FAQ Document for CalFresh Expansion Contractors

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Application portals

Will CDA be facilitating account access to MyBenefits CalWIN? Our county limits access to the status of applications. We cannot inform the client of their application status.
The issue of knowing the application status is also a problem with applications submitted through GetCalFresh.org. The heart of the problem is client confidentiality. The best way to get access to a client's application status is by asking them for their permission to do so using form ABCDM 228 - Applicant's Authorization For Release Of Information (ROI). This ROI form is available in English and Spanish and can be submitted at the same time as the application. Please remember that CalFresh outreach workers cannot be designated as Authorized Representatives.

- BenefitsCal: Although a technical solution to show application status to assistors is currently in the works, it will not be launched soon. The technical solution is to have the form integrated into the online application process, so this is completed in one process.
- GetCalFresh.org: Clients can fill out a release of information through GCF when they apply. If the application was completed through the CBO portal, the release of information will be available on the CBO dashboard.

Will there be a senior portal to BenefitsCal?
Currently there is no senior portal for BenefitsCal.

Is there a demonstration version of BenefitsCal.com, like there is through GetCalFresh? It would help advocates guide seniors through the online app if they could check it out first.
A demonstration for BenefitsCal is not yet available. CalSAWS has developed Quick Guides for CBOs and they have posted some training videos on their YouTube channel.

What is the demonstration site for GetCalFresh?
https://demo.getcalfresh.org/

What software etc. would you suggest as of now we use for implementation of services?
Software for tracking how many applications were submitted is done on individual platforms (GetCalFresh, My Benefits CalWin and BenefitsCal). Software for maintaining daily tallies could be done on the Excel template provided by CDA. Other CBOs use software including Oasis Insight, Salesforce, and Apricot.

Will we be obtaining a different login if we have already been assisting through MyBenefits CalWIN?
If you have already been assisting through MyBenefits CalWIN there will be no change. The only change will occur when your CalWIN county migrates to BenefitsCal.

How does a CBO sign up for a BenefitsCal account?
Go to https://benefitscal.com/ . Under Log In on the top right-hand corner, click on Create An Account. Under CBO select 'Register Your CBO Account.' Fill out the application, select the county, and click "Register" Only one manager can be registered as 'CBO Manager'. Once established, the CBO manager can create accounts for 'Assistors'. BenefitsCal CBO manager accounts have more permissions than the Assistor role Managers can add/remove staff. A YouTube video further explaining the process can be found here:
https://youtu.be/wykUAaLaEtc

If we already have a BenefitsCal account, do we need to sign up for a new one for CalFresh Expansion?
If you signed up for your initial account as a CBO, you could continue using the same account.

Can the application process be done through "Code for America"?
GetCalFresh.org is an application portal for CalFresh that was created by Code for America. It is currently available in all 58 counties of California. The other two portals are My Benefits CalWin and BenefitsCal. These 3 portals are the way to submit digital applications.

How are these platform reports connected to the applications we assist in completing?
The 3 different portals produce 3 different monthly reports from CDSS. Reports will be sent out to our points of contact (POCs) monthly. The reports give details of how many applications were submitted, accepted, etc. but they will not detail the individual applicant status. These reports only product aggregate data on application amounts. It is the responsibility of the POCs to check their tallies against these monthly reports so that their quarterly reports to CDA are as accurate as possible.

When will the application portals be phased out and what should I do during the switch?
Currently, CBOs can use three different portal sites for applications:
- GetCalFresh, MyBenefits CalWIN and BenefitsCal. GetCalFresh.org which is available in all 58 counties and will be phased out eventually on a date that is still to be determined but not anticipated until 2025.
- MyBenefits CalWin is currently available in 16 counties. The MyBenefits portal will end completely in October 2023. Sunsetting this portal will be a year-long process beginning October 2022 a few counties at a time.
- BenefitsCal is the CBO portal that is available in 42 counties that will eventually be the only site for application entry. BenefitsCal is part of the CalSAWS consortium.

In the meantime, continue entering applications as previously but understand that eventually BenefitsCal will be the only portal available. It would be beneficial to sign up and begin using BenefitsCal to ease into the transition.

CalWIN Migration Schedule to BenefitsCal

Wave	Counties	Go-Live Date (Subject to change)
1	Placer, Yolo	October 31, 2022
2	Contra Costa, Santa Clara, Tulare	February 27, 2023
3	Orange, Santa Barbara, Ventura	April 24, 2023
4	San Diego, San Mateo, Santa Cruz, Solano	July 03, 2023
5	Alameda, Fresno, Sonoma	September 4, 2023
6	Sacramento, San Francisco, San Luis Obispo	October 30, 2023

Application form

The paper CalFresh application has text that is small and difficult for some seniors to read. Can larger text be used?
The team behind the Elderly Simplified Application Project (ESAP) is in the process of creating a simple paper application that will be in larger print. A new application for seniors will be available late 2023.

Can the rent increase verification be submitted at any time to the case worker?
Yes, customers can submit changes to the county at any time and should be encouraged if the change will increase their benefit amount. Changes that increase a benefit amount include, but are not limited to: increased rent, increased medical costs, decreased income, and increased household size.

Client Eligibility

How does someone recertify for CalFresh?
Information on CalFresh recertification and instructions can be found at
https://cdss.ca.gov/cdssweb/entres/forms/English/CF37.pdf.

For California's Elderly Simplified Application Project (ESAP) Demonstrations Project, see more information in ACL 20-145.

