

CalFresh for SSI Recipients

Presented by Disability Rights California

Slide 2

What is changing?

- Until this year, SSI recipients were not eligible for food assistance benefits. Instead, SSI recipients received \$10 per month to buy food.
- On June 1, 2019, this is changing. People who receive SSI will also be able to receive food benefits, such as CalFresh or SNAP (both of which are sometimes called “Food Stamps.”) Benefits can be over \$100 extra dollars per month.
- CalFresh is California’s name for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). This is a federally funded program that provides recipients with money to purchase food.

Slide 3

Will this impact SSI benefits

No. This money is intended to assist SSI beneficiaries by providing them with extra money for food. If an SSI beneficiary receives CalFresh benefits, the SSI amount should not change, leaving more money to spend on rent or other important expenses.

Slide 4

How is CalFresh Calculated?

- CalFresh benefit amounts are calculated by household.

- A household is defined as a group of people who purchase and prepare meals together. (In some circumstances, you may see the term “purchase and eat meals together.”)
- Until now, a person who receives SSI was never included in the head count of a household.
- CalFresh staff use a formula that considers the amount of people in the household, the combined income of all members of the household, and then subtracts a variety of expenses and deductions, to determine how much money that household will receive for food.

Slide 5

Most households will see an increase in CalFresh benefits.

- Most SSI recipients who are receiving CalFresh for the first time will see an increase in benefits.
- This will be very apparent in households where every person in the household receives SSI.

Slide 6

A small group of households may see a reduction in CalFresh benefits

In some cases, if the SSI recipient lives with people who already have CalFresh, it is possible that the household amount may decrease or be eliminated. Here are two scenarios where that can happen:

- Scenario One: If several members of the same household receive CalFresh benefits and the household income is high enough that when the SSI beneficiary’s income is included, it can increase the household income so much that CalFresh benefits may be reduced.
- Scenario Two: If several members of the same household receive CalFresh and the household income is so high that when the SSI

recipient's income is included, the household income goes above the eligibility for CalFresh and the benefits are terminated for the entire household.

These should not be common scenarios because when you add an SSI recipient's income to the household, you are also adding that person into the headcount, so the amount of money per person may not change (it could even go down!) Even if several people live together, adding an SSI recipient will not automatically increase the household per capita income and reduce benefits.

Slide 7

Elderly and Disabled Exception

- There is also an exception for SSI recipients who are elderly and disabled. In some circumstances, a household member who is elderly AND disabled can count as a separate household and will not be included in the head count for the rest of the household. Their CalFresh award will stand alone.
- The elderly and disabled rule varies according to county and is applied on a case by case basis.

Slide 8

What happens if the CalFresh benefits are reduced or eliminated?

- In situations where a household may see a reduction or loss in CalFresh benefits, California has two programs aimed to supplement the household benefit. They are:
- The Supplemental Nutrition Benefit: This benefit will apply to households where the CalFresh benefits are reduced, but not eliminated on the EBT card.
- The Transitional Nutrition Benefit: This benefit will apply to households where CalFresh benefits are eliminated. The state will provide additional financial assistance on the EBT cards.

Slide 9

When to apply:

- Everyone is eligible to apply in May of 2019 and it is a good idea for SSI recipients to apply then.
- If you receive SSI and DO NOT live in a household currently receiving CalFresh benefits, you must apply if you want to receive CalFresh.
- If you receive SSI and you DO live in a household where the other members receive CalFresh benefits, you do not need to apply. When the program reviews the household benefit, it will add you. However, this will happen after the implementation of the program and can cause a delay in receiving the benefits, so it is a good idea to apply right away so that recipients can receive their benefits immediately.

Slide 10

How to Apply:

- Counties have been encouraged to help people apply online, on the phone, or in person!
- Here is the website where a person can apply:
<https://www.getcalfresh.org/?source=cdss>
- For a list of county offices, you can visit this website:
<http://www.cdss.ca.gov/County-Offices>
- The general helpline will have phone numbers for county offices and other helpful instructions on how to apply: 1-877-847-3663.

Slide 11

What happens next?

- Once a person is approved for CalFresh, the county will provide a debit card called an “EBT Card.” The EBT card looks like a normal debit card and the money is loaded onto it directly by the CalFresh program. Money is reloaded every month.
- EBT cards can be used at grocery stores and farmers’ markets.

Slide 12

People who live in facilities

CalFresh does not extend benefits to individuals living in facilities (like hospitals or nursing homes.) However, when a person is being discharged, applying for CalFresh can be part of the discharge planning

Slide 13

People who receive CAPI (Cash Assistance Program for Immigrants)

- People who receive CAPI will be eligible for an additional \$10 per month for food.

Slide 14

Any questions? Call Disability Rights California:

- Intake Line: 1-800-776-5746

We cannot assist with applications or appeals, but we will know where to send you!