

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Taking Aim at Food Insecurity Caused by COVID-19 Pandemic: Alameda County Launches Digital CalFresh Awareness Campaign

Oakland, CA – Alameda County has traditionally marked the month of May as CalFresh Awareness Month with public events that will not be possible this year due to the COVID-19 Shelter in Place order. However, the County is launching an all-out effort to raise public awareness through a digital outreach campaign that will connect residents with “Healthy Food When You Need It Most.”

“The need to increase awareness, outreach, and enrollment in CalFresh has never been greater, while reaching the public has never been more challenging,” said Lori A. Cox, Director of the Alameda County Social Services Agency (ACSSA).

On May 12, 2020, the County’s Board of Supervisors issued a proclamation announcing the campaign. ACSSA will team up with the Alameda County Community Food Bank (ACCFB) to share information on how to apply for CalFresh via social media, website platforms, and email, and to connect residents to nearby food distribution sites. Over 115,000 emails containing the link to [apply for CalFresh online](#) will be sent to Alameda County residents from the Alameda County Community Food Bank’s mailing list.

ACSSA will also partner with the ACCFB to host an online information session for Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) to go over options for connecting people with benefits.

Critical recent developments include:

- Children who are eligible for free or reduced-price meals at school will get extra food benefits called [Pandemic EBT or P-EBT benefits](#) to buy food due to school closures. Families with children who get CalFresh, Medi-Cal or Foster Care benefits do not need to apply. Most will get their P-EBT card in the mail during the month of May. P-EBT cards will begin arriving around May 12, 2020.
- Policy changes due to COVID-19 have temporarily suspended the interview requirement in some cases, provided emergency allotments to increase benefits to the maximum based on household size, and suspended the Able-Bodied Adult Without Dependents (ABAWD) work requirement.
- CalFresh benefits also can now be used online to purchase groceries at www.Amazon.com and www.Walmart.com.

Known federally as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), CalFresh assists qualified households and individuals in meeting their nutrition needs. In Alameda County approximately 131,000 residents currently rely on the CalFresh program to feed themselves and their families.

As thousands of job cuts hit the County and place unprecedented demands on local food pantries and other services, new CalFresh applications submitted to the ACSSA are up approximately 120 percent from this time last year. But according to Ms. Cox, that’s only a small fraction of the families and individuals who may be eligible.

More information on the ACSSA’s CalFresh Awareness Month events, including a video public service announcement, may be found at https://alamedasocialservices.org/public/services/food_assistance/awareness_month_2020.cfm.

Attached: Photo of CalFresh Awareness Month Logo and telephone number.

