

# CalFresh Expansion Implementation Update

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**Report to the County Family and Human Services Committee  
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# CalFresh Expansion Implementation Update



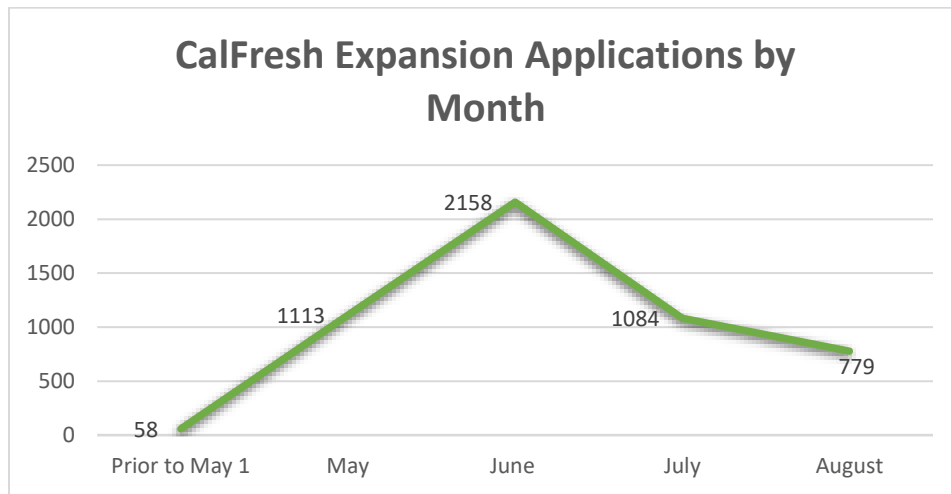
The Family and Human Services Committee received a comprehensive CalFresh Expansion Report on July 29, 2019. The following is a brief update on that report.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- EHSD remains committed to serving our community and continues to direct resources to supporting SSI recipients.
- The overall inflow of CalFresh Expansion applications remains high. CalFresh applications were still 35% higher-than-average in August due to the continued need of SSI recipients.
- The number of pending applications has decreased by 82% since our last update. The decline has been possible through extensive internal collaboration between units, availability of overtime hours, and our temporary workforce.
- Of the pending applications, only 9.5% are pending over 30 days. We continue to assist clients with rescheduling interviews and obtaining necessary verifications, though the SSI populations has unique barriers that can cause delays.
- The approval rate for the CalFresh Expansion overall is 79%, which is higher than the 50% approval rate for non-Expansion CalFresh applications. Continued communication about CalFresh eligibility criteria and the requirement to complete the full application processes is needed.
- We receive slightly over half of CalFresh Expansion applications through the GetCalFresh portal. While EHSD supports the use of online applications, especially for those with mobility issues, we encourage the public and community partners to use the MyBCW online application when possible.
- Progress continues on building out a new integrated eligibility unit in Aging and Adult Services, encompassing the operations of General Assistance, IHSS, and our SSI Advocacy team. Currently, 27% of CalFresh Expansion applicants are IHSS recipients.

## INFLOW OF CALFRESH EXPANSION APPLICATIONS

On June 1, 2019, individuals receiving SSI/SSP became eligible to receive CalFresh, however, clients were allowed to turn in applications beginning May 1, 2019. June 2019 was by far the highest volume month of the expansion thus far. Still, the overall inflow of applications remains high. Prior to the expansion, EHSD received an average of 2,180 CalFresh applications each month in 2019. Even in August, the lowest month since we officially began accepting Expansion applications, our number of applications each month has increased over 35%.



Though the total number of CalFresh Expansion applications did decrease in August, the overall volume remains a significant increase in what EHSD would typically process for CalFresh in a given month. Continued use of overtime and temporary employees remains necessary to deal with the inflow. The first week of September 2019, we received 140 CalFresh Expansion applications, the second-highest first week since May, which is notable given the Labor Day holiday and the shortened timeframe of being available to accept applications in offices. In the coming months, we do expect that the total number of CalFresh Expansion applications will level off, though the initial influx of new clients is still strong.

## STATUS OF CALFRESH EXPANSION APPLICATIONS

As of September 8<sup>th</sup>, we have received 5,333 CalFresh Expansion applications. Approximately 73% of these applications have come from new clients who are not currently receiving In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS). Initially, the state predicted we would receive about 1,000 of such applications in total. Though still early in the implementation process, we have far exceeded that total.

The number of pending applications has also **decreased** by 82% since our last update. This has been possible through extensive internal collaboration between units, availability of overtime hours, and our temporary workforce. EHSD is immensely grateful for the effort staff have put into processing applications in a timely manner and drastically reducing our backlog.

