

Santa Barbara County Ranks 50th in the Utilization of CalFresh

Full Participation Would Bring an Estimated \$47,400,000 in Federal Nutrition Benefits to Santa Barbara County Families

Wednesday, February 9, 2011

[CalFresh](#) (formerly the Food Stamp Program) is a critical defense against poor nutrition. Unfortunately, the program is severely underutilized: half of all eligible Californians miss out on the benefits of CalFresh. This dismal participation rate means California loses out on an estimated \$4.9 billion in federal nutrition benefits each year, which would go directly to low-income California families and help bolster the state's economy.

The new report by California Food Policy Advocates articulates a county-level [Program Access Index \(PAI\)](#), estimating CalFresh utilization among low-income individuals.

Santa Barbara County ranks 50th out of 58 counties for CalFresh utilization. The number one ranked county has the highest CalFresh utilization relative to the total number of income-eligible individuals. If all income-eligible individuals in Santa Barbara County participated in CalFresh, county residents would receive an estimated \$47,400,000 in additional federal nutrition benefits each year.

Rewarding Positive Performance

The [“Freshy Awards”](#) took place at the 11th Annual CalFresh Forum, held this year in the historic Crest Theater in downtown Sacramento, to honor individuals for their valiant efforts to boost CalFresh participation, and for counties that ranked best on the PAI.

This year, advocates and public administrators honored Bill York of 2-1-1 San Diego and five other Californians who have made great improvements to CalFresh over the past year. Fresno County won the award for Best Program Access Index Overall. Del Norte County won Best PAI in Class-Small County, and Solano County won Best PAI in Class- Medium County.

Mr. York won the award for Best Performance by a San Diego Advocate to Improve CalFresh for his work on the 2-1-1 San Diego CalFresh outreach plan. 2-1-1 San Diego connects callers with health and community services through a 24/7 phone line. Targeted as a high need county by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), San Diego has a large population of people

eligible but not participating in CalFresh. York trained San Diego's 2-1-1 operators to help those in need of nutrition assistance begin the CalFresh application process over the phone. Previously, callers would be directed to a separate hotline to begin applying for CalFresh; York eliminated that step.

Nominations for the awards were made by peers and were subject to popular vote. Other winners included:

- Roseanne Stephenson, California Department of Public Health won the award for Best Performance by a State Employee to Improve CalFresh award. Through her social marketing efforts to expand participation in CalFresh, more than 45,000 households were pre-screened, and an estimated 11,000 hard-to-reach households qualified for CalFresh.
- Laura McDuffey, Shasta County won the award for Best Performance by a County Employee to Improve CalFresh. She and a group of Community Health Advocates expanded CalFresh outreach to bring in over 1,100 applicants.
- Shasta Grower's Association and Healthy Shasta won the award for Best Performance by a Local Advocate to Improve CalFresh. Their work made farmer's markets accessible to CalFresh participants by accepting EBT at markets, and providing incentives for using EBT.
- Mirna Lopez, San Diego HHSA won the award for Best Performance by a San Diego County Employee to Improve CalFresh. She built strong community partnerships and worked extensively to improve CalFresh in San Diego.