

CalFresh Work and Community Engagement Requirements

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the new CalFresh work and community engagement requirements?

Starting June 1, 2026, you may have to work or participate in a community engagement activity to keep getting CalFresh if you:

- Are between the ages of 18 and 64, and
- Do not have a disability.

This is sometimes called the Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) rule. If the new requirements apply to you, then you are limited to 3 months of CalFresh every 36 months (3 years). To continue getting CalFresh, you will need to work, participate in a community engagement activity, or be excused from the requirements.

Do I qualify to be excused from the new requirements?

You may be excused if you are:

- Under the age of 18 or over the age of 64
- Unable to regularly work 20 hours per week because of a physical or mental health issue
- Pregnant
- Responsible for the care of a dependent child under the age of 14 in your CalFresh household
- Caring for a sick, injured, or disabled person
- Going to school at least half-time (student eligibility rules may apply)
- Meeting or excused from the CalWORKs Welfare-to-Work rules
- Getting or applying for Unemployment benefits
- Getting or applying for disability benefits including, but not limited to Veteran's disability benefits, workers' compensation, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), or State issued temporary or permanent disability benefits
- Participating in an Office of Refugee Resettlement Training Program
- An Indian, Urban Indian, or California Indian (a member or descendant of federally recognized tribes)

If you are experiencing physical or mental challenges that make it difficult to meet the new requirements, talk to your eligibility worker to see if you may be excused.

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If I do not qualify to be excused, how can I meet the new requirements?

If you are not excused from the new requirements, you will need to work or participate in a community engagement activity for a total of 20 hours per week, or an average of 80 hours per month, to keep your CalFresh benefits.

Work and community engagement activities include, but are not limited to, the following. You can do any of these types of activities alone or combined.

- Working (including self-employment) or earning \$217.50 per week before taxes
- Going to school or training
- Participating in an Employment and Training Program
- Volunteering, doing community service, or in-kind work (trading work for something else, such as reduced housing costs)

I heard some counties don't have the new requirements. Do the new requirements apply to my county?

The federal government may grant counties waivers that give them temporary permission not to use these work and community engagement requirements. If you live in one of these counties, you can keep getting CalFresh without meeting work and community engagement requirements between November 1, 2025, through October 31, 2026:

- Alpine
- Colusa
- Imperial
- Merced
- Monterey
- Plumas
- Tulare

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What are countable months?

Countable months are months in which a person gets a full month of CalFresh benefits, and they are not:

- Excused from the new CalFresh work and community engagement requirements
- Meeting the new requirements
- Living in a waived county or area
- Getting a discretionary exemption

This means that if you have not met one of the conditions above, then you can only get CalFresh benefits for 3 months every 36 months (3 years).

When do the new requirements go into effect?

In California, most counties will begin applying the new CalFresh work and community engagement requirements starting June 1, 2026.

- **If you applied for CalFresh before June 1, 2026**, you will not have to meet the rules until your recertification.
- **If you apply for CalFresh after June 1, 2026**, your county will tell you if you are excused from the requirements, already meet the requirements, or if you will be limited to 3 months of benefits when you apply.

Where can I get food assistance if I am no longer eligible for CalFresh?

If you are no longer eligible for CalFresh, you can:

- Contact your local Food Bank for food assistance: <https://cdss.ca.gov/food-banks>
- Call the 211 Resource Line

If I have questions, where can I get more information?



Click: BenefitsCal.com



Call: 1-877-847-3663 (FOOD)/For speech and/or hearing assistance call **711 Relay**



Come in: Visit your local county social service office. Find locations at CalFreshFood.org



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