JOHN BURTON Advocates for Youth

Frequently Asked Questions:
Non-Minor Dependents & Former Foster Youth
CALFRESH ELIGIBILITY & BENEFITS

COMMON ELIGIBILITY QUESTIONS

1. Are Non-Minor Dependents (NMDs) and former foster youth eligible for CalFresh?

Yes, current and former foster youth, including NMDs, are eligible for CalFresh if they meet other eligibility requirements.[i] Eligibility for CalFresh benefits is made on a case-by-case basis and considers the applicant's earned and unearned income, including any portion of the foster care payment they receive directly; assets; household composition; the amount of rent and utility expenses; student status and other factors.

WHAT IS A "NON-MINOR DEPENDENT"?

A "non-minor dependent" or "NMD" is a person who is 18, 19 or 20 years old and is participating in extended foster care (under dependency, transition, or delinquency jurisdiction). Extended foster care was established in 2010 by Assembly Bill (AB) 12, The California Fostering Connections to Success Act and was implemented starting in 2012.

WHAT IS CALFRESH?

CalFresh is California's food stamp program, known federally as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). CalFresh issues monthly electronic benefits that can be used to buy most foods at many farmers' markets, grocery stores, online food stores, and all public colleges and universities.

2. What are the income requirements for CalFresh eligibility?

CalFresh eligibility is based on gross and net income determination tests. Gross income is all non-excludable income from any source including both earned and unearned income. Net income is what is left after deductions are applied to the gross income. The maximum gross income allowed is 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL).[ii] The maximum net income allowed is 100% of the FPL.[iii] *(For maximum household incomes for each household size, see table above)*. Income deductions and exemptions are described in questions 7-10.

GROSS MONTHLY INCOME ELIGIBILITY STANDARDS
(200% Federal Poverty Level)

Household Size	Gross Income
1	$2,660
2	$3,608
3	$4,554
4	$5,500
5	$6,448
6	$7,394
7	$8,340
8	$9,288
Each add'l member	+$948

MAXIMUM MONTHLY ALLOTMENTS FFY27

Household Size	Maximum Allotment
1	$306
2	$562
3	$808
4	$1,023
5	$1,217
6	$1,463
7	$1,616
8	$1,841
Each add'l member	+$225

These tables, in addition to the net income eligibility table are provided by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) on their website, and by the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) in ACIN I-40-26.

3. Does an NMD's foster care payment impact income eligibility?

Yes, if the payment goes to the NMD. Any portion of the foster care payment that is received *directly* by the NMD is considered unearned income and included when determining the household's eligibility and benefit level. Any portion of the foster care payment that is *not* paid directly to the NMD is considered a vendor payment and therefore excluded from unearned income.[iv] Below are some examples by placement:

Supervised Independent Living Placement (SILP): An NMD's monthly SILP payment is counted as unearned income when they receive it directly. If this payment is going directly from the county to a landlord to pay for rent, then the amount is considered a vendor payment, and is excluded from income consideration.

Transitional Housing Placement for Non-Minor Dependents (THP-NMD): The monthly THP-NMD rate the provider receives per youth is considered a vendor payment and is ***not*** counted as income. The monthly stipend that an NMD in a THP-NMD placement receives *directly* from the provider is counted as unearned income. While the THP-NMD rate is set and providers receive the same monthly payment per youth, the amount that the providers choose to pass on *directly* to the youth varies. Note that any amount that the provider pays to a landlord for rent is considered a vendor payment and is excluded from income consideration.

4. What about parenting foster youth who receive an Infant Supplement, Expectant Parent Payment, or Parenting Support Plan payment to assist with the costs of caring for their child? Are these payments counted as income?

