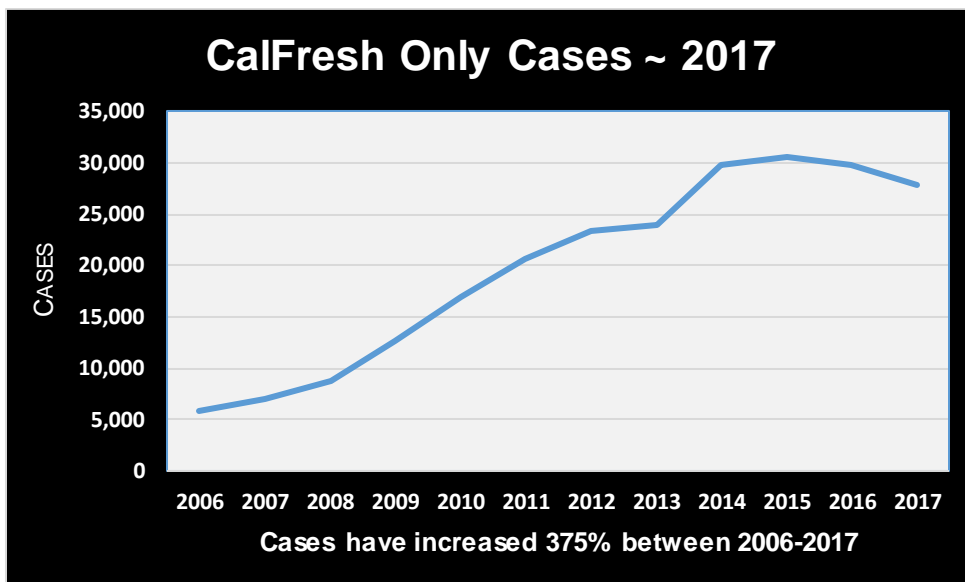


Source: CDSS Report DFA 296



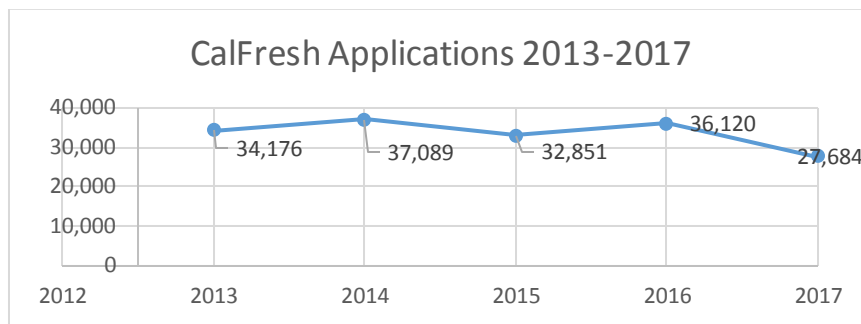
Source: CDSS Report DFA 296

Over the last 12 years, the CalFresh only cases have increased a total of 375% going from roughly 5,846 average cases a month in 2006 to 27,743 average monthly cases in 2017.

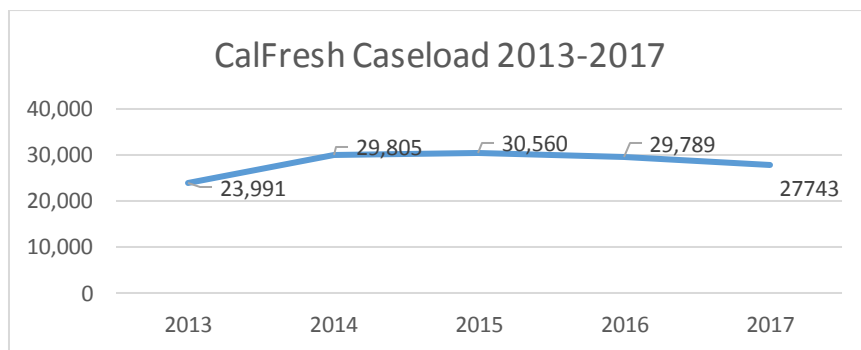
Beyond the CalFresh only average caseload of 27,743 in 2017, we also had an additional average of 4,250 Public Assistance cases, which represents those households that receive both cash aid (CalWORKs) and CalFresh. This represents a total average of 31,521 CalFresh cases in 2017.

