

Supporting Homeless, Food and Housing Insecure College Students

Presented by:

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Community Colleges*

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Overview

Homeless students in higher education

Homeless students and financial aid/FAFSA

Homeless Youth Liaisons – Assembly Bill 801

Verification of homeless youth status

AB 1930 and ACL 17-05 – new CalFresh student eligibility reqs

Income guidelines for CalFresh

CalFresh application process

JBAY - California College Pathways

- Statewide initiative managed by John Burton Advocates for Youth
- Includes CCC, CSU, UCs and Private Campuses
- Goal is to increase college access, retention & graduation for foster youth
- Expanding work into support for homeless youth
- Provides technical assistance and training; engages in advocacy; supports data collection and research efforts



Policy Update

Senate Bill 12 [2017]:

- Automated system to verify foster youth status
- Every county child welfare office must identify someone to assist foster youth with applications for college and financial aid
- Expands CAFYES districts from 11 up to 23

Proposed Senate Bill 940:

Expand foster youth access to CalGrants

- Allows foster youth to apply anytime before 26th birthday.
- Extends eligibility from 4 years to 8 years.
- Changes deadline for application from March 2nd to September 2nd.

Foundation for California Community Colleges

The Foundation for California Community Colleges is the statewide non-profit organization that supports the California Community College system and the Chancellor's Office.

- The Foundation works with the Chancellor's office to address the needs of homeless youth students, as well as to address food and housing insecurity across California's college students, by working in collaboration with the UC and CSU systems.



College students are homeless?

HOPE Lab's most recent research shows that 14% of college students surveyed report being homeless

1 in 2 students are housing insecure (unable to pay rent, temporarily housed, being priced out, etc.)

There are 15,000 homeless youth in California

Being homeless substantially reduces the odds of completing a degree

LGBTQ Youth and youth involved in the juvenile justice system or the foster care system are at a much greater risk of experiencing homelessness

How do youth end up homeless?

Abuse and/or neglect

- 40-60% of unaccompanied youth were abused physically at home
- 17-25% of unaccompanied youth were abused sexually at home
- Parental substance abuse a frequent precursor to youth leaving the home

Parents force youth out of the home due to conflicts

- Sexual orientation and gender identity (LGBT youth are at a higher risk of becoming homeless)
- Early pregnancy

The circumstances of homelessness force families apart

- Families separate due to lack of space in living situations or shelter policies
- 47% of youth experience homelessness both with their families and on their own

Exiting foster care or juvenile detention

- Approximately 30% of foster youth will experience homelessness after exiting foster care
- Many homeless youth come directly from juvenile detention centers
- Providers fail to create long-term plans

Challenges homeless youth students face

Lack of a supportive adult

Mental health issues and impact of trauma

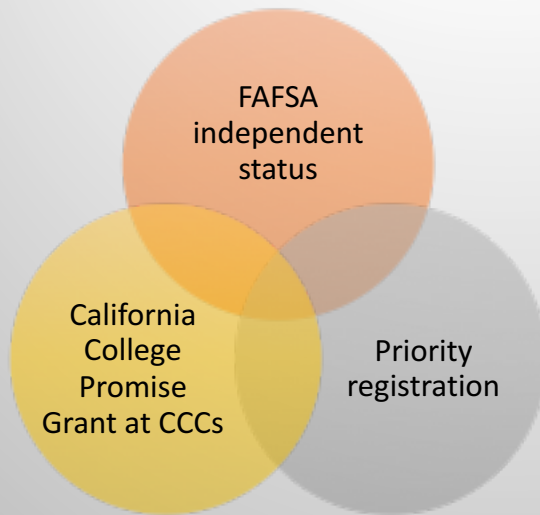
Insufficient support securing stable housing and reliable transportation

Insufficient support with deciding on a college major or potential career path, study skills

Inadequate financial resources - difficulty paying

Food insecurity

Key benefits available to homeless youth



Definition of “homeless youth”

McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

“homeless children and youth” --

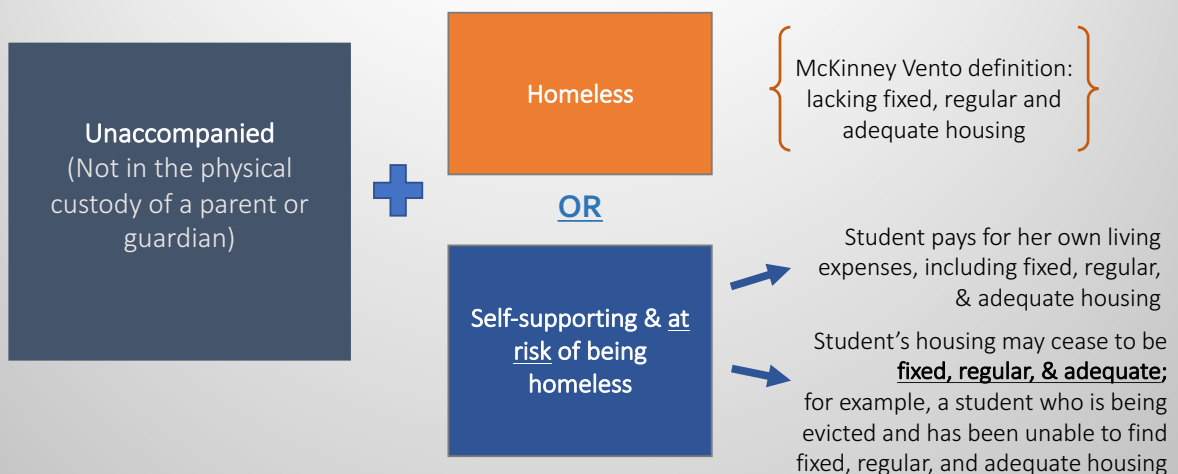
(a) means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence...;

*This definition at the heart of all benefits
but with certain key differences*

(B) and includes —

- (i) children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals;
- (ii) children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings...
- (iii) children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
- (iv) migratory children who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this subtitle because the children are living in circumstances described in clauses (i) through (iii).

Homeless and Independent Student Status



Note: Per AVG, a student living in any of these situations and fleeing an abusive parent may be considered homeless even if the parent would provide support and a place to live.

The Person Providing the Determination Should be the Person Indicated on the FAFSA

On or after July 1, 2017, were you homeless or were you self-supporting and at risk of being homeless?
☒ Yes ☐ No

At any time on or after July 1, 2017, did your high school or school district homeless liaison determine that you were an unaccompanied youth who was homeless or were self-supporting and at risk of being homeless?
☐ Yes ☒ No

At any time on or after July 1, 2017, did the director of an emergency shelter or transitional housing program funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development determine that you were an unaccompanied youth who was homeless or were self-supporting and at risk of being homeless?
☐ Yes ☒ No

At any time on or after July 1, 2017, did the director of a runaway or homeless youth basic center or transitional living program determine that you were an unaccompanied youth who was homeless or were self-supporting and at risk of being homeless?
☐ Yes ☒ No

[PREVIOUS](#) [NEXT](#)

Verification Guidelines



FAAs are not required to verify the answers to the FAFSA homeless youth questions - unless they have conflicting information



It is not conflicting information if an FAA disagrees with an authority's determination that a student is homeless



If an institution has no conflicting information, the institution should not request additional documentation;
 doing so may appear as if the FAA is asking applicants to explain or justify their circumstances, instead of simply providing documentation of their homeless status

FAFSA Verification of status

Unaccompanied homeless youth (independent student) determinations can be made by:

A local
homeless
education
liaison (K-12)

A Runaway
and Homeless
Youth Act -
funded shelter
or transitional
living program

A HUD-funded
shelter or
transitional
housing
program

A financial aid
administrator
designated by
the college

School district liaisons, RHYA program directors or designees, and HUD homeless assistance program directors or designees now are permitted to continue to make FAFSA determinations in subsequent years as long as the liaison has access to the information necessary to make such a determination for a particular youth

What if an unaccompanied homeless youth has no one to make a determination?

If the student is an unaccompanied homeless youth but does not have contact with a qualified individual to make a determination for them, the Financial Aid Administrator (FAA) must make the determination.



FAAs can get assistance with making case-by-case homelessness determinations by contacting, among others:

College access
programs

Doctors

Social workers

Mental health
professionals

Verification Guidelines

The determination may be based on a documented interview with the student if there is no written documentation available.