Yes, the same rules on direct payments apply. Any portion of the monthly Infant Supplement, Expectant Parent Payment, or Parenting Support Plan payment that is received *directly* by the NMD is considered unearned income and included in income consideration.*

- **Expectant Parent Payment (EPP) and Parenting Support Plan (PSP) Payment:** The EPP is always paid directly to the NMD, regardless of placement, as well as the PSP payment, which is only provided to NMDs in SILPs.
- **Infant Supplement:** Most NMDs in SILPs receive the Infant Supplement directly as opposed to using a payee. For those who receive the payment directly, the entire payment is counted as unearned income. For NMDs in THP-NMD, the Infant Supplement is passed through to the NMD by the THP-NMD provider. The provider must pass through the full Infant Supplement payment to the NMD unless there is a shared agreement documenting that a portion of the Infant Supplement will be retained by the THP-NMD provider to assist with any costs the provider covers for the NMD's child.[v] In this instance, only the portion of the Infant Supplement passed through to the NMD is considered unearned income.

**NOTE: The Infant Supplement and Expectant Parent Payment each previously provided a flat $900 per month per child, however, as of July 1, 2026, the monthly payments increase annually for inflation according to the California Necessities Index (CNI).[vi] The Parenting Support Plan for NMDs in SILPs provides $200 per month per child and does not have an annual CNI increase.*

5. Does participation in the Transitional Housing Program-Plus (THP-Plus) for *former* foster youth impact CalFresh eligibility?

Yes, although youth participating in the THP-Plus program are not NMDs, the rules for counting income are the same as they are for THP-NMD. The monthly stipend amount that a youth participating in the THP-Plus program receives *directly* from the provider is counted as unearned income.[vii]

6. If an NMD lives in a household where other individual(s) are already receiving CalFresh benefits, can they still apply?

Yes. In shared living arrangements where meals are purchased and prepared *separately*, each individual may apply for CalFresh benefits separately (i.e. THP-NMD, renting a room in a SILP). In shared living arrangements where meals are customarily purchased and prepared *together*, the Head of Household would apply for CalFresh benefits on behalf of the entire household (more commonly in Resource Family homes). Parenting youth are required to have at least 50% custody of their children to include children in their household and must determine which household should claim the child in the case of shared custody; a child cannot be claimed in more than one household.

A CalFresh household has the option to include or exclude an NMD and the foster care payment when determining the household's eligibility and benefit level. The exception to this rule applies to NMDs who are a CalFresh household of one, as is often the case for NMDs in SILPs or THP-NMD. An NMD and the NMD's income cannot be excluded from a household of one as no CalFresh household would remain.[viii]

7. What are income deductions, which are more common to NMDs, and how do they work?

An applicant's net income is determined by deducting certain allowed amounts from the gross income. Types of income deductions that are more common to NMDs are listed in the table below. Deduction amounts are adjusted annually by the USDA at the beginning of each federal fiscal year, based on changes in the **cost of living** (COLA). Current amounts can be found on the USDA **website**. The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) also releases an annual All County Information Notice (ACIN) that includes the updated amounts based on the COLAs. See **ACIN I-40-26** for Federal Fiscal Year 2026-27 (FFY27) COLAs which applies to October 1, 2026, through September 30, 2027.

FFY27 ALLOWANCE OR DEDUCTION AMOUNT	DESCRIPTION
Standard Deduction **$217 for households of 1-3**	All CalFresh recipients receive the standard deduction. For households of 1-3 people, this deduction is $217 for FFY27.
Earned Income Deduction **20%**	All CalFresh recipients have an allowable deduction of 20%. This means that NMDs who are working can automatically deduct 20% of the amount they earn from wages or salaries to calculate their net income.