In Contra Costa County, CalFresh puts almost \$8.8 million into the local economy each month. As indicated by the USDA, research shows that every \$1 provided in CalFresh benefits generates \$1.79 in economic activity. Using the multiplier effect, CalFresh pumped more than \$17.9 million into the local economy in the past year. This economic stimulus is almost exclusively Federal and State funded and provides an important local boost to our economy. CalFresh benefits help families stretch their food dollars to buy healthier foods for the whole family.

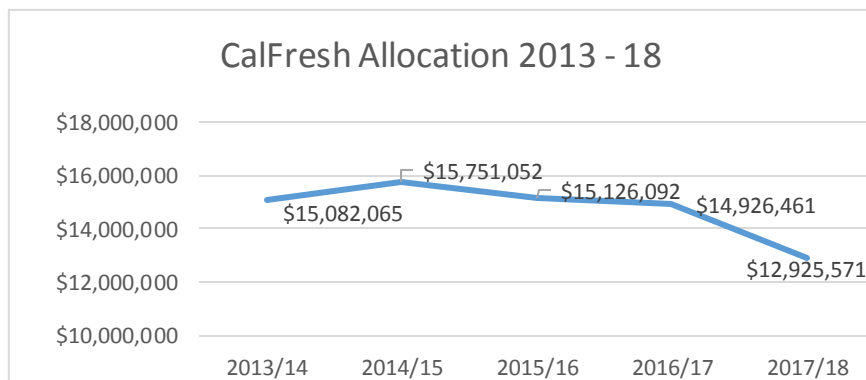
The average, total monthly CalFresh benefits issued in 2006 was \$3,285,940 compared to the 2017 issuance of \$8,816,127. This accounts for an increase of 268% for our households and the local economy.



Source: CDSS Report DFA 296



Source: CDSS Report DFA 296



Source: EHSD Fiscal

1. Although the allocation has declined approximately 14% and the caseload and applications have declined approximately 9% in the last two years, our operational CalFresh specific staffing has reduced by approximately 26% in the same time frame. This severe reduction has critically impacted our ability to deliver services timely.
2. We are interested in developing more partnerships and innovative services to better serve the CalFresh applicants and recipients in our county. Our low staffing levels impact our ability to explore these areas.
3. In addition, many counties have more than one Program Analyst dedicated to CalFresh making it possible to expand beyond core services.

Alameda ~ 2.5 CF Program Analysts with one designated for outreach

Fresno ~ 2 CF Program Analysts

Ventura ~ 2 CF Program Analysts until 7/3/17. As of July 3, 2017, there are four (4) CF Program Analysts. Two (2) are dedicated to writing policy and two (2) operational analysts who visit district offices to ensure regulations are being followed and provide Q and A.

There is an additional analyst dedicated to outreach for all programs.

II. Eligibility for CalFresh

Households that include single individuals, couples, or families are eligible for CalFresh benefits if they meet certain income criteria and legally reside in California. For some CalFresh beneficiaries (under the 200% FPL) eligibility is not asset-based or resource-based which means their property is not counted such as vehicles, cash on hand or money contained in bank accounts.

The amount of benefits a person receives depends on the number of people in the household who purchase and prepare food together and how much monthly income is left after certain expenses are deducted. Income consists of earned and unearned income. Expenses like rent, utilities, dependent care and certain medical expenses are allowable deductions. For example, a household of one (1) with no income would be eligible to receive \$192.00 a month in CalFresh benefits and a household of 10 with no income would receive \$1,441.00 a month.

III. Program Accessibility

To make CalFresh benefits more readily accessible to County residents and families, over the last several years the Department has increased its efforts in working with the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano as well as other community agencies dedicated to the CalFresh-eligible population.

As listed below, these efforts have contributed to the success of our expanding benefits to those in need of food security.