FAAs should determine **if** the student is unaccompanied and homeless or at risk of being so without regard for **why** the student is homeless

A new determination must be made each year for FAFSA

Templates for Determination Letter



- From SchoolHouse Connection:

https://www.schoolhouseconnection.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/SHC_FAFSA_Determination_2018_FINAL.doc



- From National Association for the Education of Homeless Children & Youth:

http://www.naehcy.org/sites/default/files/dl/legis/uy_fafsa_template_sept2016.doc

**Make sure to update the year on your letter*

Assembly Bill 801: Support for Homeless Students

Signed into law on September 21, 2016

AB 801 defines homeless youth as follows:

- “Homeless youth” means a student *under 25 years of age*,
- who has been verified at any time during the *24 months immediately preceding the receipt of his or her application for admission* by a postsecondary educational institution as a homeless child or youth, as defined in subsection (2) of Section 725 of the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. Sec. 11434a(2))

Assembly Bill 801

Requires a **Homeless Youth Liaison**

Financial Aid staff member, or staff in another appropriate office or department

Requires Homeless Youth Liaison to *inform current and prospective homeless youth students* about financial aid and other assistance available

Priority enrollment
verified homeless youth

(sunset date of January 1, 2020)

California College Promise Grant
automatic to verified homeless youth (as long as they meet minimum academic and progress standards)

Assembly Bill 801

- Once a student is verified as homeless, they **retain that status for a period of 6 years** or until they reach age 25, whichever comes first (unlike FAFSA verification which needs to happen annually).
- If a student enrolls in a different college, they will need to be re-verified at the new college (a phone call will suffice).

AB 801 Verification of Homeless Youth Status

Per AB 801, to be eligible for priority registration and California College Promise Grant, homeless status may be verified by:

A homeless
services
provider*

Federal TRIO
program or
GEAR-UP
program

A financial aid
administrator
for an institution
of higher
education

**Includes government or nonprofit agency receiving government funding to serve homeless persons, an attorney, local education liaison, or a State funded provider of health services, mental or behavioral health services, substance use disorder services, or public assistance or employment services.*

Tips for the verification conversation

Start by saying: "I need to ask you a few questions to determine if you meet the criteria for 'independent' or 'homeless' student status, which could help you gain access to special benefits. This conversation is completely confidential, and I won't share your information with anyone else unless I get your permission."

"Could your friend/relative that you are currently staying with ask you to leave if they wanted to? Where would you go if they asked you to leave?"

"Do you stay in the same place every night? Do you move around a lot?"

"Do you relate to any of these arrangements described (in the McKinney Vento definition)?"

"Tell me about where you are living. Is this arrangement permanent or temporary?"

Supporting homeless students

- Publicize the availability of a homeless student point of contact
- Maintain a resource list of community agencies such as shelters, food banks, transitional living programs, street outreach teams, drop-in centers, mental health resources
- Train faculty and staff regarding the needs of homeless students
- Avoid stigmatizing words such as "homeless." Use alternate wording such as "in a temporary living arrangement" or "without stable housing"

TRYING TO GO TO COLLEGE? LIVING ON YOUR OWN WITHOUT STABLE HOUSING?

Do you live in any of the following situations apart from your parents and with no financial support from them?

- ☐ In a shelter, motel, vehicle, or campground?
- ☐ On the street, in an abandoned building, or in another inadequate accommodation?
- ☐ Doubled-up temporarily with other people because you have nowhere else to live?
- ☐ In the dorm, but with nowhere else to live during school breaks when dorms close?
- ☐ Supporting yourself, but at risk of losing housing?

If so, you may qualify as an independent student on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) when applying for federal financial aid for college. Speak with any of the following persons to discuss your eligibility:

- ☐ The Local Homeless Education Liaison in your school district (graduating high school seniors)
- ☐ The director of a HUD-funded or Runaway and Homeless Youth Act-funded shelter where you have stayed or received services
- ☐ The college financial aid administrator of the college you attend or where you are applying

CONTACT:
Enter agency contact information here

Additional resources available from:
National Association for the Education of Homeless, Unstable and Youth • www.nasefa.org • College food banks • www.collegefoodbanks.org

