

California Student Aid Commission MAKING SNAP WORK FOR STUDENTS



BARRIERS STUDENTS FACE WHEN APPLYING FOR SNAP BENEFITS



01 – LIMITED AWARENESS & NAVIGATION SUPPORT

Many students are unaware that SNAP benefits are available to those struggling with access to nutritional food. Even when they learn about the program, there is no guide to help them through the process of applying for CalFresh, collecting all the required documents & verification, & navigating the system.



02 – OUTDATED COMMUNICATION TOOLS

Students struggle to complete the interviews necessary for the application process due to slow mail notification, calls from blocked numbers that students tend not to answer, & predesignated interview times that often do not match students' schedules. Even when students are approved for benefits, county social service offices send electronic benefit transfer (EBT) cards & PINs through the postal mail at times that are often not well aligned to the start of college classes.



03 – COMPLEX PROCESSES

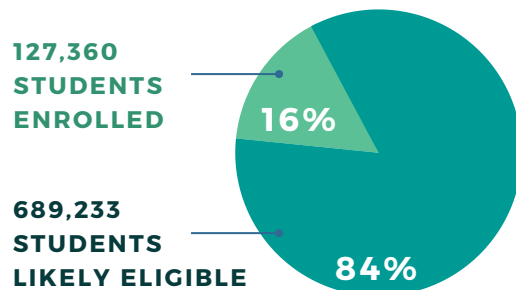
Completing a successful application requires substantial documentation, lengthy verification processes, & intensive system navigation. Federal processing timeline penalties & a reimbursement system focused only on completed applications create disincentives for county offices to conduct outreach to college students & to sufficiently support the surges of applications at the start of college.



04 – PROCESSING DELAYS

The student eligibility rule adds requirements that are in addition to those of the general population, making their applications more time consuming to review. Low-income students often begin a new academic term, potentially far from home, without yet having any support for their food expenses, despite having already demonstrated significant financial need.

STUDENTS ENROLLED IN CALFRESH VS POTENTIALLY ELIGIBLE STUDENTS IN CA



05 – GAPS IN BENEFITS

Once a student is approved for SNAP benefits, the system requires a recertification process every 6 months. This process frequently causes a temporary or permanent loss in benefits. Nearly 36 percent of students in California receiving SNAP lose their benefits because of these recertification steps.

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FEDERAL POLICY & REGULATORY RECOMMENDATIONS

SHORT TERM SOLUTIONS

01 **USE OF \$0 EXPECTED FAMILY CONTRIBUTION (EFC)**

Under the current emergency federal COVID-19 provisions, the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture (USDA) determined that all FAFSA filers with an EFC of \$0 are eligible to apply for SNAP benefits without meeting other student eligibility rule requirements.

Making this change permanent will enable hundreds of thousands more students to receive SNAP benefits.

02 **ELIMINATION OF INTERVIEW REQUIREMENTS FOR STUDENTS**

Eliminating the interview requirement permanently for students who have complete applications would streamline the process & address students' unique logistical challenges.

"This report is a stark reminder that there is more work to be done to address student food insecurity on college campuses. Improving food security and meeting basic needs are critical in ensuring that higher education opportunities remain accessible for all.

That's why I'm proud to lead efforts in Congress like the Student Food Security Act and BASIC Act to expand college students' eligibility for nutrition assistance benefits, and help put food on the table for those who need it most."

U.S. SENATOR ALEX PADILLA (D-CA)

LONG TERM SOLUTIONS

01 **ELIMINATION OF FEDERAL STUDENT ELIGIBILITY RULE**

The student eligibility rule is premised on an understanding of student circumstances that no longer holds true. The elimination of this rule would greatly accelerate eligibility verification for applicants & substantially reduce the administrative burden on individual county workers & their offices.

02 **ELIMINATION OF 6-MONTH ELIGIBILITY STATUS CHECK & UTILIZATION OF ANNUAL FAFSA SUBMISSIONS FOR SNAP RECERTIFICATION**

Because student financial circumstances do not change considerably while they are attending postsecondary institutions, the federal government should waive completion of the 6-month verification & instead use information collected in the FAFSA annually to recertify.

03 **ESTABLISH PRESUMPTIVE ELIGIBILITY FOR \$0 EFC ELIGIBLE STUDENTS, PARTICIPANTS OF THE FREE & REDUCED-PRICE MEAL (FRPM) PROGRAM OR FROM A HOUSEHOLD THAT RECEIVES SNAP BENEFITS**

This would include recipients of benefits funded through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program or the FRPM program & recipients of the maximum Pell Grant under the new Student Aid Index (SAI). Final verification could be provided with required supplemental information, but automatic access to SNAP benefits under any of these programs would be initiated

To read the Commission's full report, **Access to Proper Nutrition Equals College Success**, & learn more about the barriers to SNAP support facing college students, please visit :

CSAC.CA.GOV/CALFRESH-STUDENTS