- The application process has been made easier by eliminating the requirement to apply through a face-to-face interview process. A telephone interview is now acceptable at both intake and recertification. A customer may still request a face-to-face interview if they are more comfortable meeting directly with an Eligibility Worker.
- Use of telephonic signature has begun at Department locations that have Automated Call Distribution capability such as the Medi-Cal CalFresh Service Center (MCSC) and the Health Care Access Center (HCAC). As we obtain and expand the necessary technology, the use of telephonic signature will be used department-wide.
- Applicants can now apply for CalFresh benefits on-line through My Benefits CalWIN.org portal. Many of our community-based partners have received orientations/trainings on assisting individuals through this on-line application process. In addition, Community Based Organizations (CBOs) can register their organizations as vendors in CalWIN. This will allow the CBOs to track the number of applications they register and the number processed each month by the Department.
- A customer can also access benefits through the use of a multi-program single paper application. For example, a customer who applies for and is found ineligible for CalWORKs benefits can use this same application (the SAWS 2 Plus) to automatically apply for CalFresh benefits without completing another application.
- In February 2014, the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) initiated the Express Lane Eligibility waiver program in which certain CalFresh beneficiaries were given Medi-Cal benefits without having to complete and file an application. The waiver ended June 30, 2017.
- The statewide Work Incentive Nutritional Supplement (WINS) Program was implemented in Contra Costa County on July 1, 2014. Under the WINS program, CalFresh households who are not in receipt of CalWORKs, but who meet the work participation hours of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program and have a child in the household under 18 receive an additional \$10.00 food benefit each month. From April 2017 through March 2018 there is a monthly average of 2,660 households in receipt of this additional benefit.
- Horizontal Integration allows applicants who are applying for health coverage through the California Healthcare Eligibility Enrollment and Retention System, (CalHEERS) portal to complete their application for CalFresh and/or CalWORKs benefits at the same time without having to respond to questions already asked through the Covered California process.

It was expected that through Horizontal Integration there would be an increase in program participation rates by expediting program enrollment and minimizing client efforts. In 2017 there were an average of 30 CalFresh and 6 CalWORKS applications submitted each month.

- Conversations are also taking place with the Health Services Department to expand the existing clinic consortium Medi-Cal Express application processing to include CalFresh.
- Other efforts to increase CalFresh enrollments are outlined in the Outreach section of this report.

IV. Current CalFresh Service Levels and Program Performance

A. Service Levels:

During Program Year 2016- 2017 the monthly average of individuals (families and single) who were in receipt of CalFresh benefits was 64,666. This is a 9% decrease from the previous program year which is the result of an improving economy. Forty-eight percent (48%) of these individuals are children under the age of 18.

B. Program Performance:

1. Timeliness Processing Standards

FNS requires states and counties to maintain certain performance measures for the timely processing of CalFresh applications. These measures require that 90% of all applications received be processed within 30 days and requires a three (3) day processing period for those CalFresh applicants determined to require Expedited Services (ES).

We continue to meet the 30-day CalFresh application processing standard of 90% for PY 2016-2017 with 97.5% of applications being processed within the 30-day processing requirement. During this same period we achieved a 96.61% processing of ES applications within three (3) days. With our existing efforts and commitment to the ES process, we have met or exceeded the ES 90% standard for a fourth consecutive year.

With the significant loss of staff, a two year hard hiring freeze in the Workforce Services (WFS) Bureau and now more than 78 positions vacant; our staffing levels have fallen below those needed to process the work. The wait times at the Medi-Cal CalFresh Service Center (MCSC) are frequently exceeding two hours and we are at risk of being out of compliance for the timely processing of CalFresh applications.

Through Program Year 2016-17 and 2017-18, the WFS Bureau lost over 300 positions/staff equating to a 28% reduction our workforce in the Bureau. In the CalFresh program, a reduction of 55 staff was sustained.

The Department is looking into the details and reasons of denied applications. This review will assist in identifying training needs, increase participation and approval rating, and improve the Case and Procedural Error Rates. The top denial reasons are failure to keep a scheduled intake interview, failure to provide verifications, over

income limits, not a separate household, SSI/SSP recipient, ineligible student, and application withdrawn.

