

Preparing Your Client for the Phone Interview

What to Expect Before, During and After the Phone Interview

In many California counties, households no longer need to come to the food stamp office to complete their interview and begin receiving food stamps. California counties now have the option to allow all households applying for and/or renewing their food stamps benefits to have a phone interview with an eligibility worker—instead of an in-person interview—to complete the process. This means that households no longer need to claim a “hardship” or provide a reason to request a phone interview. Call your local food stamp office to see if this option is available in your county.

Here are some tips to help you prepare your client for their Food Stamp phone interview.

BEFORE THE PHONE INTERVIEW

- Clients should provide the best phone number where they can be reached and any alternative numbers.
- The interview should be scheduled at a time that is convenient for both the worker and the client.
- Clients should expect the interview to last anywhere between 30 to 60 minutes. Remind clients to set aside enough time to complete the interview, uninterrupted and in a quiet place, if possible.
- Clients should know that once their application has been received by the county office, they will either: (1) receive an initial phone call from their eligibility worker to schedule a phone interview; OR (2) will receive an appointment card in the mail with the date and time of the phone interview. Clients have the right to request a face-to-face interview with an eligibility worker. If your client would like a face-to-face interview, they should tell their eligibility worker.
- Clients should post the time and date of the interview in a place that they will see it and remember it.
- Clients can prepare a list of questions for the eligibility worker prior to the interview and remind them to ask questions if they do not understand what is being discussed.
- Clients who have less than \$150 or their housing costs are more than their income may be eligible to receive benefits as soon as three (3) days after applying. Clients should ask their eligibility worker for expedited food stamps.

DURING THE PHONE INTERVIEW

- The eligibility worker must review your client’s rights and responsibilities, as well as how and when to report changes.
- The eligibility worker may ask your client to clarify their responses on the application and will ask additional questions to help them determine eligibility and if eligible, to help them calculate benefits.
- Encourage clients to ask any questions that they may have about the process during the interview.
- At the end of the interview, clients should ask the worker what they can expect to happen next and any deadlines. Your client can ask the worker for a printed copy of their complete application.

AFTER THE PHONE INTERVIEW

- The eligibility worker will mail your client a list of the information they need to provide to show they are eligible—including what information could help them get more food stamp benefits. Some of this information must be returned to the county office within ten (10) days to complete the process.
- If your client is having trouble finding a document, the eligibility worker is required to help them find an alternative document to fulfill the requirement. Your client should call their eligibility worker.

For more information, please visit www.cfpa.net/PhoneInterviewsCalifornia.html
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