In an average month, approximately 50% of CalFresh cases are approved. The approval rate for SSI recipients / CalFresh Expansion is much higher at 79%. EHSD and community partners should continue communicating with SSI recipients that CalFresh income limits still apply and SSI recipients will need to complete the entire CalFresh application process.

# CalFresh Expansion Implementation Update



SSI Expansion Application Status	Number of Applications	% of Total
Approved	4,199	79%
Denied	595	11%
Pending	317	6%
Withdrawn, Cancelled, or Discontinued	222	4%

## PENDING APPLICATIONS AND 30-DAY COMPLIANCE

The state of California defines compliance for CalFresh applications as 90% of applications being processed within 30 days. In May 2019, SSI recipients became eligible to apply for CalFresh benefits. State data shows our 30-day compliance rate decline from 96% in May to 91% in June 2019, then 81% in July 2019. This decline coincided with the increased backlog created by the influx of CalFresh Expansion applications.

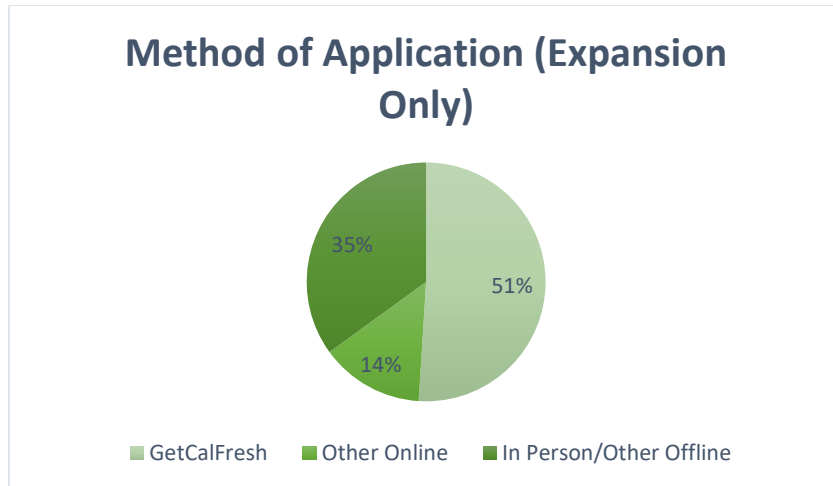
We have developed internal methods for tracking compliance rates specifically for the CalFresh Expansion SSI population. Of the 262 pending CalFresh Expansion applications as of September 12, only 25 have been pending for over 30 days (9.5%). Further, nearly half of these overdue applications are overdue by less than 10 days. While we strive for complete compliance with the 30-day timeframe, the influx of applications combined with the unique needs of CalFresh Expansion applicants has made 90% compliance difficult for both EHSD and applicants.

After a client misses an interview or fails to turn in verifications, they have an additional 30 days to do so before their application receives a final denial and they need to start a completely new application in order to receive benefits. Because of the unique challenges the SSI population faces, which can include homelessness and severe disabilities, clients may need additional time to complete interviews or obtain their necessary paperwork.

## ONLINE APPLICATIONS

One method of reducing wait times and expediting processing is the use of online applications. While we recognize that some SSI recipients may have disabilities that make the use of computers difficult, for those with mobility-related issues it may be an alternative to needing to make the trip to a district office. Approximately 65% of CalFresh Expansion applications have arrived through an online portal. However, the vast majority of these have come through GetCalFresh, a Code For America site that requires minimal information from clients before sending the information to EHSD.

While we recognize that some clients may have limited time and GetCalFresh is a convenient option, we do wish to stress that these applications have a higher-than-average denial rate for all CalFresh clients due to the impression the application gives some clients that they have already completed the entire process. MyBCW is an alternative online application system that better informs clients of the entire CalFresh application process. We provided a MyBCW guide to community partners in May and are available for any ongoing questions or support to use this system. When possible, we do encourage both the public and community partners to use MyBCW instead of GetCalFresh to lessen the confusion for clients and potentially expedite the application process.



### INTEGRATED SERVICES DIVISION

When the Expansion was approved by the legislature, we began planning for a new, integrated unit within Aging and Adult Services (AAS) to oversee the ongoing case management of CalFresh expansion customers. The goal of this unit is a customer-friendly application experience for IHSS customers who have SSI and may be eligible for CalFresh. Currently 27% of CalFresh Expansion applicants are existing IHSS clients.

This new division will serve both General Assistance (GA) customers and the IHSS clients that have SSI. GA currently processes CalFresh applications for individuals already applying for GA, which will remain the same. Customers who have both IHSS and SSI are currently able to apply for Medi-Cal, and will now be able to apply for CalFresh through this new division. Additionally, Social workers in this new division will continue to refer clients to apply for SSI benefits when appropriate, as well as provide advocacy and case management during their SSI application process.