Management Evaluation (ME)

As mandated by the FNS, the California State Department of Social Services (CDSS) is required to conduct a Management Evaluation (ME) review of Contra Costa County's administration of the CalFresh Program. The federal priority areas of the ME for FFY 2017 were Program Access, Customer Service, Timeliness of Application Processing, Payment Accuracy, Quality Control and Training. The ME review was conducted the week of October 9, 2017.

CDSS observed and interviewed staff and clients at the Medi-Cal CalFresh Service Center (MCSC), Benefits CalWIN, Central Mailing Unit, and district offices in Antioch and Hercules. CDSS indicated that they were very impressed with the excellent customer service demonstrated by our staff. They noted that with this being the first ME for FFY 2018 that CCC has set a high standard for other counties to achieve. CDSS was also impressed that our department had conducted Case And Procedural Error Rate training and stated staff had commented to them on the value of this training.

During the exit interview CDSS noted a total of five findings in several easily correctable administrative and procedural areas. In addition, they recommended that supervisory staff periodically sit in on client interviews to provide feedback and ensure appropriate forms are discussed.

The next ME review will take place the week of October 15, 2018.

2. CalFresh Error Rate

Every month in every county, FNS selects a random sampling of CalFresh cases that are to be reviewed for case errors involving miscalculations of income or household composition which result in benefit issuance errors. Our Quality Control (QC) Unit reviews those cases that are selected and determines our CalFresh error rate. Based on the number of cases reviewed and the number of errors cited an error rate percentage is then derived.

FNS is currently evaluating all States QC procedures to ensure that there is no bias applied to the final outcome of the error rate. As a result there will be no fiscal penalties tied to the error rate for FFY 2015 and FFY 2016. Therefore there will be no final error rate for FFY 2016. It resets with FFY 2017 with new QC rules and procedures for case reviews.

The error rate for FFY 2017 (October 2016 through September 2017) is at 6.07% compared to the State error rate of 7.93%. California's error rate falls within the tolerance level for QC related liability assessments for FFY 2017. CDSS does anticipate a request from FNS for a corrective action plan, which they will do in partnership with counties.

The cumulative error rate for FFY 2018 (October 2017 through March 2018) is at 3.26% compared to the state error rate of 5.03%.

In recent prior years, our County has been one of the counties with a consistently low error rate, which has contributed to the State error rate being below the federal threshold.

3. Outside Consultant

In our attempt to improve customer service and performance levels, we hired an outside consultant to assess our current business practices. While we have incorporated several improvement recommendations there are still other recommendations we will be instituting that will improve program access and customer service. Due to allocation reductions, the contracted consultant will not continue in Program Year 2018-19.

- The QC consultant has worked with our IT staff in developing a Case Review Management System tool. This tool allows the reviewer to go on-line to complete the case review as well as produce real time data reports. This has been instrumental in allowing our Unit Supervisors and the Program Integrity Unit to quickly identify error trends so that corrective action can be taken. In addition, the consultant has assisted our ability to fine tune the QC and Quality Assurance (QA) process with focus placed on the root cause of errors. This has allowed us to identify error trends and develop corrective action strategies.
- The Business Process consultant has evaluated our current CalFresh business processes and analyzed data to identify areas for improvement. It was determined that missed appointments are a large barrier for many applicants. EHSD has incorporated and is evaluating options to reduce missed appointments, including providing same day appointments, text appointment reminders, and expanding alternatives to face-to-face interviews such as phone and video conferencing.
- EHSD is also working to identify and reduce “churn,” which is when clients cycle on and off the program in a short amount of time; specifically, applicants who reapply within three months of their semi-annual report or recertification being due. If those clients were able to maintain continuous enrollment, it would greatly reduce the workload of EHSD staff without an interruption in service for clients. EHSD has begun work in this area, with a first step being the implementation of text reminders to clients when their reports are due. In addition, a “packet wrapper” was created for individuals walking into the district office. This four step guide provides an overview of the enrollment process including the interview, verification request, and EBT card issuance. Another tool was developed for on-line applicants that places emphasis on how to download and upload documents digitally, and how to create a MyBenefitsCaIWIN account so the applicant can track the application status.

