

CalFresh Work Group: Summary of Short & Long-Term Policy Strategies

| Policy Strategy | Details | Considerations & Next Steps |
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| Long-Term Strategies | | |
| Elimination of the Student Eligibility Rule | <p>The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) was not designed with college students in mind. The Student Eligibility Rule presents unnecessary eligibility and administrative barriers that prevent students from accessing a service that they need.</p> <p>Given the food insecurity crisis students are experiencing nationwide, elimination of the SNAP Student Eligibility Rule would significantly enhance the CalFresh enrollment experience for students and allow many more students to qualify.</p> | <p>-Requires Congressional action</p> <p>-Alternative short-term actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make permanent the COVID-19 temporary flexibilities that allow zero EFC/Federal Work Study-eligible students to qualify temporarily for SNAP benefits. • Eliminate interview requirement for students. • Eliminate 6-month re-certification requirements for students. • Continue 15% SNAP benefit boost (currently set to expire June 30) <p>-Legislature and advocates drafting letters to Congress calling for permanent elimination of student eligibility rule</p> |
| Horizontal integration with FAFSA OR Presumptive eligibility through financial aid systems | <p>The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) application asks students over 100 questions, including detailed information about family income, to verify need.</p> <p>The State should explore strategies to integrate FAFSA information with the CalFresh application or create some sort of 'warm hand-off' between the two applications. For example, relevant data points in the FAFSA application could automatically pre-populate a CalFresh application, making it easier for students to complete the application process (the CalFresh application is approx. 9 pages currently).</p> <p>Long-term, the Commission envisions being able determine a student's presumptive eligibility for</p> | <p>-Horizontal integration requires action at the State level. Presumptive eligibility requires Congressional/USDA action.</p> <p>-Challenge: FAFSA utilizes prior-prior year tax information whereas SNAP requires income information from the last 30 days.</p> <p>-Alternative short-term action: Once California students complete FAFSA, automatically link to GetCalFresh.org.</p> |

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| | CalFresh using information from the FAFSA, without requiring students to go through an additional burdensome application and interview process. | |
| Improve data about college student eligibility & participation in CalFresh | Currently, there is no centralized statewide database of college students participating in CalFresh. This makes it challenging to understand which students are using CalFresh and which students are eligible but not applying (<i>e.g.</i> , where gaps in access exist). If a statewide database existed, it would be easier to identify where targeted outreach needs to occur to improve enrollment among vulnerable populations. | <p>-Requires action at the State and county levels</p> <p>-Challenge: CalFresh is administered at the county level; there are 58 counties implementing the program in different ways as well as multiple data sources at the county level.</p> |
| Improve the transition from K-12 Free/Reduced Price meals | Many high school students are served by the Free/Reduced Priced Meals program while in school and the need for nutrition assistance does not necessarily end when they enroll in college. The State should identify ways to transition students from Free/Reduced Price meals to CalFresh, ideally before they even leave high school. Early exposure to the CalFresh application process before students even enrolls in college might incentivize students to stay engaged even when the Student Eligibility Rule kicks in. | <p>-Improving alignment between food benefit/ cash assistance programs (Free/Reduced Price meals, CalFresh, WIC, CalWORKS, etc.)</p> <p>-Challenge: different federal requirements/verifications between programs and student data privacy laws (<i>i.e.</i>, FERPA)</p> <p>-Alternative short-term action: improve outreach to K-12 families about CalFresh</p> <p>-TBD; still exploring more specific strategies.</p> |
| Short-Term Strategies | | |
| Statewide Call Center for Application Assistance targeted to college students | The California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) currently has a fully operational student call center with 15 employees that operates Monday through Friday from 8:00am to 4:45pm. With additional one-time/ongoing General Fund support, our Call Center could expand to start taking calls and questions from students about the CalFresh application process. Specifically, staff could be trained to provide application assistance in the following manner: | <p>-Requires action at the State level</p> <p>-CSAC currently vetting this proposal with legislative/budget staff</p> |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate students about CalFresh benefits and the Student Eligibility Rule • Assist students with completing the CalFresh application • Assist students with mandatory verifications and preparing for interview • Provide direct outreach (i.e., postcards, phone calls, emails, texts) to students that are likely eligible for CalFresh (TANF-funded Cal Grant, O EFC, etc.) • Provide direct follow-up to students with incomplete applications, pending data-sharing agreements with county offices (potential pilot idea) | |
| <p>Improve CalFresh outreach to financial aid applicants, especially those who are likely eligible for CalFresh</p> | <p>CSAC has many unique touchpoints with financial aid applicants/recipients that it can leverage to improve targeted CalFresh outreach to financial aid applicants, especially those who are likely eligible for CalFresh.</p> | <p>-Short-term actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage students to apply for CalFresh after FAFSA completion by linking to GetCalFresh.org • Like the AB 214 CalFresh notification letter, develop a similar notification letter for recipients of the California Chafee Grant for Foster Youth • Update CalFresh notification letter to incorporate GetCalFresh.org tool • CSAC/college campuses can share list of students that received TANF-funded Cal Grant (requires student permission) • Cal Grant C recipients participate in verified CTE programs – provide notice to these students that they may be eligible for CalFresh • Provide notification to recipients of the Students with Dependent Children (SWDC) Access Award that they may be eligible for CalFresh as head of household if they meet certain conditions |

