



Your CalFresh Benefits Are Changing

What to Know and What To Do Next!

(Revised as of 05/2026)

Food assistance matters. CalFresh, California's grocery benefits program, is changing because of a new federal law called HR1. Some of these changes are already in effect. Others are coming soon.

WHAT IS CALFRESH?

CalFresh is California's food assistance program, also known as SNAP or food stamps. HR1 (also known as the One Big Beautiful Bill Act) is a recent federal law that changes how people qualify for and keep benefits like CalFresh.

WHAT IS CHANGING & WHEN

April 1, 2026

Some lawfully present immigrants who were previously eligible may no longer qualify for CalFresh

June 1, 2026

Some adults will need to meet new work requirements to keep their CalFresh benefits

I'M AN IMMIGRANT

Starting April 1, 2026, some lawfully present immigrants may no longer qualify for CalFresh under the new rules.

- The most important thing you can do right now is contact [LA County DPSS](#) or a trusted benefits navigator to ask about your specific situation.

For food resources in the meantime, please visit the [OYC Resources Page](#).

Will it
affect
me?

I'M A STUDENT

If you are enrolled more than half-time, you are generally not considered an ABAWD — so the new work requirements work differently for you. However, students face their own CalFresh eligibility rules. To qualify for CalFresh as a student, you typically need to meet at least one of the following:

- You work at least 20 hours per week (or 80 hours per month)
- You have a campus job or work for a recognized campus organization (this automatically counts — no minimum hours required)
- You receive Cal Grant A or B
- You are under 18 or over 49
- You are parenting a child under 12 with no available childcare
- You are a single parent attending school full-time with a child under 12
- A doctor has documented that you are physically or mentally unable to work 20 hours per week
- You are not planning to enroll next term

IMPORTANT REMINDER

Financial aid should **NOT** be counted when DPSS decides if you qualify for CalFresh. SILP is counted as unearned income when directly received by Non Minor Dependent. If DPSS says you are over income, ask them for a breakdown of what income they counted. If financial aid was included, ask DPSS to review your case and get help from your case manager, campus basic needs center, or a legal aid organization before your benefits are denied, reduced, or stopped.

WHAT DOES "ABAWD" MEAN?

CalFresh uses the term **Able-Bodied Adult Without Dependents (ABAWD)** to describe adults the program considers able to work who don't have a young child at home.

Starting June 1, 2026, if you fall into this category, you'll need to meet new work requirements to keep your benefits.

You may be considered an ABAWD if ALL of the following apply to you:

- You are between ages 18 and 64.
- You are considered physically and mentally able to work.
- You do not have a child under age 14 in your CalFresh household.
- You are not currently a student attending school more than half-time.

If you are not sure whether this applies to you, ask [DPSS](#).

A NOTE FOR FORMER FOSTER YOUTH

If you were in foster care: You may have heard that you were automatically exempt from CalFresh work requirements until 2030. That exemption has ended under the new law. You now need to meet CalFresh work requirements

This also affects unhoused individuals and veterans who had automatic exemptions. These groups must now meet the work requirements or qualify for another exemption listed in this FAQ.

If you are under 25 and aged out of foster care, don't wait — reach out to DPSS, your case manager, or a trusted legal aid organization now to understand your situation before your benefits are affected.

How do I meet the work requirements?

If the ABAWD rules apply to you, you'll need to do at least one of the following each month to keep your benefits:

- Work at least 20 hours per week or 80 hours per month
- Participate in a job training or employment program
- Complete approved volunteer or community service hours. In Los Angeles County, that means you can participate in LA County DPSS Workfare

WHAT IS WORKFARE?

Workfare lets you work a set number of hours through an approved DPSS program in exchange for your CalFresh benefits. The number of hours is based on your benefit amount, and it may actually require fewer hours than the standard 80-hour monthly requirement. Ask DPSS whether Workfare could work in your situation.

What proof do I need to provide?

You may be asked to show:

- Proof of work hours
- Pay stubs or work schedule
- School or training enrollment
- Volunteer or community service hours
- Workfare participation paperwork
- Updated contact information
- Documents showing you qualify for an exemption (see below)
- Immigration-related verification if the county asks for it

If you are not sure what to provide, ask DPSS or a trusted support person for help before your benefits are affected.

What if I cannot meet these requirements?

You may not have to meet the new work requirements if:

- You are pregnant
- You are under 18 or over 64
- A doctor has certified that you are physically or mentally unable to work
- You have a dependent child under age 14 in your CalFresh household
- You are caring for a child under age 6 or for someone with a disability (they don't have to live with you)
- You are enrolled more than half-time in school, college, or a job training program
- You are working at least 30 hours per week, or earning at least \$217.50 per week before taxes
- You are receiving or applying for unemployment or disability benefits
- You are in a drug or alcohol treatment program
- You are meeting work rules through another program, like CalWORKs
- You are an American Indian or Alaska Native covered under the Indian Health Care Improvement Act
- You are participating in an Office of Refugee Resettlement Training Program

To document an exemption, you may need to provide a doctor's note, proof of school or training enrollment, or a statement of pregnancy, depending on your situation.

What if I don't meet the work requirements?

If the ABAWD rules apply to you and you receive a full month of CalFresh without meeting the work requirement or qualifying for an exemption, In California, you are given a 3 month limit (within a 36 month period) to receive CalFresh benefits without meeting work requirements.

If you reach three countable months, your CalFresh benefits may stop. To get them back, you would need to meet the work requirement or qualify for an exemption — and then reapply.

The bottom line: don't ignore letters from DPSS, and reach out for help before your benefits stop — not after.

What if I can't/don't meet the requirements?

WHAT SHOULD I DO NOW?

These changes can feel overwhelming. Here is what matters most:

1. Make sure DPSS has your current mailing address, phone number, and email.
2. Check your benefit status at BenefitsCal.com.
3. Open and read every notice you receive from DPSS — deadlines matter.
4. Ask DPSS whether you qualify for an exemption from the ABAWD rules.
5. Keep records of work, school, training, volunteer, or Workfare hours.
6. Report changes quickly — especially changes in work hours, health, childcare, school enrollment, household members, or immigration status.
7. Save copies or screenshots of everything you submit.
8. Ask for help before your benefits are reduced or stopped.