FFY27 ALLOWANCE OR DEDUCTION AMOUNT	DESCRIPTION
Excess Medical Deduction **$120 standard, or actual expenses if more than $155**	A household with at least one elderly or disabled household member with that member's non-reimbursed eligible medical expenses over $35 can deduct $120 for the standard medical deduction, or actual eligible medical expenses if more than $155 per month.
Dependent Care Deduction **Actual cost**	Actual cost of payments necessary for dependent care if that care enables a household member to accept or continue employment or training, or education preparatory for employment. An NMD who pays for childcare, when that childcare enables them to work or attend training/education preparatory for work, should deduct their childcare costs.
Homeless Shelter Allowance **$205.66**	Available to homeless households who are not receiving free shelter for the entire month. If this deduction is applied, the household cannot use the Standard Utility Allowance. Shelter costs do not have to be verified; however, if the household can verify higher shelter costs than the current FFY27 allowance of $205.66, they can claim a higher amount.
Maximum Shelter Deduction **Up to $769**	When monthly shelter costs are in excess of 50% of the household's income after all other applicable deductions have been allowed, they are eligible for the Maximum Shelter Deduction up to $769 for FFY27. However, for homeless households, if actual verified homeless shelter costs are higher than the Homeless Shelter Deduction, the actual cost may be used as a housing cost instead of a homeless shelter deduction, and utility costs may be claimed.
Standard Utility Allowance **$686**	When heating or cooling costs are separate from the rent payment, the household is eligible for this deduction. An NMD who pays their heating or cooling bill *separate* from their rent payment (i.e. making payments directly to the utility company) is allowed the Standard Utility Allowance which is $686 for FFY27.
Limited Utility Allowance **$176**	When a household is not eligible for the Standard Utility Allowance but incurs expenses for at least two separate types of utilities other than heating or cooling (i.e. telephone, water, sewerage or garbage/trash removal), they are eligible for the Limited Utility Allowance which is $176 for FFY27.
Telephone Utility Allowance **$21**	When a household is not eligible for the Standard Utility Allowance or the Limited Utility Allowance, but incurs telephone costs, they are eligible for the Telephone Utility Allowance which is $21 for FFY27.

8. Are there any types of income that are not counted when considering CalFresh eligibility?

Yes, there are certain types of income that are not counted when calculating gross or net income. These should be communicated clearly to the eligibility worker during the interview, including:

- Earned income if the NMD's Transitional Independent Living Plan (TILP)* states that the purpose of their employment is to gain knowledge of needed work skills, work habits and the responsibilities of maintaining employment;[ix]
- In-kind benefits (any gain or benefit that is not in the form of money – i.e. meals,** clothing, housing provided by employer, etc.);
- Vendor payments (money paid to third party for a household expense by a person or organization outside of the household);
- Deferred educational loans;
- Grants and scholarships;
- Credit card company gift cards (i.e. American Express, MasterCard, Visa, etc.) if the gift card cannot be reasonably anticipated by the CalFresh recipient; and any establishment-specific gift cards (i.e. specific grocery stores, gas stations, retail stores, etc.);[x]
- Cash donations from a charitable organization of not more than $300 in a calendar quarter; and,
- Income received too infrequently/irregularly to be reasonably anticipated but not more than $30 in a quarter.[xi]

** Eligibility workers may be unfamiliar with the TILP income allowance, youth should flag this during their CalFresh eligibility interview.*

***The exception to the in-kind benefits meals rule is that those who live in an institution and receive half of their meals or more by the institution are ineligible for CalFresh benefits. This includes college students who reside in dormitories.*[xii]

9. If an NMD or former foster youth in a THP-NMD or THP-Plus program receives a gift card from their housing provider, is it counted as income?

Generally, no. Establishment-specific gift cards (i.e. specific grocery stores, gas stations, retail stores, etc.) are excluded as income and resources when determining a household's eligibility or benefit level.[xiii] When a housing provider gives the NMD or former foster youth a gift card instead of cash as a stipend, the gift card is only counted as income when determining a household's eligibility or benefit level if it is a credit card company prepaid gift card (i.e. American Express, MasterCard, Visa, etc.), ***and*** the gift card can be reasonably anticipated each month. If the credit card company gift card cannot be reasonably anticipated, it is counted as a resource.

10. Should current or former foster youth include any "under the table" income they earn on their CalFresh application?

Yes, all income must be reported when applying for and recertifying benefits. After benefits are initiated, CalFresh households are issued their Income Reporting Threshold (IRT), which is unique to their household based on household size, income and expenses. If the household income increases above this IRT, the household must report the income to the county. As long as earned income, cash or otherwise, is under this threshold, it does not need to be reported.

