



## What is SNAP?

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, known as SNAP or food stamps, allows low-income people who meet eligibility requirements to purchase food and groceries using Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards, which are similar to debit cards. In California, the program is known as CalFresh, and helps feed more than 5 million people each month.

CalFresh eligibility is based in household size, immigration status, and income. Most households must have a [gross monthly income below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level](#) to potentially qualify for the program.

Sweeping changes are coming to CalFresh/SNAP, prompted by the July 2025 passage of a massive federal budget reconciliation bill, [H.R.1](#).



### HOW WILL THIS AFFECT COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS?

Some of your patients could lose some or all of their SNAP benefits as billions of federal dollars vanish.

Community Health Centers should expect to see growing food insecurity among patients and families as these changes take effect, potentially increasing the demand for food distribution programs and medically supportive food interventions. Many of the same people affected by SNAP changes may also lose Medicaid in the coming years, and may have less access to Medicaid-funded medically supportive food.

## HOW CAN COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS RESPOND?

Patients who receive SNAP benefits may be confused by the new rules. They may be subject to work requirements for the first time, lose eligibility because of their legal status, or have their benefits reduced because of changes to the household utility cost deduction.



**Support Benefits Navigation:** Many community health centers already provide SNAP application assistance and eligibility screenings, but your patients may need additional guidance to navigate the changes. If you can, boost your case management services (especially pertaining to eligibility) or community health worker support. Consider joining forces with your county to co-locate outreach workers at the clinic.



**Develop Food Access Strategies:** Your patients may also simply need more food. Partner with a food bank, if you don't already do so, to bring food distribution programs to clinics or other accessible locations.



**Form Medical-Legal Partnerships:** Work with local legal aid organizations to develop a strategy to provide legal guidance to patients who are facing challenges accessing benefits.



**Educate Patients:** Remind patients to open their mail and read any official letters they receive. Offer to help make sense of these letters.

## WHAT ARE THE MAJOR CHANGES TO THE PROGRAM?¹

### Limits to Immigrant Eligibility

Many groups of lawfully present, noncitizen immigrants have been eligible for food stamps. The budget bill eliminates SNAP eligibility for some of them, including refugees, asylees, immigrant survivors of domestic violence, and victims of trafficking. (SNAP has never been available to undocumented immigrants.) The state estimates 74,000 immigrants will lose their benefits as a result.

Immigrants who will remain eligible for food stamps (if they meet other program requirements) are:

- Lawful Permanent Residents, also known as green card holders (after a five-year waiting period, if applicable),
- certain Cuban or Haitian entrants,
- citizens of the Compact of Free Association nations (Marshall Islands, Micronesia, and Palau).

Some households may have questions about the “public charge” rule. SNAP is not currently considered when making public charge determinations. To learn more, visit the Immigrant Legal Resource Center at <https://www.ilrc.org/pc-updates>

<sup>1</sup>Note: This summary is accurate as of October 2025 but ongoing federal guidance may result in changes.

## Expansion of Work Requirements and Time Limits on Participation<sup>2</sup>

Some SNAP recipients are limited to three months of benefits during a three-year period unless they meet strict work requirements or qualify for an exemption. The individuals who must comply with these requirements are listed below, including categories added (or removed) by the federal bill (in bold):

- Adults ages 18 through 64 who are not parents or caregivers of children. **(The bill added adults in the 55-through-64 age range.)**
- **Parents/caregivers with children ages 14 and up.**
- Groups who are exempt from the requirements include pregnant women and those who are physically or mentally unfit for work. The bill added an exemption for **American Indian and Alaska Native people.**
- It removed exemptions for **veterans, homeless people, and young people ages 24 and under who recently aged out of foster care.**

The bill also dramatically limits most states' ability to waive these requirements in areas with high unemployment, which will affect the majority of California.

## Elimination of SNAP-Ed Funding

H.R. 1 eliminates funding for the nutrition education and obesity prevention program known as SNAP-Ed, which helps families make healthy, affordable food choices. In California, this is called [CalFresh Healthy Living](#).

## Reduction of Household Utility Allowances

Under H.R. 1, receiving payments over \$20 from the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) or similar energy assistance program no longer automatically qualifies a household for the Standard Utility Allowance. The standard allowance streamlines the process of deducting utility costs from income (for purposes of determining eligibility and calculating benefits) and makes it easier for recipients to qualify.



<sup>2</sup>"States must begin tracking this three-month time limit for people newly subject to this requirement when they are approved or recertified for benefits. The USDA guidance is not detailed, but this apparently means that people who apply or are recertified beginning in September 2025 will exhaust their three months of SNAP benefits as soon as January 1 and states will, at that time, begin cutting people off SNAP who cannot document that they qualify for an exemption or are meeting the 20-hours-per-week work requirement." [Center on Budget and Policy Priorities](#), Sept. 10, 2025

Under the new rules, only households with an older adult or person with a disability will automatically qualify. Others will have to provide documentation of heating and cooling expenses.

### Shifting Costs to States

States will have to pay 75 percent of SNAP administrative costs, up from 50 percent. **This takes effect Oct. 1, 2026.**

For the first time, states will also pay a portion of food benefit costs. This requirement kicks in if states' payment error rates exceed a certain threshold, and is expected to affect most states. **This takes effect Oct. 1, 2027.**

These changes will hit California's budget hard, by as much as \$2 billion or more each year, and may force the state to make additional cuts to the program.



### WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION?

[FAQ on SNAP/CalFresh Changes in English and Spanish](#)  
from the California Department of Social Services

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