



Nutrition for Los Angeles Families (NFLAF)

Recommendations to Increase CalFresh Participation

Opportunity: In-reach

Roughly one million Angelenos who are eligible for CalFresh may already be enrolled in other assistance programs such as, WIC, Medi-Cal, social security and subsidized child care. In-reach is a tool to better inform, connect, and enroll households using other public benefit programs into CalFresh. To achieve increased CalFresh participation, the Los Angeles Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) should work with its CalFresh partners to identify the most cost-effective in-reach strategies.

- Build on new procedures forged with Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS) in 2012 to develop protocol with other county departments and agencies that make referrals to DPSS to ensure the households are enrolling through Your Benefits Now (YBN) and that case managers have the right support to help households navigate and successfully submit a completed CalFresh application.
- Coordinate a series of informative peer-to-peer workshops led by the community. The workshops will be geared toward eligible, non-participating households with children 0-5 who receive services in other supportive settings such as, child care centers, health centers, community clinics and county hospitals, libraries, and other trusted community and faith based organizations. The workshops can dispel common CalFresh myths and disseminate useful information, such as how to successfully submit a completed CalFresh application.
- Incorporate CalFresh messaging into the Department of Public Health's (DPH) nutrition education materials in order to both promote CalFresh as a tool to improve access to healthy foods and outline the application process and enrollment options. In addition, review with DPH all existing communication venues where CalFresh may be integrated. This may include but is not limited to: *Rx for Prevention*, a periodic clinician newsletter offering helpful resources and referral guides.
- Train health oriented *promotoras* to increase CalFresh awareness and submit applications using YBN within health care settings, such as federally qualified health centers and community partner clinics.

Opportunity: Consistency

With many district offices and dozens of programs to administer, the 13,000 DPSS staff face a formidable task: implementing benefit determinations for nearly two million county residents in an environment of ever-changing laws, regulations and funding. Operating consistently and delivering high-quality service in this environment is a goal identified in DPSS' current strategic plan. When policies, such as No Wrong Door, and other related processes are not implemented consistently across the county this leads to a snowball effect and overall decreased customer service.

- LA DPSS' existing No Wrong Door Policy should be used consistently and implemented as intended. Doing so will help capture more eligible households and

maximize the efforts of partners' working to provide enrollment assistance in the community.

- To provide customers with consistent customer service, DPSS should work with community partners and district offices to ensure that eligibility workers implement policies and practices for application, verification, reporting, comment cards and phone interviews in a consistent manner.
- Identify variations in practice in order to focus training and support on common areas of inconsistency. One step might be to survey the 17 CalFresh contract outreach partners and dozens of other host sites to understand denials, "failure to comply" and changes that might increase retention.
- Using the Department's "as-is" process maps, identify standard expectations for the CalFresh enrollment experience, incorporate a "no wrong door" approach into these process maps in order to increase approvals.
- Establish a consistent DPSS CalFresh Program expert liaison to help CalFresh Outreach partners understand and implement policies, in addition to troubleshooting solutions.
- Simplify the type of verification documents, signatures and steps needed to approve eligibility at the time of application submission.
- Monitor and measure staff awareness of CalFresh policy and procedures, in order to identify additional operational, policy and professional development training needs.
- Build on the Joint Dialogue Customer Service Subcommittee and updated comment cards to set goals and measurements for district offices to collect, analyze and resolve participant feedback.

Opportunity: Modernization

Technology tools are available to enroll the next one million CalFresh participants in a cost-efficient, timely manner. The redesign of LEADER and Business Process Re-engineering (BPR) are two timely vehicles that should trigger DPSS to initiate a new process to hear from its closest partners and client representatives.

In order to maximize modernization efforts, DPSS should establish a modernization workgroup with its CalFresh, legal services, and other partners to inform BPR and key strategic decisions with community input and data.

- Implement DPSS's CalFresh Outreach Plan submitted to CDSS in February. CalFresh partners can help with identifying benchmarks and tracking progress.
- To make the most of its BPR initiative, DPSS can utilize the commitment and expertise of its CalFresh partners to inform process improvements such as, whether to go to task-based management, how to increase retention and reduce churning, how to increase complete online enrollment, and phone interviews.

- Utilize the Customer Call Center as a tool to schedule phone interviews for applicants, using a time-frame schedule; make the schedule available on YBN for applicants to pre-select the time(s) most convenient to them.
- Eligibility workers should update their case notes on a regular basis for the purpose of providing any eligibility worker who access those notes the ability to comprehend the most recent activity taken and expeditiously follow up.
- Standardize data collection and disseminate findings to discuss with partners, such as variations in approval/denials, negative error rate trends, and use of phone interviews.
- Develop a digital search link to help applicants and participants identify the nearest CalFresh partners, out-stationed eligibility workers and offices.

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