11. What is the Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) time limit?

Under federal policy, individuals considered "Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents" (ABAWDs) are eligible to receive CalFresh benefits for only three full months in a 36-month period unless they meet certain work requirements. This is commonly referred to as the "ABAWD time limit." An ABAWD is defined as a CalFresh recipient, age 18 through 64, who is "able-bodied" (does not have a verified disability), does not have dependent children under the age of 14 and does not meet the criteria for an exemption. ABAWD eligibility for CalFresh is time-limited unless the individual:

- Satisfies the ABAWD work requirement;
- Is exempt from the ABAWD time limit;
- Qualifies for an additional three consecutive month period of eligibility;
- Receives a discretionary exemption; or,
- Lives in a county or area with a waiver of the ABAWD time limit.[xiv]

Questions 12-15 explain how NMDs and former foster youth are impacted by the ABAWD time limit.

12. What is federal law H.R. 1 and how does this impact CalFresh eligibility for NMDs and former foster youth?

Effective June 1, 2026, current and former foster youth, including NMDs, must meet or be exempt from ABAWD work requirements to receive CalFresh benefits without a time limit.[xv] New federal policy, established in 2025 by **Public Law 119-21** (also referred to as H.R. 1), changes previous regulations that exempted NMDs from the ABAWD work requirement.[xvi]

Federal law permits some counties or states to have an exemption from the ABAWD policy, generally due to elevated unemployment rates. From November 1, 2026, through October 31, 2027, the ABAWD time limit *is not* in effect in the following counties: Colusa, Imperial, Kings, Merced, Monterey, Plumas, and Tulare. CalFresh participants in these counties, including current and former foster youth, do not need to meet ABAWD work requirements while the waivers are in effect. CalFresh participants in all other California counties are subject to the ABAWD work requirements. See Questions 13-15 for information on how NMDs and former foster youth may meet or be exempt from the ABAWD work requirement.

13. Do all NMDs and former foster youth, including NMDs, have to meet the work requirements?

No, CDSS policy exempts some CalFresh applicants and recipients from ABAWD work requirements through state implementation of federal regulations.[xvii] NMDs and former foster youth are no longer exempt from federal time limits on benefits due to their involvement in the child welfare system alone. However, they may not need to meet work requirements if they qualify for an updated CalFresh ABAWD time limit exemption as described in questions 14-15, or for a student exemption described in questions 16-19.

14. Which CalFresh ABAWD exemptions could help NMDs and former foster youth qualify for greater access to CalFresh benefits?

NMDs and former foster youth who meet a CalFresh ABAWD exemption can qualify for CalFresh benefits without the time-limit. If any of the following exemptions apply, it is important that this is communicated with the eligibility worker, see **ACL 26-67**:

- Earning at least $217.50/week ($870/month).
    - Being mentally or physically unable to work (cannot regularly work 30 hours/week of work or training).
- Parenting or responsible for the care of a child under age 6 or someone who is incapacitated.
- Meeting TANF/CalWORKs work requirements.
- Applying for or receiving unemployment benefits.
- Applying for or receiving Social Security Administration benefits or any other type of disability benefit, including Supplemental Security Income (SSI).
- Regularly participating in a drug or alcohol treatment and rehabilitation program.
- Enrolled at least ½ time in a school or training program and meet at least one of the CalFresh student exemption criteria (see question 17).

15. What is the CalFresh ABAWD "exemption file," who is included, and how does it work? How does AB 2765 (2026, Ahrens) support NMDs and former foster youth access to CalFresh?

CDSS policy permits automated electronic verification of available data that indicates CalFresh participants' fulfillment of ABAWD work requirements or exemptions. This automatic process can support NMDs and former foster youth at the time of application or recertification, as they will not be required to individually go through the certification process with a county eligibility worker.

Assembly Bill (AB) 2765 (2026, Ahrens) established the automation of specific data that verifies youth who qualify for an exemption due to a medical or mental health condition. AB 2765 automatically exempts these NMDs and former foster youth ages 24 and younger who have a documented behavioral or physical health condition in their case plan or other applicable records.[xviii]

The CDSS "exemption file" based on administrative data also verifies information for disabled individuals served by Regional Centers, recipients of In-Home Supportive

Services, and individuals experiencing homelessness with obvious physical or mental unfitness for work.[xix]

In addition to automation of data exempting current and former foster youth from the ABAWD work requirement, AB 2765 also automated data verifying compliance with the ABAWD work requirement for certain NMDs. Those participating in extended foster care under participation condition number 4, "employed at least 80 hours per month," will be automatically verified as meeting the ABAWD work requirement using extended foster care data.

