

CALFRESH EXPANSION TO SSI RECIPIENTS: LESSONS & OPPORTUNITIES

Initial Roll-Out Was Hugely Successful

The expansion of CalFresh benefits to Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients in 2019 was the biggest increase in program eligibility in decades. The change required a year of intensive multi-stakeholder planning. Enrollment in CalFresh and the two “hold harmless” programs that the State put in place to protect existing CalFresh households from the negative impacts of the policy change, Supplemental Nutrition Benefits (SNB) and Transitional Nutrition Benefits (TNB), exceeded projections as of June 2021.



49%

out of 1.2 million
SSI recipients enrolled



577,930

people enrolled



\$740M

in annual food benefits,
\$88 per person

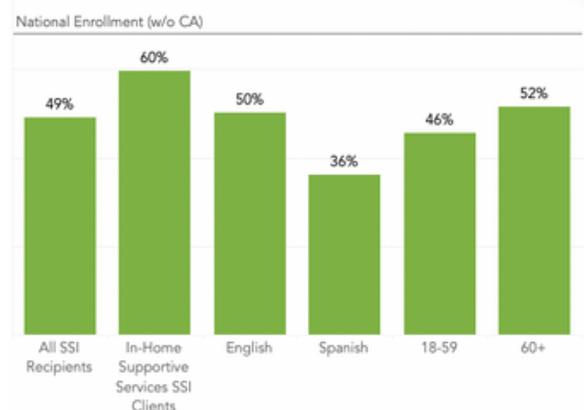
220,000 More SSI Recipients Could Still Enroll

California's CalFresh enrollment rate among SSI recipients remains far from the national average (68%, excluding California). We can see the potential impact of full CalFresh enrollment -- how many more SSI recipients would benefit and how many federal dollars they would have to spend in their communities -- by projecting enrollment numbers to the national average for certain populations.

- IHSS clients:** ~35,320 new enrollees, ~\$44,755,800/yr.*
- English speakers:** ~118,100 people, ~\$149,653,500/yr.*
- Spanish speakers:** ~65,260 people, ~\$82,691,700/yr.*
- Adults age 18 to 59:** ~90,470 people, ~\$114,640,600/yr.*
- Older adults (60+):** ~111,580 people, ~\$141,388,400/yr.*

*Enrollment is notably lower than the statewide overall enrollment rate for demographic groups or the national rate for In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) clients.

SSI Enrollment Rates for Key Populations, June 2021



A PATH TO FULL ENROLLMENT

Full CalFresh enrollment of SSI recipients will require dedicated efforts in outreach, policy refinement, and operational improvement. These short- and long-term recommendations are largely focused on areas that will need strong leadership from CDSS and the California legislature, in partnership with county administrators and advocates.



1. Invest in outreach that will bring the CalFresh enrollment rate for SSI recipients (49%) in line with national rates (68%).

- Target under-enrolled populations.
- Streamline CalFresh enrollment of new SSI recipients.
- Track and report on progress.



2. Remove administrative burdens to CalFresh, TNB, and SNB enrollment. Address the harm they have caused.

- Restore SNB and TNB benefits to people who lost benefits during the pandemic.
- Reach out to people whose applications were denied for procedural reasons.
- Massively simplify recertification processes.
- Resolve technology and process barriers to access.



3. Increase CalFresh benefit levels so they are always worth the effort of applying.

- Increase the minimum benefit level for older adults and people with disabilities.
- Target education about medical deductions; standardize self-attestation templates.
- Expand availability, accessibility, and promotion of Market Match-style programs.



4. Create a plan to improve accessibility of CalFresh for people with disabilities.

- Assess accessibility on an ongoing basis.
- Expand, improve, and make standard existing accessibility features (e.g. telephonic signatures, simplified applications, online ordering).



5. Use the SSI CalFresh Expansion planning process as a model for rolling out future policy changes.

- Engage broad networks of stakeholders in meaningful planning with regular communication structures.
- Prepare for automation and implementation roll-outs with testing and training.