4. Staffing

As previously mentioned, 28% of the WFS Bureau's staff/positions have been reduced in the last two program years with 55 positions lost in CalFresh. Our inability to hire case carrying or support staff is making it difficult to stay in compliance.

The loss of intake workers, eligibility workers, ongoing caseload workers, supervisory and clerical positions in the Workforce Services Bureau will compromise the improvements that have been achieved in the CalFresh program, specifically the reduced error rate and Expedited Services delivery.

V. Outreach and Community

EHSD is proud of our efforts to increase CalFresh participation thereby ensuring that more children, families and individuals are able to put nutritious food on their tables each day. The Department has convened a CalFresh Partner Group with the goal of increasing enrollment in the County. The partners include the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano, the Multi-Faith ACTION Coalition, Ensuring Opportunity, and First 5. This group's strategies are to increase CalFresh enrollment and reach populations with historically lower enrollment. What is already clearly a success is forging a path to partner with community organizations on a shared goal; the ability to evaluate and modify processes and procedures; and a mindset that working together is always better.

The partner group is developing strategies for 2018 & 2019 that focus on outreach for children, seniors, Latinos, reducing churn, and looking at dual enrollment by evaluating existing Medi-Cal customers who could be potentially eligible to CalFresh. In addition, work is being done to identify the potential population as it relates to 2019 regulation changes that impact Able Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) and SSI/SSP population. These changes are discussed in the Policy Items of Interest section.

Successful efforts and key achievements of the group are illustrated as follows:

- CalFresh Enrollment Process Improvements: We are developing new and strengthening existing business processes for helping people enroll in CalFresh. EHSD currently works with the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano to train nonprofit staff in CalFresh so they have a better understanding of the program and enrollment process. This enhanced training and knowledge as well as a more specifically identified EHSD liaison for the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano will not only enhance the quality of training and knowledge in the community, but will strengthen our community partnerships.
- Our partnering agencies have expressed a desire for the County to participate more robustly in outreach efforts. Community activities, grants and funding opportunities often request community based organizations to partner with the County or the County needs to participate as a stakeholder. With the staffing issues that are currently being faced, it is challenging for our staff to participate in expanded outreach efforts.

We are currently exploring the possibility of providing additional funding support to our partners to expand their outreach efforts. We will then measure the impact for the timely processing of applications.

- Walmart awarded a grant to the Food Bank for CalFresh Outreach. Partnering with EHSD, the Food Bank mailed postcards to households currently receiving Medi-Cal but not CalFresh. The Food Bank also partnered with local school districts to mail to families with children on free/reduced lunch. Funds were also used to print posters advertising the CalFresh program that are posted in health clinics, food pantries, and other locations where low-income families are likely to visit.
- When staffing levels increase, we will resume community based CalFresh events that provide an opportunity to process applications and issue same day benefits while in the community.
- Technology partnership
 - EHSD is working with the Food Bank and Code for America to utilize a mobile application equipped with electronic signature. This allows the streamlining of preliminary applications through an electronic portal via assistors in our partnering agencies. The Food Bank and EHSD piloted a new application GetCalFresh (formerly known as CLEAN), which is a simplified version of the on-line CalFresh application that can be used on a tablet, smartphone or laptop. It was designed by Code for America for use by community-based organizations. The application takes only about 5-10 minutes to complete and is much simpler for outreach workers in the field. Clients' documents can also be uploaded for submission with the application. The Food Bank continues to use GetCalFresh and is looking to this platform as their sole application portal. It has greatly streamlined the application process and makes filling out an online application while in line at a food distribution event more feasible. This has increased the number of CalFresh applications.

- Read Only Access

To further support the Food Bank's efforts to assist clients more directly, EHSD has provided CalWIN read only access to the Food Bank. This will allow designated Food Bank staff to look up clients' case status in real time, remind clients of their appointments, let them know what paperwork they are missing, etc. This should improve timely processing while also saving EHSD staff time. Before, the Food Bank had to contact EHSD staff to get case updates, so this has significantly streamlined access to data.