AB 2765 is subject to an urgency clause, taking immediate effect as of the day the bill was signed, September 18, 2026. However, streamlined verification of compliance with or exemption from work requirements for current or former foster youth will not occur until a process has been established to provide the data and the necessary changes have been automated.

COMMON POSTSECONDARY STUDENT ELIGIBILITY QUESTIONS

16. Does being a student impact an NMD or former foster youth's eligibility for CalFresh?

Yes, depending on the enrollment status of the NMD or former foster youth. If the NMD or former foster youth is enrolled in high school or is enrolled in postsecondary education for less than half-time there are no changes to eligibility rules. If they are enrolled half-time or more there are additional student rules. The institution of higher education determines what is considered "half-time" enrollment. Due to federal regulations, students attending an institution of higher education (i.e., college, university, trade/technical school) half-time or more are only eligible for CalFresh *if they meet an exemption*. Students who meet an exemption must also meet all other **CalFresh eligibility requirements**. See **ACL 24-31** for the CalFresh Student Eligibility Handbook.[xx,xxi]

17. What student exemptions can qualify an NMD or former foster youth who is enrolled half-time or more for CalFresh?

Students must meet household income eligibility requirements described in questions 2-10 and meet one of the following student exemption criteria:

- Enrolled in high school.
- Enrolled in higher education institutions less than half-time as defined by the institution.
- Enrolled in schools and training programs which are not institutions of higher education.
- Employed for a minimum of 20 hours per week or 80 hours per month and be paid for such employment.
- Participating in a government-funded Local Program that Increases Employability (LPIE), see **ACL 26-25** for details.
- Approved for federally financed work study for the current term and anticipate working during the term.

- A parent under any of the following conditions:
  - A parent with a dependent child under age 6;
  - A parent with a dependent child age 6-12 and for whom lack of adequate childcare prevents them from attending class and working 20 hours per week or participating in work study; or,
  - A student enrolled full-time in a higher education institution and is a single parent with a dependent child under age 12.
- Receiving a Cal Grant A or B,* unmarried, 25 years or younger, and income of less than $50,000 per year.
- Be assessed as physically or mentally unfit for employment.

**NOTE: The Cal Grant B Access Award and Cal Grant C do not qualify a student for the exemption. Cal Grants A and B are Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)-funded programs which is an exemption category.*[xxii]

18. What is a Local Program that Increases Employability (LPIE) and how does an NMD or former foster youth qualify for this student exemption?

A Local Program that Increases Employability (LPIE) is a state or local government program that helps people build skills for work. Programs can include education or training that improves basic skills, builds work readiness, or helps someone find and keep a job. The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) decides which programs count and explain these criteria in **ACL 26-25**. CDSS states that all undergraduate degree programs at California Community Colleges, California State Universities, and University of California are now considered LPIEs.[xxiii] Students studying at least half -time in these associate or bachelor's undergraduate degree programs qualify for the CalFresh student exemption. Additional programs, such as Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs, or approved campus-based programs at public post-secondary education institutions, may still be designated as LPIEs through the previous CDSS process.[xxiv] This exemption does not apply to students enrolled in private institutions of higher education.

19. Are grants and scholarships counted as income when applying for CalFresh?

No. Grants and scholarships are considered exempt income.[xxv] They should not be included on the CalFresh application as income. As of 2026, this now includes non-need-based educational assistance, whether the funds are paid directly to the institution or to the recipient.[xxvi] See policy details in **ACL 26-16.**

COMMON APPLICATION AND PROCESS QUESTIONS

20. What is the first step to an application for CalFresh?

CalFresh benefits are managed through county welfare departments. Individuals applying or recertifying for CalFresh can do so online by visiting **https://benefitscal.com**, or go to their county CalFresh office in person if they prefer. County welfare department office locations are identified here: **https://calfresh.dss.ca.gov/food/officelocator**.