Are the income limits fixed within counties or do they vary? Are limits different between counties?
Income limits are the same throughout the state.

Contract

Will the funding for CalFresh Expansion be annual?
Yes. The contract is for 3 years with a yearly close-out.

I plan to subcontract these services but AAAs may not have subcontractor in place by Oct.1st. Would this cause concerns with data and fiscal reporting?
The Department of Aging is aware of the contract delay and will accommodate. If the services can be rendered on October 1st then please instruct your subcontractor to do so or when they are in place.

The last funding allocation estimates were released in 2021. Have these been updated for 2022?
Yes, new funding allocations are available on the CDSS website:
https://www.cdss.ca.gov/Portals/9/Additional-Resources/Letters-and-Notices/CFLs/2022/22-23_19.pdf

If the AAA subcontracts, will the AAA still be the responsible party to submit data reports? Or the subcontractor?
The point of contact (POC) at each PSA will be responsible for submitting data reports to CDA. If the POC needs to be changed, please make the request at CalFreshOutreach@aging.ca.gov. Application data is report to CDA per county under each PSA.

How do we carry out services if we don't yet have a contract in place?
In the meantime if you can provide services please do. You can also begin billing CDA for those general amounts. You will be reimbursed once an executed contract is in place. If your organization cannot render services at this time, you can wait until after you have received a contract then back-date your expense reports for reimbursement.

If this is a 3-year contract, can we create 3-year contracts with our providers?
This is a 3-year contract between CDA and the AAA. Unfortunately, 3-year contracts with partners are not allowed. Partnership contracts can only be billed per year. Keep in mind that in this situation, contracts would not have to go out to RFP (request for proposal). You would only need to sign a new contract each year.

Materials

What printed materials are available at the county level?
Program outreach materials in various languages can be found at
https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/calfreshssi/partners

Can CDA flyers be modified to show our agency info?
Yes, flyers can be modified to show organization name and details. Materials to
download are available at the CDSS website:
https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/calfreshssi/partners

**Are free materials for outreach available to order for CalFresh Expansion? I
already order CalFresh materials from a CalFresh Healthy Living account with
CDPH.**
Yes, free materials are available on the Web Storefront but keep in mind that
CalFresh Expansion and CalFresh Healthy Living are two separate programs and
require separate access to the storefront. To gain access, complete the 'WSF-001
Web StoreFront Online Ordering - Access and Updates' form and email
to Robert.Harrigan@dss.ca.gov

Training

Will there be training for the CBOs about BenefitsCal?
There is a training video by BenefitsCal that can be found at
https://youtu.be/wykUAaLaEtc

Will the recent trainings on eligibility and reporting trainings made available?
Yes. The recordings will be placed on the CDA program website by the end of 2022.
Until then, copies of the presentation can be provided. Contact the Expansion team
inbox for copies CalFresh.Outreach@aging.ca.gov.

Unique Situations

**In our county, we have seniors go into other counties for their grocery
shopping. Is shopping in a different county a problem for clients?**
Your local CWD is aware that people live on the border of states or counties and will
frequently shop in other areas. State and county administrators can see transaction
activity. In some cases when the purchases continue in another state or county for
an extended period of time the CWD may reach out for an explanation (Form CF387
Request for Information). If no response is given within 10 days, benefits may be
terminated.

What is the process of changing a point of contact (POC)?
You can send an email to Calfresh.Outreach@aging.ca.gov and provide the new POCs name and contact information.

Can CalFresh benefits be used in other states?
Yes, temporarily. Your local CWD is aware that people live on the border of states or counties and will frequently shop in other areas. State and county administrators can see transaction activity. In some cases when the purchases continue in another state or county for an extended period of time the CWD may reach out for an explanation (Form CF387 Request for Information). If no response is given within 10 days, benefits could be terminated.

Volunteers

Can volunteers help with CalFresh Expansion?
Volunteers can be used to help with CalFresh application assistance without having to be included as part of the CalFresh Expansion program. They would not be required to take the Civil Rights training if they are not part of the CalFresh Expansion Outreach program, but the training would be recommended. If volunteer organizers want their volunteers to be included as part of the CalFresh Expansion program, they will have to adhere to some guidelines. Specifically, if the agency with volunteers uses general funds (state or local) to claim volunteer time, and those funds are not used as a match for any other federal grant, then the non-federally funded volunteer time can be claimed as state share in CalFresh Outreach. Please see the Outreach Plan Guidance, page 30, section 4.20 for guidance on how to report volunteer time for a public agency. If an organization wants to volunteer and be part of CalFresh Expansion and meets all of the requirements listed in the guidance above, they can include their volunteer time in their PSA's budget.

Volunteer time from a private entity is not allowable and not reimbursable for federal funds (7 CFR 277.4(e)). If you have any questions regarding volunteer time from private entities, please contact your CDA representative.

Voter Registration

What is the expectation of the voter registration requirement for AAAs?
The responsibility of the AAA is to ask each applicant if they are registered to vote. If they are not, a voter registration card (VRC) should be offered. Registration cards can be downloaded at https://eforms.com/images/2017/10/California-Voter-Registration-Form.pdf. Regarding any tracking and reporting on the Voter Registration Act (VCA), prime contractors are responsible for tracking paper voter

registration cards for their subcontractors. Slide 90 of the National Voter Registration Act presentation explains the tracking responsibilities of VRCs. [Training for VRA Coordinators guide](). The California Secretary of State site also provides additional training and resources for VRA Coordinators are