- Marketing

- Volunteers from the Leadership Contra Costa alumni group have expressed interest in helping advertise and market CalFresh to communities with many eligible people. Developing a marketing plan for CalFresh will require studying the issue and

applying smart advertising techniques to the challenge of CalFresh enrollment. Leadership Contra Costa has marketing professionals who can help with this work.

- The month of May has been designated “CalFresh Awareness Month” by several other California counties. Working with our community partners, the County Board of Supervisors provided an official resolution and declared May as CalFresh Awareness month in Contra Costa County.
 - Community Produce Program is another successful example of the collaboration between EHSD and the Food Bank. The Food Bank brings a food truck to the EHSD Antioch District office parking lot at 4545 Delta Fair, every first and third Friday of the month from 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. In 2017, the Food Bank served an average of 106 households each month. In 2018, the average served is 120 households each month thus far. The Food Bank and EHSD have been working together to find other locations allowing the population to receive fresh produce.
 - In addition, the Food Bank is working with EHSD in designing a note card to send to existing CF households to remove confusion surrounding the ABAWD work rules. These rules go into effect in three bay area counties September 1, 2018, but not implementing in CCC.
- Community Training on CalFresh:

- The EHSD CalFresh Program Analyst conducts “Just the Basics” training with the Food Bank which takes place three to four times per year with 25 to 30 participants from community organizations in each session. Provided in the training is a CalFresh overview, hands-on outreach application exercise as well as an introduction to the on-line application MyBenefitsCalWIN.

This training has been a foundation in developing new partners since 2006. Aides of the Board of Supervisors, staff from Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) and regular attendees have attended this training from WIC, the Monument Crisis Center, La Clinica, Rubicon, Public Health, Head Start, One Stop Centers and the Family Justice Centers.

- Over the last six (6) years, EHSD has attended an annual Food Bank Summit which is held on a rotational basis between Contra Costa and Solano Counties. The purpose of the Summit is to educate, inform and update those in attendance on topics such as Nutrition Education, Food Safety, what the Food Bank does, and provide instruction and mandates of USDA on the CalFresh Program. This is a daylong event and is attended by various County Department representatives, agencies, and CBOs who work closely with the Food Bank.
- Beginning this month, EHSD staff are providing client navigational services and more direct access to benefits including CalFresh through our 4 Our Families Strategic Initiative. This service model provides a holistic approach to helping first-

time clients access the targeted supports and services they need, through EHSD and our Community Partners.

Currently, the services are available at the Richmond Family Justice Center, Bay Point SIT Site, EHSD Antioch District Office and the EHSD satellite office in Brentwood.

- The CalFresh Program Analyst participated in the “Connecting Homeless Clients with Mainstream Benefits” training on August 14, 2018. This training was sponsored by the CCC Health Services Department and featured several topics on eligibility requirements for various programs including CalFresh. This training allowed its participants to gain insight into the programs and or services that are available and how the homeless population can connect with mainstream benefits.
- Advocacy

As the CalFresh Partner Group worked at expanding access to increase participation; it was clear that changes at the local, State, and National level would be helpful, or even sometimes necessary, to improve CalFresh benefit access. Current CalFresh policies limit accessibility, including an application process that can be arduous for residents with young children, those who work traditional hours, those who are disabled, and the elderly. Policy changes that allow residents to apply over the phone, through the mail, or on-line are recent additions, but work is still needed to make CalFresh as accessible as possible.

The CalFresh Partner Group is looking to CalFresh advocacy to increase participation. Several partner organizations have legislative platforms that include CalFresh concerns, including addressing college student food insecurity, providing supplemental benefits in the summer to families with school-age children, and simplifying the application process by using electronic employment databases to verify income.

VI. Legislation

Under the current Administration, we continue to be concerned about potential legislative or allocation methodology changes, which may result in client eligibility and/or funding reductions to SNAP. We continue to track this issue through several mechanisms including County representative organizations and our Policy and Planning Division.

The impending cuts to CalFresh proposed in some versions of this year’s Farm Bill have the potential to be very harmful to program participants in our county, increasing hunger in our community. Likewise, the more extreme time limits and stricter work requirements proposed would likely remove many low-income individuals from the program.