Post-secondary students have an optional **application portal on BenefitsCal** with guidance addressing student-specific requirements.[xxvii] If applying online, applicants will first create a user account with BenefitsCal, which allows users to save, exit, and return to applications and manage all benefit reporting requirements going forward.

Many local food banks and colleges have CalFresh Outreach teams that can help you with the application process.

The CalFresh applicant will be required to have an interview with the county to discuss the application, usually over the phone, but that can be conducted in person if requested. Counties are required to support applicants needing translation assistance or disability accommodations, which can be requested on the application on BenefitsCal or at any time.

21. What documents are required to submit with an application?

The CalFresh application includes questions about the number of people in the household, all types of income, expenses, and immigration status. Applicants will need to upload or provide proof of identity and residence, a social security number (SSN) or proof application for a SSN, relevant immigration documents if applicable, and financial documents verifying income, resources, and expenses.[xxviii] Individuals experiencing homelessness do not need to provide proof of residence. Applicants and those seeking more information can find assistance through BenefitsCal or at **https://www.getcalfresh.org**.

22. How is an applicant notified about approval or denial of benefits?

The county welfare department will send a letter to let a household know if it is approved or denied CalFresh benefits within 30 days. Individuals experiencing homelessness and those without a stable residence can request that mail be sent to an address managed by the county, usually to a county welfare building address.

CalFresh applicants can check their application status using their BenefitsCal account. If applicants miss their telephone interview, need to reschedule, or have not received a notification of approval or denial within 30 days, they should call their county welfare department at the number listed here: **https://www.getcalfresh.org/en/resources/#counties.**

23. How often must NMDs or former foster youth recertify their eligibility for CalFresh benefits?

At a minimum, every six months. Individuals receiving CalFresh support must recertify every six months and notify the county welfare department if there are changes in income, residence, household size, or expenses that were included in the application. Changes in income only need to be reported if they exceed the household's Income Reporting Threshold (IRT), an amount determined specifically for their household by the county welfare department. If a household misses a required report of income over the IRT, the county must recalculate the monthly allotment for the months in which the household income exceeded the IRT, and the household must return funds equal to the overpayments.

CalFresh households must recertify and interview before the 15th day of the last month they are currently approved to receive benefits. If they fail to do so, their benefits will stop. Households have up to 30 days after benefits cease to complete recertification. If they miss the 30-day deadline, households must reapply as a new CalFresh case. Through a state waiver in effect until April 2029, CalFresh applications, including recertifications, can be denied for failure to submit requested verification within 10 days of the written request even if 30 days have not passed since the application date.

24. Are CalFresh benefits denials common and what are the reasons for denial?

The most common denial reasons are related to missing or incomplete information and missed phone interviews. While some CalFresh applicants are denied benefits due to being found ineligible (see eligibility questions), the majority of applicants are denied due to incorrect or incomplete actions during the application process.

In August 2026, 34% of CalFresh applications were denied statewide. Of these, 70% were due to actions during the application process. CalFresh applications for post-secondary students had a 45% denial rate, and 62% were due to application process actions – the most common being failure to complete an interview with the county welfare department eligibility staff. Most interview calls come from an unknown or blocked number. Eligibility staff will call twice before reporting a failure to interview. Applicants are encouraged to call the same day as the missed interview to reschedule. Another common reason for denial in the application process is incorrect or incomplete documents necessary for verification of application details. See question 21 above for information on required documents.

25. What can an NMD or former foster youth applicant do if they are denied or discontinued from CalFresh benefits?

If a CalFresh application is denied, applicants can file an appeal within 90 days. If benefits are discontinued, the household must request a hearing within 10 days to continue receiving benefits. NMDs and former foster youth can find appeal process information on their mailed Notice of Action letter from the county welfare department, or file an appeal at the state Appeals Case Management System here: **https://acms.dss.ca.gov/acms/login.request.do**.

