



## CalFresh and Medi-Cal: Keeping Benefits

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### Helping customers continue to get benefits as long as they are eligible

We are always working to help eligible households maintain their benefits without a break in aid. This is known as retention. Retention efforts help people to stay in compliance with program requirements or resolve issues in a timely manner. When we increase retention, we stop the cycle of people needing to reapply frequently, which is called churn. This is a big win for all sides since it keeps households in receipt of the aid they are eligible to and reduces the work that is needed to maintain the administration of these benefits by the county.

Many people lose their benefits due to missed reports, insufficient verifications on file, having outdated contact information listed with Social Services or for missing a scheduled interview. Receiving a discontinuance notice in the mail can feel very final for many people. However, there are often ways to restore benefits and keep the household on aid.

### Tips for Keeping Benefits

#### Mandatory Reports

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A customer is required to make contact with the county and provide information regarding their household when changes occur. Staying in compliance with program reporting rules is part of receiving the benefits. Making these reports may change eligibility, but it is an important part of remaining eligible to future benefits and avoiding fraud.

Medi-Cal is a change reporting program. This means that for Medi-Cal, a customer must report to our office any change in address, income and household size within 10 days of that change. For some customers, asset changes must also be reported within ten-days. These customers will have it listed on the paperwork they are provided that explains their reporting responsibilities.

#### For CalFresh, a customer must report within ten days when:

Their household income goes over the set Income Reporting Threshold (IRT) for their case  
If they receive substantial gambling or lotto winnings.

If you are an Able-Bodied Adult without Dependents (ABAWD) and your work or training hours drop below 20 hours a week or 80 hours a month.

- The IRT is based on household size and a notice is sent out listing details with benefit approval for each case. The income used is gross income, not the NET amount that is paid out after taxes.
- Substantial winnings are any lotto or gambling winnings from ticket purchase, hand, or other bet that exceeds \$4,500.
- Reports can be made by calling the Eureka Call Center at 1-877-410-8809, online at BenefitsCal.com, or in person at any Social Services office location.
- When in doubt, talk it out. Customers are encouraged to call or come into the office to review their IRT as well as any income changes that have occurred.
- Review before sending in verification. Proof of a change of income is not always required mid-period. Talking to an eligibility specialist is the best way to determine what steps need to be taken and what documentation (if any) is needed.

## Office Correspondence and Communication

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- Customers need to open all correspondence received from our office. Have them call our Eureka Call Center if something is unclear. The Eureka Call Center is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- Benefit recipients should update contact information any time they move, change their mailing address or change their phone number.
- Voicemails for cell phones need to be set up and be able to receive messages. Often customers do not answer our phone calls because they are from an unknown number and we need to be able to leave a message requesting a call back.

## Medi-Cal Renewals

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The Medi-Cal program has an annual renewal for each case. Many cases have the renewal completed automatically by the system. Reporting changes timely helps ensure this report can be completed through this functionality and reduces the need for customers to provide paperwork or complete interviews.

## CalFresh Voluntary Reports

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Customers may want to notify the county of the following changes, but are not required to:

- Decrease or loss of income
- Someone entering the home (such as a new baby) or leaving the home
- A change in address or phone number
- A change to household expenses, such as rent or childcare costs.
- Your medical expenses increase (for household members 60+ or with a disability)

These reports are not required and it is up to the customer if they want to provide the information. Sometimes a voluntary report of a household change can help a case to continue to receive benefits or even increase the amount of CalFresh received each month. An example of this is increased rental costs. There may be situations where CalFresh is reduced due to a household reporting a change that they assumed would help them get more.

## Periodic Reports

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CalFresh recipients are required to complete Semi-Annual Reports (SAR 7s) and Recertifications. In a majority of cases, the SAR 7 occurs six months from application followed by the recertification at one year. For some cases the time between reports is longer. A customer is always welcome to call our Eureka Call Center to verify when a report is due for their household.

Our Eureka Call Center can complete a SAR 7 over the phone with a customer, review any needed verifications, such as proof of income, and obtain the customer's signature electronically. This can help customers get the report completed timely and correctly.

## Recertifications

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CalFresh recertifications consist of an interview and report packet. If the report is not completed and turned in to the office, it can be completed with the interview. Much like an application interview, these can be completed over the phone or in-office, depending on customer preference. Some households may have the option to provide the paperwork in place of the interview.