

# CalFresh FAQs

For Provider Use With CalOptima Health Members

## 1. What is CalFresh?

CalFresh, formerly known as Food Stamps and federally known as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), can help stretch your food budget so you can buy healthy food for you and your family. Monthly amounts are based on eligibility, such as household size, income and expenses. The program provides benefits on a debit-type card (also known as an Electronic Benefit Transfer, or EBT card) that can be used at grocery stores, farmers' markets and online at stores such as Albertsons, Vons, Amazon, Walmart and Sam's Club.

### Why should I consider enrolling in CalFresh?

CalFresh can help you and your family increase your access to healthy food, which is important to your overall health and wellness. Eating the right foods can help you prevent illness and live a healthier life. Showing children good eating habits early can help them thrive and even perform better in school.

## 2. How do I apply?

### I am a CalOptima Health member. How do I apply for CalFresh?

CalOptima Health members can call CalOptima Health Customer Service at 1-888-587-8088 (TTY 711) for an easier and faster transfer to a CalFresh Eligibility Worker. To enroll online, click [GoCalFresh.org](https://www.GoCalFresh.org). To enroll in person, visit a Social Services Agency office. Find one at [ssa.ocgov.com/about-us/office-locations/office-location-list](https://ssa.ocgov.com/about-us/office-locations/office-location-list).

### Is CalFresh part of Medi-Cal?

CalFresh is not a Medi-Cal program, and it will not change your Medi-Cal benefits. There is no guarantee you will qualify if you apply, and the benefit amounts vary. CalFresh will not impact immigration status.

### What are the steps for enrolling in CalFresh?

First, a CalFresh Eligibility Worker will collect information about your household size, income and expenses. Second, they will call back to interview you to confirm that information. Third, you will get a notice in the mail. The whole process can take up to 30 days but being patient and following through can help you obtain benefits that will help you and your family for months to come.

### Am I required to be a citizen to receive CalFresh benefits?

Talk to a CalFresh Eligibility Worker. Some qualified non-citizens may be eligible. Even if you are not eligible for CalFresh benefits, other members of your family may be. Parents who do not qualify should apply for their children born in the United States. Enrollment in CalFresh does not impact immigration status.

### Do I have to be fingerprinted to get CalFresh?

No.

*(questions continue on back)*



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### 3. Do I qualify?

#### If I am receiving SSI/SSP, can I also receive CalFresh benefits?

Yes. In 2019, CalFresh was expanded to include eligible older adults and people with disabilities who receive Supplemental Security Income/State Supplementary Payment (SSI/SSP) benefits.

#### Can I get help if I am not working?

Yes. But you may be required to participate in a work or training program.

#### Can I get help if I am working?

Yes. If your income does not exceed the eligibility requirements, you may receive CalFresh benefits even if you work. Income eligibility limits vary depending on the number and age of people in your household.

### 4. What can I buy with my CalFresh benefits?

You can buy food as well as edible plants and seeds to grow food. You will not be charged sales tax on items you buy with CalFresh. You cannot buy pet food, vitamins, medicines, alcohol, tobacco, paper products, fast food or food that will be eaten in the store.

Orange County participates in the Restaurant Meals Program to help the elderly (age 60 or older), disabled and/or homeless with additional access to meals. If you are eligible for that program, you can purchase food at approved participating restaurants, listed at [ssa.ocgov.com/cash-calfresh/calfresh/rmp-locations](https://ssa.ocgov.com/cash-calfresh/calfresh/rmp-locations).

### 5. What else do I need to know?

#### Is there a limit on the number of people I can apply for?

No, there is no limit to the number of people you can apply for. However, the people you can apply for must live in your home and buy and eat meals with you in the home. If you have children younger than age 22 living with you in the home, you must apply for them and their family, if any, even if they buy and eat meals separately from your family.

#### How long does it take to get CalFresh?

It may take up to 30 days to approve or deny your application. If you need food before 30 days, you may be eligible for Expedited Services. If you qualify for Expedited Services, you can receive your CalFresh benefits within 3 days.

#### How do I renew my benefits?

Once a year, most households must attend an interview to determine continued eligibility. The purpose of the interview is to report changes of address, family size, children's school attendance, employment, income, property and expenses. Some elderly and/or disabled households may have longer recertification periods.

Information current as of May 2023

Source: County of Orange Social Services Agency,  
[ssa.ocgov.com/cash-calfresh/calfresh](https://ssa.ocgov.com/cash-calfresh/calfresh)

