

DRAFT for a Model Policy on Auto Enrolling Foster Youth into CalFresh

Problem Description:

Over 5,000 Foster Youth Emancipate each year in CA. Of that number, [over 25%](#) experience hunger or food access instability. Even those enrolled in higher education are not immune, with over 20% still experiencing food access instability. The opportunity is to automatically enroll Foster Youth at 18 into the CALFresh Program at the behest of the social worker or court.

Currently the burden is on the foster youth to navigate the system, and that is a tremendous burden. The application/enrollment should be handled by the relevant social worker/agency to ensure this is the 18 + process.

Current Status:

The occurrences of non-minor dependents (“NMD”) not knowing about their right to CalFresh, submitting the application incorrectly, or getting rejected are common. As it is now, the submittal of a CalFresh application is to be done by the NMD, on their own, or for them to request their assigned CSW for help.

An [ACL](#) was sent in February of 2017, but was not acted on by all CalFresh workers. The ACL sent out on February 14, 2017 outlines how applications should be interpreted by social workers. It explains the following foster youth NMD related exemptions:

Exemptions:

- a. Directly related to Foster Youth:
 - i. Cooperating Agencies Foster Youth Education Support (CAFYES)
 - ii. Extended Foster Care (AB 12/AB 212)
 - iii. Foster Youth Success Initiative
- b. Indirectly related:
 - i. Educational Opportunity Program (EOP)
 - ii. College Disabled Students Program and Services/Student Academic Support
 - iii. Guardian Scholars Program
 - iv. Chafee Educational Training Voucher Program

Verification documents are already in the hands of social workers or will eventually be needed as the assigned CSW is tasked with being up to date on the progress of preparing an NMD for emancipation from the system. Most foster youth do not have access to the ACL and are unclear on how to deliver verification documents on their own.

Foster youth are commonly rejected for food stamps due to a 20-hour work week requirement for students, that is in fact waived to 1 hour for foster youth. The ACL was meant to clarify this, but the occurrence of rejected applications is still common.

Proposed Solution:

1. Make all foster youth at 18 eligible for CalFresh, **automatically** enrolling them.

2. Alternatively, the Social Worker / Court should enroll all foster youth at 18 years old.

The CalFresh application pipeline can be made more efficient by front-loading the process of filling out, submitting, and renewing the application to the timeframe in which foster youth become NMDs, by CSW's. When a foster youth becomes an NMD, they are concurrently signed up for MediCal and depending on their future plans, ILP.

When a foster youth becomes an NMD, their assigned social worker should be tasked with filling out and submitting their youths CalFresh application -- similar to when they are tasked with submitting their ILP and MediCal applications concurrently, the CalFresh application should be included in the batch.

Pilots have been suggested in either Alameda, Los Angeles or San Francisco Counties.