COMMON BENEFIT QUESTIONS

26. What can and cannot be purchased with CalFresh?

CalFresh benefits can be used to buy almost all foods, including baby formula, as well as seeds and plants to grow food. Alcohol, tobacco, pet food, food that will be eaten in the store, hot foods, or anything that is not food (like toothpaste, soap, or paper towels) cannot be purchased with CalFresh benefits.

The exception to the hot food exclusion is the Restaurant Meals Program (RMP), which allows people at high risk for chronic hunger to use their CalFresh benefits to buy prepared meals at approved participating restaurants. RMP needs separate approval and is only available for individuals experiencing homelessness, people with disabilities, and seniors.[xxix] Additionally, during certain disasters, a Hot Foods Waiver may be approved, which temporarily allows CalFresh recipients to purchase hot, prepared foods.

27. Where can CalFresh benefits be used and matched?

CalFresh benefits can be used to purchase food at grocery stores, farmers' markets, and even some flea markets. They can also be used to purchase food online with participating retailers.[xxx] CalFresh participants have access to **Market Match,** which doubles the value of each CalFresh dollar to a set amount (generally $15) at many farmers markets across the state when purchasing fruits, vegetables, fresh-cut herbs, and edible plant starts.

28. What amount of CalFresh benefits will single or married NMDs or former foster youth likely qualify for?

A single or married NMD or former foster youth may be eligible for the current federal fiscal year (FFY27) maximum monthly allotment which is $306 for an individual and $562 for a two-person household. The amount of CalFresh benefits a household gets depends on how many people are in the household and how much monthly net income remains after taking allowable deductions, outlined in questions 7 and 8.

This calculation takes the federally determined maximum amount of CalFresh benefits a household can get based on household size, and deducts 30% of the household's net income. This means that for every $10 of net income the household has, the county welfare department will reduce the CalFresh allotment by $3.

Maximum allotments are adjusted by the USDA at the beginning of each federal fiscal year, based on changes in the cost of living (COLA). A chart that shows the maximum monthly allotments by household size for the current federal fiscal year is included in question 2 of this FAQ. CDSS includes this information in their annual notice released every September, see **ACIN I-40-26**.

29. What amount of CalFresh benefits will parenting NMDs or former foster youth likely qualify for?

Parenting NMDs or former foster youth would receive a benefit amount reflective of their household size that could include the other parent, if in the household, and the number of eligible children. The current federal fiscal year maximum monthly allotment is $562 for a two-person household and $808 for a three-person household. Pregnancy does not change household size for CalFresh until the baby is born.*

**Note that an expectant NMD does qualify for an Expectant Parent Payment in months 7-9 of pregnancy, which can help them afford nutritious meals. See ACL 21-123 for payment details.*

30. If an NMD also receives Supplemental Security Income or State Supplemental Program payments (SSI/SSP), does this affect their eligibility?

No. Individuals receiving SSI or SSP are eligible for CalFresh, provided all other eligibility criteria are satisfied.[xxxi] See **ACL 18-90** for eligibility details.

31. How long will it take from the time the CalFresh application is submitted to the time when the first benefit payment is received?

It may take up to 30 days for the county welfare department to process the application. However, a CalFresh applicant may be able to get benefits within 3 calendar days if the household's monthly gross income (income before deductions) is less than $150 and their cash on hand or in checking or savings accounts is $100 or less; or if the household's housing costs (rent and utilities) are more than their monthly gross income and cash on hand or in checking or savings accounts.[xxxii]

32. Where can a CalFresh recipient access and manage their benefit account?

Monthly CalFresh benefits are available through an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card and deposited between the 1st and 10th of every month. CalFresh households can see their account summary, transaction history, and freeze or block transactions that may be fraudulent or stolen through ebtEDGE either online or through a mobile app; access information is available here: **https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/cdss-programs/ebt/ebtedge**

33. What online resources are available from state and federal agencies that can help current and former foster youth access and maintain CalFresh benefits?

