HUNGER HAS NO IMMIGRATION STATUS

Think your information will be shared with Immigration and Customs Enforcement? Think again. CalFresh does not share information. If you have lived in the U.S. for five years and have a permanent resident status or “qualified” immigration status, you may be eligible for CalFresh. If your children were born in the U.S., they are eligible, even if you are not a U.S. citizen. Here are some other facts about CalFresh benefits for immigrants or refugee families:

- Your information will not be shared with Immigration and Customs Enforcement. CalFresh does not share your information with any organization.
- Immigrants and refugees may also be eligible for CalFresh if they receive disability-related assistance or benefits, regardless of entry date.
- Noncitizens, such as those admitted for humanitarian reasons or permanent

residence, may be eligible for CalFresh benefits.

- Immigrants who have not lived in the U.S. for five years, but have a permanent resident status or “qualified” immigration status may be eligible for the California Food Assistance Program (CFAP).

» **CALFRESH IS FOR IMMIGRANTS. VISIT WWW.MYBENEFITSCALWIN.ORG TO APPLY.**

Frequently Asked Questions About CalFresh



How do I receive my benefits?

CalFresh benefits are distributed every month on a plastic electronic benefits transfer (EBT) card. The EBT card can be used at many grocery stores, convenience stores and some farmers markets.

What is the amount of CalFresh benefits that I can receive?

The amount of CalFresh benefits is determined by a number of factors, including the number of persons in your home and your household income.

What food can I buy and what can I not buy with CalFresh?

Foods like breads, cereals, fruit, meats, fish, poultry and vegetables can be purchased with CalFresh benefits. Seeds and plants that produce food can also be purchased. **These items cannot be purchased:** beer, wine, liquor, cigarettes, tobacco, soap, paper products, household supplies, vitamins, medicines or food that is already prepared and intended to be eaten at the store.

Do I need to be a U.S. citizen to receive benefits?

No. Certain noncitizens are eligible for CalFresh. These include:

- Those admitted for humanitarian reasons
- Those admitted for permanent residence
- Honorably discharged U.S. veterans
- Many child immigrants
- Elderly immigrants
- Individuals who have been working in the United States for certain periods of time.

Even if you are not eligible yourself, other members of your household may be eligible.

How easy is it to apply for CalFresh?

Applying for CalFresh is easy. Visit www.mybenefitscalwin.org to get started. If you need assistance filling out an application, contact one of the community-based organizations listed on the back page.

Do I need to have children to get CalFresh?

No. CalFresh benefits are available to eligible, low-income households, whether or not children live in the home. A household can be one person, a group of people, a family or any combination of people that buy and prepare food together.

What about adult children living at home?

Children living with their parents are considered part of the same household until age 22.

How will I know if I was approved?

