

Contra Costa CalFresh Partnership Key Achievements 2013-2016



“I always felt there were other people that need it more than me...but after I had gone three days without eating, I was so hungry.”

-Mary, Age 90, on why she applied for CalFresh

No one in our community should ever have to suffer what Mary went through before learning about the nutrition assistance program CalFresh. **The Contra Costa County CalFresh Partnership works to improve food security and benefit the local economy by increasing CalFresh enrollment among eligible residents.** The CalFresh Program improves the health and well-being of qualified households and individuals, like Mary, by providing them with monthly electronic benefits that can be used to buy groceries at most food retailers. Now that Mary receives CalFresh, she says she never has to skip a meal.

Key Achievements

- ☑ **Improved Referral Form:** Developed an easy-to-complete CalFresh referral form for community based organizations to refer individuals to Food Bank staff for application assistance.
- ☑ **CalFresh Express:** Held two one-day enrollment events in San Pablo and Bay Point where families could apply and receive CalFresh benefits all in the same day.
- ☑ **Medi-Cal and School Lunch Mailings:** Collaborated with local school districts and the John Muir/ Mt. Diablo Community Health Fund to mail CalFresh information to households with members receiving Medi-Cal or free and reduced-price school meals.
- ☑ **CLEAN/Get CalFresh Pilot Project:** Piloted the CLEAN/Get CalFresh application, a simplified version of the online CalFresh application developed for a tablet, smartphone, or laptop.
- ☑ **Outreach and Media Campaign:** The Food Bank hired two bilingual outreach staff and began a public-perception campaign to dispel myths and raise awareness of the value of CalFresh.
- ☑ **CalFresh Outreach at VITA Sites:** Conducted outreach at Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites to provide application support at the same time clients received free tax assistance.

- ☑ **AB 402 Pilot with Pittsburg Unified:** Partnered with Pittsburg Unified to implement AB 402, a law that allows families to opt into receiving information about CalFresh when they submit their free and reduced-price meal applications.
- ☑ **Mayoral Outreach:** Highlighted the local economic benefits of CalFresh to mayors and worked with them to issue CalFresh Awareness Proclamations, post links to the CalFresh application on their city websites, and advertise the health benefits of the program during CalFresh Awareness Month in May.
- ☑ **CalFresh Advocacy:** Several partner organizations have begun to advocate for state and federal policy changes that would strengthen and streamline CalFresh. If you are interested in our anti-hunger policy work, please contact Carly Finkle at cfinkle@foodbankccs.org.

Next Steps

- ☐ **Missed Appointments:** To help applicants make their scheduled application appointments, the County's Employment & Human Services Department (EHSD) is considering same-day appointments, text reminders, and expanding in-person alternatives like phone and video conference appointments.
- ☐ **Improve Continuity:** To prevent clients' benefits from being discontinued due to missed paperwork, EHSD is piloting text reminders to alert clients when they need to recertify.
- ☐ **Read-Only Access:** EHSD is working to allow the Food Bank read-only access to their CalFresh computer operating system to allow Food Bank staff to look up clients' case status in real time, remind clients of their appointments, let clients know what paperwork they are missing, etc.
- ☐ **Staffing:** Community partners are working with the County to address the root causes of chronic under-staffing at the County, which impacts the timeliness of client application processing.

Preliminary data shows that improvements have been made toward increasing CalFresh participation, but we know there is still much to be done. The CalFresh Partnership remains committed to exploring all ways to increase enrollment, improve the client experience, and advocate for policies that will ensure food security for individuals and families in Contra Costa County.



*We are Advocates and Communities
Taking Initiative for Our Neighbors*



For more information visit <http://ehsd.org/2016/08/09/ehsd-announces-california-partnership-achievements/>