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| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targeted outreach to financial aid applicants/Cash 4 College participants that may be eligible for CalFresh (texting, emailing, WebGrants4Students pop-up boxes) |
| Formalizing CTE programs/coursework as “programs that increase employability” | <p>One of the exemptions to the Student Eligibility Rule is participation in a “local program that increases employability.” Specifically, programs or coursework that are defined as career and technical education (CTE) by the Carl D. Perkins Act of 2006 meet the requirements of this particular exemption. The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) is currently working with the California Community Colleges to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define and identify CTE programs Identify students enrolled in CTE programs Identify means of notifying students of potential CalFresh eligibility Identify easy way of verifying student enrollment in CTE program for eligibility workers | <p>-Requires administrative action at the State and campus levels</p> <p>-CDSS is working to develop this statewide process by early 2021 and issue guidance on statewide implementation shortly after.</p> |
| <p>Data sharing between state agencies, campuses, and local human services agencies to simplify verification of student exemption</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Student Eligibility Rule Verification Hub</p> | <p>Verifying that a student qualifies for an exemption under the Student Eligibility Rule is one of the biggest barriers to CalFresh enrollment for college students. Facilitating data-sharing of the following information between CSAC, college campuses (i.e. basic needs centers), and local human service agencies would assist county eligibility workers with verifying student exemptions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employment (for students that work on campus) Federal Work Study participation (FWS) Recipient of TANF-funded Cal Grant (can be verified by CSAC or campus) | <p>-Requires action at the State, county, and campus levels</p> <p>-Can be achieved administratively with partnerships between campuses and county CalFresh offices (some examples currently exist)</p> <p>-Align with Cradle-to-Career Longitudinal Data system efforts</p> <p>-Challenge: student data privacy laws (i.e., FERPA) and incentivizing data sharing agreements</p> |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in Employment and Training (E&T) / Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs • Enrolled less than half-time <p>Additionally, if California could consolidate various data sources to create a 'Student Eligibility Rule Verification Hub' that was easily accessible to eligibility workers, the verification process could be much easier for both students and eligibility workers.</p> | |
| <p>Utilize TANF funds for other financial aid programs</p> | <p>The State's Cal Grant program (Cal Grant A & B tuition awards) is partially funded by TANF dollars meaning that recipients of TANF-funded Cal Grants qualify for an exemption from the Student Eligibility Rule. However, current rules do not allow community college students to benefit from this exemption as community college students only receive Cal Grant aid through the Cal Grant B Access Award. The State could explore utilizing TANF funds for other financial aid programs (i.e., California College Promise Grant) to expand on possible student exemptions and therefore draw down more federal SNAP dollars.</p> | <p>-Requires action at state level; this idea is proposed in SB 20 (Dodd)</p> <p>-CCC still exploring the feasibility of this strategy.</p> <p>-Challenges: Displacing Prop 98 funds may have unintended consequences and identifying TANF funds source</p> |