Able Bodied without Dependents (ABAWD)

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA) limits the receipt of CalFresh benefits to three months in a 36-month period for the Able

Bodied without Dependents (ABAWD) CalFresh population if they are not working; participating at least 80 hours per month in a qualifying education or training activity; participating in a workfare program or exempt due to age; caring for a child or incapacitated household member; or certified as medically unfit for employment.

Previously, there was a waiver to this requirement, which is scheduled to end August 31, 2018. When this occurs, ABAWDs will be required to participate in work activities in order to continue to receive benefits. The waiver has been extended through August 31, 2019 for 55 Counties including Contra Costa. Three counties; San Francisco, San Mateo and Santa Clara will begin implementing ABAWD rules September 1, 2018. CCC is expected to be implementing in the second waive which begins September 1, 2019.

With the impending end of this waiver, the State and Counties are current working on various concepts to serve this population effective September 1, 2018. This is a current emphasis of the Department at this time.

In partnership with EHSD, the Food Bank has secured significant private funding from four local foundations to tackle this issue. EHSD has engaged in the formation of a new partnership, specifically focused on mitigating the negative effects of the ABAWD roll off and ensuring adequate supports for work in the community. This project has involved contracting with the Glen Price Group consulting firm to convene necessary stakeholders and to leverage partnerships to create a community-wide response to this impending challenge.

Supplemental Security Income and/or California State Supplementary Payment (SSI/SSP) Cash Out Policy

Effective June 1, 2019 individuals receiving or authorized to receive SSI/SSP are eligible for CalFresh, providing all other eligibility criteria are met. This policy changes California's "cash-out" policy that began in 1974 when it opted to increase the monthly SSP allotment by \$10 instead of administering benefits to SSI/SSP recipients. Two state funded programs will also be created to provide benefits to continuing households that will have their monthly benefits reduced or discontinued due to adding a previously excluded SSI/SSP individual.

VII. Policy Items of Interest

The following changes will have an impact to our CalFresh participation, and/or increase the workload of our staff:

- Telephonic signature

The telephonic signature is a type of electronic signature that uses an individual's recorded spoken signature or verbal consent in place of an actual written signature. The use of the telephonic signature, as part of the application or recertification process, will eliminate the need to mail documents in order to gather a client's ink signature. In addition, utilizing this process will also reduce the amount of cases being discontinued for failure to complete the recertification process, which will assist with reducing churn.

EHSD does not yet have the technology in place to roll out telephone signature Department wide but it is used at our locations that operate under Automated Call Distribution such as the Health Care Access Center and the Medi-Cal CalFresh Service Center. We began using this process in May 2016.

- SNAP to Skills or Employment and Training

Contra Costa County is currently participating in SNAP to Skills led by Seattle Jobs Initiative (SJI). The Federal and State CalFresh agencies have contracted with SJI to help select California counties develop Employment and Training (E&T) programs. Contra Costa is one of 34 counties in the State to offer CalFresh participants training and assistance towards job readiness, job security, work norms and access to higher education. We are partnering with Opportunity Junction and Rubicon Programs, who are overseen by the Foundation for California Community Colleges' Fresh Success program.

The E&T program launched in Contra Costa on April 17, 2017. To date, there are 74 voluntarily enrolled clients in the E&T program with a total of 225 referrals.

- Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Suspense Status

Due to the outcome of the Hector Riojas vs. USDA case, individuals in California who are in SSI suspense status are no longer *ineligible* for CalFresh benefits. It was argued that SSI recipients whose benefits are in suspense status should be eligible for CalFresh. Effective August 30, 2016, individuals in California who are in SSI suspense status are not precluded from CalFresh eligibility. These individuals must apply and meet normal CalFresh eligibility requirements in order to receive benefits. While this change does increase the number of eligible household members, the benefits are reduced as the SSI income that was previously excluded is now included in the budget.

- Public Charge

Immigration discussions at the national level continue to cause concern for the CalFresh recipient and potential applicant. There have been no regulatory changes to date and we continue to communicate to the community that it is business as usual. Use of CalFresh benefits does not affect ones immigration status and will not cause immigration officials to consider these individuals as a public charge.