Information on CalFresh program policies and procedures are available on federal and state SNAP and CalFresh program web pages:

- California Department of Social Services, CalFresh Program - **https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/calfresh**
- United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - **https://www.fna.usda.gov/snap**
- California Department of Social Services, CalFresh Program: Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents - **https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/calfresh/abawd**
- California Department of Social Services, CalFresh Program: Eligibility for Students - **https://calfresh.dss.ca.gov/food/college/index.html**
- California Department of Social Services, CalFresh Program: Eligibility for Immigrants - **https://calfresh.dss.ca.gov/food/immigrants/index.html**

34. Where can youth find additional resources to support applying for or maintaining CalFresh benefits?

- Apply or recertify for CalFresh - **http://www.benefitscal.org**
- Web-based guide for applying for CalFresh - **https://www.getcalfresh.org**
- Legal Services of Northern California's Guide to CalFresh Benefits - **http://calfresh.guide**
- Youth with urgent food support needs can find support from their local food bank. California Food Banks: Food Bank Members by County - **https://www.cafoodbanks.org/our-members/#find-a-food-bank**

ENDNOTES

[i] California Department of Social Services. All County Information Notice I-68-17 (2017).

[ii] The maximum gross income permitted is 130% of the FPL; however, the California Department of Social Services applies a gross income limit of 200% FPL through the Modified Categorical Eligibility policy.

[iii] Code of Federal Regulations § 273.9(a)

[iv] California Department of Social Services. Food Stamp Regulations § 63-502.2(b). All County Information Notice I-68-17 (2017).

[v] Ibid.

[vi] The monthly payment amount can be found in the annual All County Information Notice (ACIN) "Necessities Index Rate Increases For Out-Of-Home Placement Rates, Including Those Receiving Aid Families With Dependent Children-Foster Care And Approved Relative Caregiver Funding" released by CDSS early in each fiscal year.

[vii] California Department of Social Services. Food Stamp Regulations § 63-502.2(b). All County Information Notice I-68-17 (2017).

[viii] Ibid.

[ix] Cal. Welf. & Inst. Code §11008.15

[x] U.S. Department of Agriculture. Memorandum: Revised Treatment of Gift Cards in Determining SNAP. California Department of Social Services. All County Information Notice I-68-17 (2017).

[xi] Code of Federal Regulations § 2014(d)

[xii] Code of Federal Regulations § 273.1(b)(7)(vi)

[xiii] U.S. Department of Agriculture Memorandum: Revised Treatment of Gift Cards in Determining SNAP. California Department of Social Services. All County Information Notice I-68-17 (2017).

[xiv] Code of Federal Regulations § 273.1(b)(7)

[xv] Code of Federal Regulations § 273.1(b)(7)

[xvi] One Big Beautiful Bill Act. Pub. L. 119-21, 139 Stat.72

[xvii] California Department of Social Services. All County Letter 26-29. (2026).

[xviii] CalFresh and CalWORKs: childhood hunger and foster youth. Cal. Assembly. B. 2765. Chapter 310 (Cal. Stat. 2026).

[xix] Ibid.

[xx] U.S. Department of Agriculture. Food and Nutrition Administration. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program: Students. Accessed November 1, 2026.

[xxi] Code of Federal Regulations § 273.5(b)

[xxii] For further clarification about student exemptions for CalGrant recipients, refer to California Department of Social Services. All County Letter 19-32 (2019).

[xxiii] California Department of Social Services. All County Letter 26-25 (2026).

[xxiv] California Department of Social Services. All County Letter 22-46 (2022).

[xxv] California Department of Social Services. Food Stamp Regulations § 63-502.145

[xxvi] California Department of Social Services. All County Letter 26-16 (2026).

[xxvii] State of California. BenefitsCal: Student Center. Accessed November 1, 2026.

[xxviii] State of California. BenefitsCal: CalFresh Details. Accessed November 1, 2026.

[xxix] California Department of Social Services. CalFresh: Restaurant Meal Program. Accessed November 1, 2026.

[xxx] California Department of Social Services. EBT-Online. https://www.cdss.ca.gov/ebt-online; EBT Online Flyer. Accessed November 1, 2026.

[xxxi] California Department of Social Services. All County Letter 18-90 (2018).

[xxxii] State of California. BenefitsCal. Accessed November 1, 2026.