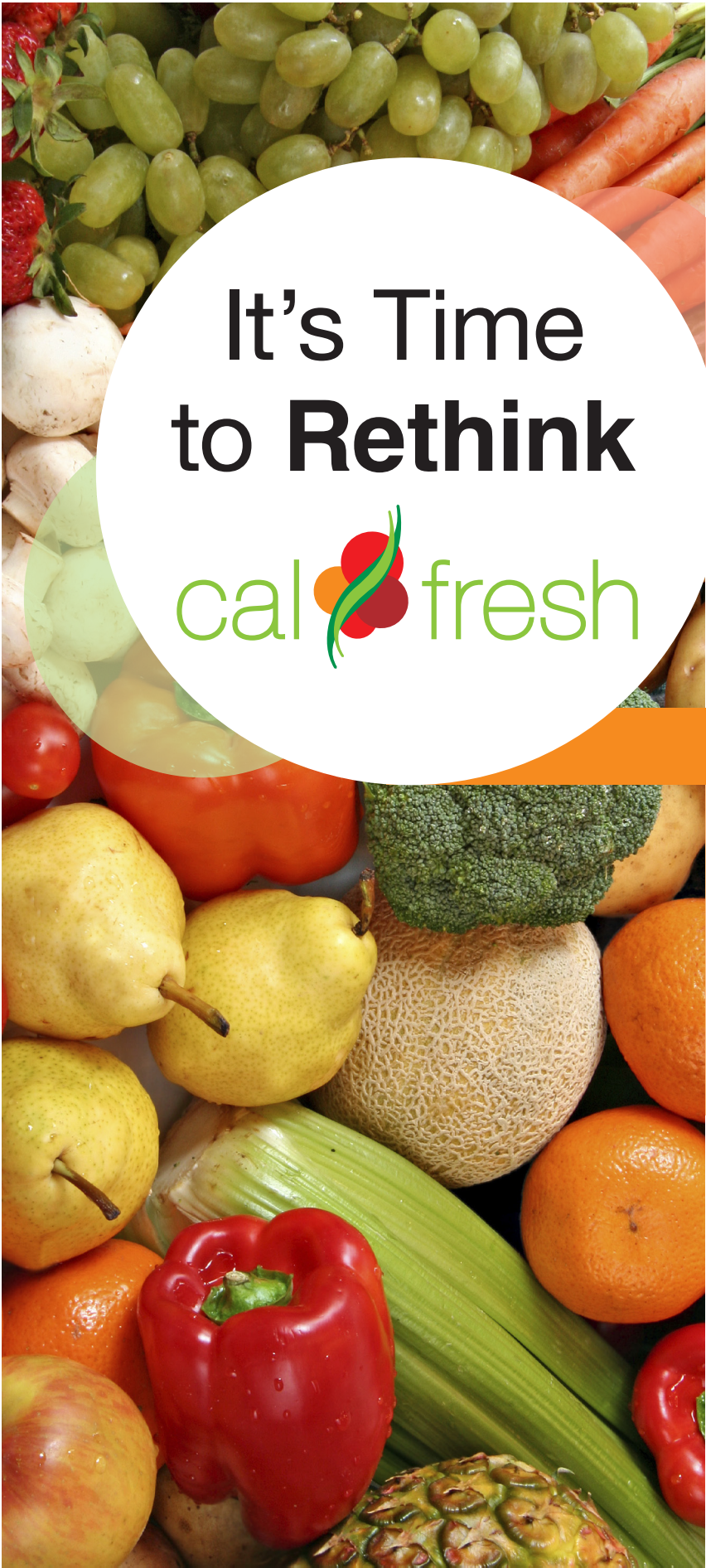
Once your application is approved, you will be notified by mail with a letter stating your monthly benefits.

How long will CalFresh benefits last?

You are eligible for CalFresh benefits for as long as you meet the program requirements.

Will I have to pay back my benefit if I receive too much?

You never have to pay back any CalFresh benefits you are eligible to receive. However, if you used false information on your application, you will have to pay back the benefits you received.



It's Time to Rethink



Think it's hard to apply? Think you have to fumble with stamps at the checkout line? Think you have to report your income every three months? **Think again.** The new CalFresh makes it easier to sign up and renew, easier to qualify and easier to use. That means even more people in need will be able to supplement their household food budget. Everyone deserves to eat, and the people who need CalFresh are our neighbors, co-workers and friends.

CalFresh keeps our community healthy.

CalFresh is for Yolo County!

START YOUR APPLICATION TODAY!

Yolo County Health and Human Services Agency

www.mybenefitscalwin.org

1-855-278-1594

A community-based organization can help you through the CalFresh application process. Call an agency near you for more information or to schedule an appointment.

Yolo County Children's Alliance

West Sacramento: 916-572-0560

Davis: 530-757-5558

Clarksburg: 530-902-6850

RISE, Inc.

Esparto: 530-787-4110

Winters: 530-794-6000

Yolo Center For Families

Woodland: 530-406-7221

Knights Landing: 530-735-1776 ext. 102