

FSD Best Practices:

Advice for Partner Agencies on Advocacy and CalFresh Outreach

ADVOCACY

Instill the importance of advocacy in the minds of your staff/volunteers. Provide information about advocacy opportunities and new legislation to start a conversation. Join community groups and meetings, and be proactive in reaching out to government representatives. Connect with FSD's advocacy team and join us for Hunger Action Day.

Additional Advice

- **Instill importance of advocacy in staff, volunteers, and clients by emphasizing self-sufficiency and empowerment (and specifically train staff/volunteers to treat clients with dignity and reinforce this)**
- **Include advocacy information, legislation, and events in your area on your website or at your site, disseminate flyers on upcoming events or hold your own**
- **Make appointments with your local legislators and tell your story and the stories of your clients, be well-prepared by researching online and getting to know them on social media before-hand**
- **Join community groups and collaborations, be proactive about making your presence known in the community and always be open to new knowledge and opportunities**

You can find upcoming events and meetings on The City of San Diego's website, found here:

<http://www.sandiego.gov/>

You can also look up your representative and their contact information to request a meeting or advocate for your clients.

CALFRESH OUTREACH

Cross-train your staff and volunteers in CalFresh. Utilize satellite community sites for your outreach, such as libraries, schools, and parks, to reach new people in places where they feel comfortable. Reach out to FSD staff to send interns or train your staff on CalFresh basics and applications. Refer clients to 2-1-1 for application assistance.

Additional Advice

- **Keep CalFresh referral forms on-site for clients to fill out and for you to pass on to FSD for application assistance**
- **Take advantage of lines and speak to clients while they wait, ask if they know about CalFresh**

- **Educate yourself on the myths and facts about CalFresh so that you can properly represent it to your clients**
- **Host FSD CalFresh interns or staff**

Common Myths

Myth: People who are homeless are not eligible for CalFresh because you must have housing and a mailing address.

Fact: You do not have to have a permanent address to apply for CalFresh. Counties are required to provide options regarding mailing alternatives for homeless applicants to facilitate participation in the program. These options may include the use of P.O. boxes, alternative mailing addresses, general delivery pick-up (USPS), and pick up at the local Department of Social Services. If you live in a shelter, you can bring a letter from a shelter employee that says you live there when you apply.

Myth: Members of the military and their families cannot receive CalFresh.

Fact: Military members and their families can apply and receive CalFresh benefits if they meet eligibility requirements. Military pay can be complicated, and some types of pay are included in income reported on the CalFresh application, and some are not. Work with an advocate to ensure a fair analysis.

Myth: CalFresh is like welfare and you are considered a public charge when you receive CalFresh benefits.

Fact: CalFresh is not welfare or cash aid; it is funded by the USDA (US Department of Agriculture). “Public charge” is a term used to describe an individual who is likely to become primarily dependent on the government for subsistence, as demonstrated by the receipt of public cash assistance or use of long term care at government expense. CalFresh is not cash aid, and you will not be considered a public charge if you receive CalFresh.

Myth: I need to be employed or have some income to receive CalFresh.

Fact: Employment is not an eligibility requirement for CalFresh, and there is no minimum income requirement.

Myth: My children will have to repay CalFresh when they turn 18.

Fact: CalFresh is not a loan and does not need to be paid back by anyone who receives it.

Myth: If I get CalFresh, my kids will not be able to get free or reduced school lunches, and I will not be able to receive WIC (Women, Infant, and Children Program.)

Fact: All three programs are separate, and it is possible to receive WIC, the School Lunch Program, and CalFresh at the same time. All of these programs help to ensure that you and your family can be healthy and productive.

Myth: If I am undocumented and I go to the CalFresh Office on behalf of my family, the workers will turn me in. Immigration authorities check the CalFresh Office records.

Fact: Confidentiality is strictly enforced at the CalFresh Office, and client records cannot be checked or shared with Immigration authorities. The only time you should be concerned is if there is a warrant for your arrest; if so, your name will be turned into the authorities.

Myth: If a citizen or legal resident in my household applies for CalFresh, undocumented members of the household will be deported.

Fact: CalFresh is intended to make sure that those that are eligible receive benefits in order to increase access to healthy foods. Confidentiality is strictly enforced and client records are not shared or reported to Immigration. For example, an undocumented mother can apply for CalFresh on behalf of her citizen child and does not need to be concerned about deportation.

Myth: Signing up for CalFresh will affect my immigration status, or be used against me when I go to get Legal Permanent Residency or Citizenship status.

Fact: Non-cash benefits like CalFresh, Medi-Cal and WIC, will not affect immigration status and will not be used against you.