

CalFresh

The CalFresh Program is a federal benefit (known as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, on the federal level) administered on the state level and colloquially known as “food stamps.” CalFresh provides money that can be used to buy approved food at participating grocery stores, corner stores, farmers markets, and more.

Eligibility for CalFresh is complicated and is based on income, assets, and other non-financial eligibility rules. Generally, people whose gross income is less than 130% of the federal poverty line are most likely eligible but there are a host of exemptions.¹

Food stamps eligibility is based on household composition. Generally, people living under one roof are considered to be in separate households if they buy and prepare their food separately.² There is no minimum age requirement to be your own household.³ Generally, youth under 18 must be part of the food stamps household of the adult with whom they are living.⁴ However, if the adult is not acting as a parent (i.e., the youth is not “under the parental control” of the adult) then the youth can still be his or her own food stamps household.⁵ Youth under 22 who live with parents must be part of their household for food stamps.⁶ [Youth who are homeless](#) and living in a shelter may apply as their own household.⁷

Youth 18 or older may not be able to get food stamps if they are enrolled at least half-time in post-secondary education.⁸ There are a lot of exceptions to this rule, including:

- If the school program or course does not require a high school diploma or GED to enroll;⁹
- If the student is employed at least 20 hours per week;
- If the student is receiving work study (or approved for work study and expecting to receive it during the term);¹⁰
- If the student has children and:
 - Is a full-time student and has a child younger than 12; or
 - Is a part-time student and has a child younger than 6 or between 6-12 but there is no child care; or
 - Is receiving [CalWORKs](#).
- If the student does not intend to register for the next school term;¹¹
- If the student has a [mental or physical disability](#);
- If the student is enrolled in Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS); and
- If the student is participating in a program designed to “increase the student’s employability,” including programs especially targeted at current and former foster youth such as Guardian Scholars Program, [Chafee Education and Training Voucher Program](#), and extended foster care more generally.¹²

CalFresh and [Extended Foster Care](#)

A non-minor dependent living in a [THP+FC](#) or [SILP](#) can qualify for CalFresh if they are otherwise eligible. Only income received directly by the youth will impact CalFresh

eligibility. This means if a youth is in THP+FC, only the stipend given directly to the youth, if any, counts as income for purposes of CalFresh eligibility. The amount given to the provider directly does not count as income for CalFresh.¹³

CalFresh is underutilized by foster youth in California. Recent figures show that 60% of youth in foster care ages 18-20 in 2015 were not participating in the CalFresh program to which they may have been entitled.¹⁴ To address this lack of access, the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) “strongly encourage[s] counties . . . to continue to strengthen efforts to provide youths aging out of foster care with information regarding CalFresh and with the opportunity to apply for CalFresh **before** [emphasis in source] they exit care.”¹⁵

CalFresh and Other Benefits

Youth receiving [SSI/SSP](#) benefits are disqualified from CalFresh, while those receiving [Social Security Disability Insurance \(SSDI\)](#) and [Social Security survivor benefits](#) may be eligible depending on their monthly income and other factors.

Families eligible for needy CalWORKs, where the youth and the caregiver are both in need, are categorically eligible for CalFresh.¹⁶ Also, if everyone in the household is receiving some sort of cash assistance, like CalWORKs or General Assistance/General Relief, they are most likely eligible for CalFresh.

Finally, youth and households are categorically eligible for CalFresh if they are eligible for and/or receive [Medi-Cal](#) “providing the household meets all other CalFresh eligibility requirements other than the CalFresh resource limits.”¹⁷

More Information

CDSS – CalFresh

<http://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/calfresh>

The People's Guide to Welfare, Health, & Other Services (36th Edition 2015 Los Angeles County)

https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/hungeractionla/pages/28/attachments/original/1423592735/2015_English_Peoples_Guide.pdf?1423592735

¹ If you are interested in doing the calculation yourself, go to LSNC Guide to CalFresh Benefits, *How to calculate the monthly grant amount*, <http://calfresh.guide/how-to-calculate-the-monthly-grant-amount/>.

² MPP § 63-402.1.

³ California Department of Social Services, All-County Information Notice No. I-39-13: Homeless Youth (July 8, 2013), available at http://www.cdss.ca.gov/lettersnotices/EntRes/getinfo/acin/2013/I-39_13.pdf.

⁴ MPP § 63-402.141.

⁵ MPP § 63-102(p)(1)(B).

⁶ MPP § 63-402.142.

⁷ For the specific provisions regarding homeless youth, see MPP § 63-402.46.

⁸ MPP § 63-406.

⁹ MPP § 63-406.111.

¹⁰ MPP § 63-406.212.

¹¹ California Department of Social Services, All-County Information Notice No. I-36-12: Student Eligibility (June 27, 2012), available at http://www.cdss.ca.gov/lettersnotices/entres/getinfo/acin/2012/I-36_12.pdf.

¹² For a more complete list of exemptions, see All-County Letter No. 17-05: CalFresh Student Eligibility, available at <http://www.cdss.ca.gov/Portals/9/ACL/2017/17-05.pdf?ver=2017-02-15-111331-970>.

¹³ California Department of Social Services, All-County Information Notice No. I-68-17: CalFresh Treatment of Non-Minor Dependent (NMD) Foster Care Income (Oct. 2, 2017), available at <http://www.cdss.ca.gov/portals/9/acin/2017/i-68-17.pdf?ver=2017-10-02-151226-987>.

¹⁴ Presentation, California Department of Social Services, *CalFresh & Foster Youth* (December 2016), available at <http://www.chhs.ca.gov/Child%20Welfare/CalFresh%20and%20Foster%20Youth.pdf>.

¹⁵ California Department of Social Services, All-County Information Notice No. I-22-12: CalFresh for Foster Youth (May 1, 2012), available at <http://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/Letters-Regulations/Letters-and-Notices/All-County-Information-Notices>.

¹⁶ However, this is not true for a family receiving non-needy CalWORKs, who must be separately eligible for CalFresh.

¹⁷ California Department of Social Services, All-County Information Notice No. 13-108: Implementation of Assembly Bill 191 (Chapter 669, Statutes of 2013) – CalFresh Categorical Eligibility for Medi-Cal (Dec. 31, 2013), at 1, available at <http://www.cdss.ca.gov/lettersnotices/EntRes/getinfo/acl/2013/13-108.pdf>.