Public charge is a term used by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS) when referring to noncitizens that have or may become dependent on public cash assistance such CalWORKs, General Assistance, or Supplemental Security Income (SSI). This determination is made by CIS when a person is adjusting their citizenship status to lawful permanent resident. CalFresh is considered a supplemental nutrition program and not a cash benefit. As a result CalFresh recipients are not a public charge.

There has, however, been a leaked notice of proposed rulemaking to change these rules and to make several public benefit programs, including CalFresh, public benefit programs.

- Elderly and / or Disabled Household Demonstration Projects

Standard Medical Deduction

Effective October 1, 2017 through September 30, 2021 a standard medical deduction of \$120 will be issued for households in which an elderly or disabled member incurs medical expenses in excess of \$35 per month. Households with an elderly or disabled member include those with at least one individual who is 60 years of age or older and/or disabled and/or receives a disability based benefit. To be eligible, the household must verify that they incur more than \$35 a month in qualifying medical expenses. Households with more than \$155 a month may opt out to document and claim actual expenses. Since the implementation of this new policy there are currently 1,876 households utilizing this deduction.

Elderly Simplified Application

Effective October 1, 2017 through September 30, 2021 a simplified application process has been approved in an attempt at improving CalFresh access among the state's low income elderly and disabled population. The project waives the recertification interview requirement, uses existing data matches to reduce verification requests, and extends the certification period to 36 months. The project applies to households where all members are either elderly (age 60 or older) and/or disabled with no earned income. The project does not apply to other CalFresh participants. Since the implementation of this new policy, the 36-month certification has been approved for a total of 1,392 households.

VIII. Disaster CalFresh

As a result of the significant increase of disasters combined with record breaking destruction, California created Assembly Bill AB 607, community Resiliency and Disaster Preparedness Act of 2017. In accordance with AB 607, the Bay Area Social Services Consortium (BASSC) is developing a social services mutual aid plan. The plan is a work in progress and includes Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Monterey, Napa, San Benito, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Solano and Sonoma County. It is anticipated that the agreement will be officially incorporated into the Department and CDSS disaster plan for FFY 2020.

An example of mutual aid agreement can be seen in the 2017 Northern California wildfires as California was approved to operate Disaster CalFresh (D-CF) October 25 through November 1, 2017 in seven counties: Butte, Lake, Mendocino, Napa, Nevada, Sonoma and Yuba counties. D-CF provides individuals and families impacted by the wildfires and displaced outside of the disaster area with access to D-CF. These benefits provide temporary food assistance for one month to eligible disaster impacted households who do not already receive CF. It also facilitates the issuance of supplemental CF benefits for ongoing CF households up to the maximum monthly allotment for one month.

To be eligible for D-CF a household must have lived or worked in the identified disaster area at the time of the disaster, plan to purchase food during the benefit period, experienced adverse effects due to the disaster and meet D-CF income guidelines.

Due to Sonoma County systems being down, the CalWIN counties leveraged the ACA Call Center capabilities and established the D-CF Call Center. CCC, along with six (6) additional counties, was provided access to the Sonoma County CalWIN region. CCC also provided support by sending staff to Sonoma County to assist in interviewing and processing D-CF applications.

Sonoma County has issued: 1) replacement benefits to 3,147 households using an automated Mass Replacement Benefits process, 2) Issued mass supplemental D-CF to 5,111 households on 10/25/17, and 3) approved 1,207 households for D-CF and 5,227 households for Supplemental D-CF.

X. Important Next Steps

The Department remains committed to providing timely and ready access to CalFresh benefits for those with food insecurity, and in continuing to serve our CalFresh customers in a timely and accurate manner. Although our staffing challenges will prevent us from embarking on these improvements as robustly as we would like, we have a continual improvement objective in the areas of outreach, access, enrollment, and services delivery.

Part of this objective is to continue our community outreach efforts and to work even more closely with our community partners to expand access to CalFresh benefits. Expanding access includes our continued rollout of electronic and other alternative means for applying for benefits despite our staffing reductions. We will also continue our efforts to further streamline our CalFresh application and benefits renewal process, and will continue to work on increasing knowledge and awareness of the CalFresh program throughout and to targeted areas within the County.