CalFresh Overview

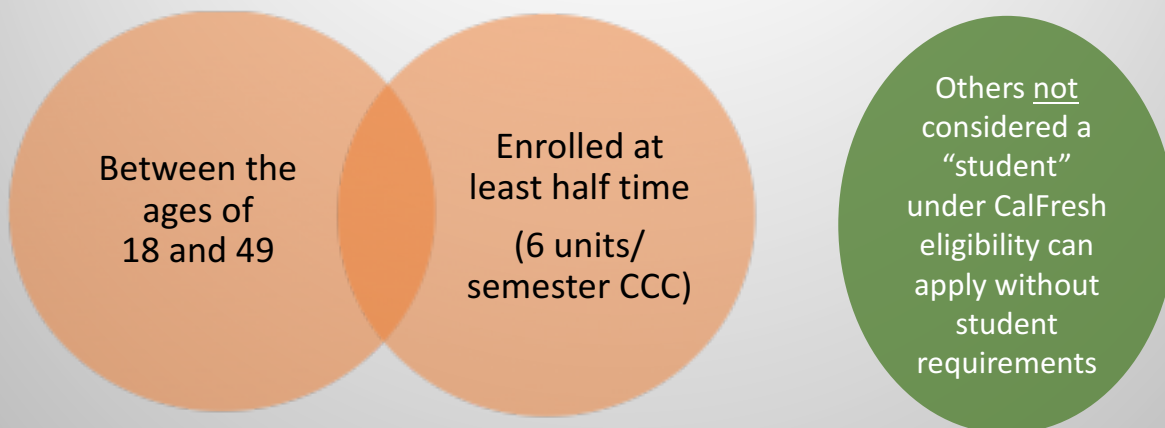


- Assembly Bill 1930 changed the rules around student eligibility for CalFresh. Many more students are now eligible for CalFresh.
- CalFresh (previously called “food stamps”) is a federally funded program that allows income-eligible recipients to purchase food.
- CalFresh benefits cannot be used to purchase hot ready-to-eat foods, alcohol, tobacco, medication, or supplements.

CalFresh Overview



How does CalFresh determine who is a “student”?



CalFresh Overview



If you are a student between ages 18-49, enrolled at least half-time and meet income eligibility, you must also meet any ONE of the following:

- Working in paid employment for 20 hours per week OR 80 hours averaged monthly;
- Approved for (or awarded or accepted) for federal or state work study and anticipating a placement;
- Enrolled in a state funded program that increases employability (EOP, EOPS, WIOA, DSPS, CARE, UC McNair, Puente, or MESA)
- Enrolled in a program that increases employability for current and former foster youth (Guardian Scholars, FYSI, CAFYES, Chafee (ETV), or Extended Foster Care);
- Exerting parental control over a dependent household member under the age of 6 OR between the ages of 6 and 12 with no adequate childcare (as determined by the county on a case-by-case basis);
- Enrolled full time in an institution of higher education AND be a single parent of a dependent household member under the age of 12; or
- Participating in the CalFresh Employment and Training Program (CFET) or be a recipient of CalWorks or JOBS
- In a program under Section 236 of the Trade Act of 1974.

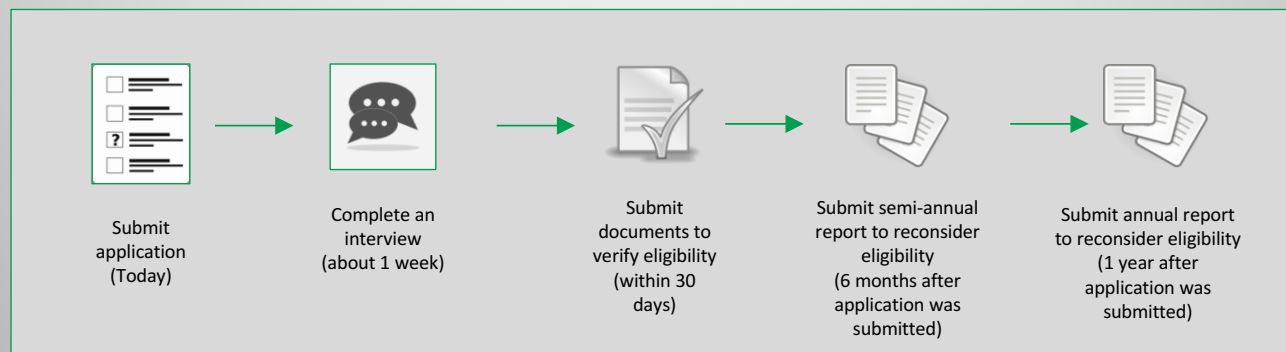
Refer to [ACL 17-05](#) for more info

CalFresh Overview



To apply for CalFresh benefits, go to www.benefitscal.org to find out which online portal your county uses.

30-Day Application Process:



CalFresh Overview



How does CalFresh define a “household”?

- an individual or unit of individuals that buy and prepare food together.

A CalFresh household must meet income guidelines and reside in California as a legal resident or citizen.



CalFresh Overview



MONTHLY INCOME LIMITS		MAXIMUM MONTHLY ALLOTMENT	
NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN HOUSEHOLD	GROSS MONTHLY INCOME	NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN HOUSEHOLD	MAXIMUM CALFRESH ALLOTMENT
1	\$2,010	1	\$192
2	\$2,708	2	\$352
3	\$3,404	3	\$504
4	\$4,100	4	\$640
5	\$4,798	5	\$760
6	\$5,494	6	\$913

Effective October 1, 2017 to September 30, 2018

CalFresh Overview



What counts as income?

- Income from a job
- Stipends (when paid directly to the student)
- Money/allowances from a parent
- Private grants and scholarships (after allowable educational expenses are subtracted)

For additional guidance please refer to the [LSNC Guide to CalFresh Benefits](#)

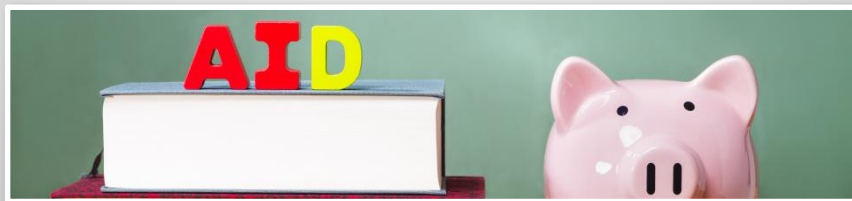
CalFresh Overview



Does financial aid count as income?

- Grants, scholarships and work study are not counted as income when determining CalFresh eligibility. They are considered exempt income.

Examples: Pell grant, Chafee grant, Cal Grants, Stafford, Perkins, PLUS, and consolidation loans.



****CalFresh benefits do not count as income and do not affect taxes or financial aid eligibility**

CalFresh Overview



Educational Assistance and Gift Card Policy

- When providing students **educational assistance** (e.g. stipends, book vouchers, gift cards, emergency funds, etc.), the lender/third party may “ earmark” the funds to be used for educational purposes as outlined in MPP 63-502.2(e).

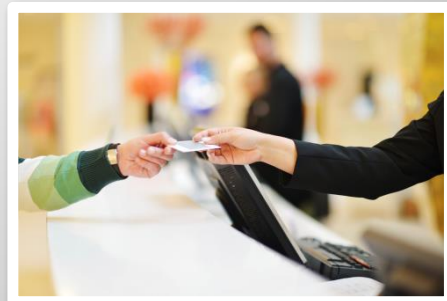


Recent Policy Guidance – NMD Eligibility

Gift Cards & Income

If a program or provider gives the student a gift card instead of money as a stipend, the gift card is only counted as income if it is a credit card company prepaid gift card (like a VISA gift card).

Establishment-specific gift cards are excluded as resources in determining a household's eligibility or benefit level.



CalFresh Overview



Tips for students experiencing homelessness when applying for CalFresh benefits:

- Make sure they have a reliable phone number
- Homeless individuals can utilize a free PO box using general delivery at their local post office
- Many campuses allow students to receive mail on campus
- Always have other immediate food assistance resources available (referrals to food pantry, community food bank, gift cards, etc.)
- Homeless students may be eligible for expedited benefits

For additional guidance please refer to the [LSNC Guide to CalFresh Benefits](#)

CalFresh Overview



Typical Required Verification Documents:*

- Identification
- Pay stubs (if employed)
- Proof of residency (a piece of mail with current address)
- Utility bill (can sign own affidavit if obtaining this is a barrier or bill is not in applicant's name)
- Financial Aid/Work Study award letter
- Proof of enrollment and number of units

**other documentation may be requested*

Scenarios

Q: I know a student who resides with non-legal residents, can the household still apply for CalFresh benefits?

A: Yes, the household can still apply. The non-legal residents would not be included for the purpose of determining the amount of benefits the household would be eligible to receive.

Q: What if a student attends college in a different county than where they live?

A: The student can still apply on campus, but should use the online application for the county in which they currently reside.

Scenarios

Q: Does a 17-year-old student who is also homeless apply with her family or as an individual?

A: If a student is verified as independent or UHY, she can apply as individual without her family.

Q: I have a student that lives independently from his parents, but his parents help supplement his income. Does he apply with his parents or as an individual?

A: The student should still apply as an individual since his parents are not part of his CalFresh household (buy and prepare food together). He still needs to report the income from his parents as unearned income.

Question and Answer



Upcoming events

Webinar: Supporting Homeless College Students: Legal Obligations and Best Practices

Date: Wednesday, April 4th

Time: 10:00 AM – 11:00 AM

To register:

<https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/4477574576357195777> OR jbafor youth.org

Upcoming events

California Community Colleges Basic Needs Summit

Date: April 26th & 27th

Location: Sacramento, CA

To register:

<https://www.regonline.com/builder/site/Default.aspx?EventId=2167657>

For more
information

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