



May 4, 2018

CCWRO Welfare News - 2018-03

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Four years & still no food stamps for SSI recipients who live below 100% of the federal poverty level. Most SSI recipients have lost \$75 every month for four years.

Recent History of Efforts to End Cash-Out - Four years ago the SSI Coalitions Ending the SSI Food Stamp Cash Out Committee voted to END cash-out, even if it meant that some families already getting food stamps with an SSI recipient, may get less food stamps. The committee realized that over 90% of SSI recipients would benefit. The committee's recommendation was put on the shelf and forgotten. Meanwhile, every month, for years, 90% of the SSI recipients do not get an estimated average of \$75 worth of food stamps.

HOW DID WE GET HERE?

In the days of paper case files (1973) only 25% of SSI recipients received food stamp benefits. California asked for federal government approval to add \$10 a month to each SSI recipient's SSI check so that 100% of the SSI caseload got CalFresh. It is now 2018 and SSI recipients still only receive \$10 a month for food. In the welfare system things often stand still.

LAO REPORT

This year, the California Legislative Analyst Office (LAO) released a report entitled "[Potential Effects of Ending the SSI Cash-Out](#)". The report alleges that out of 1.3 million SSI recipients, 369,000 SSI recipients would benefit from the cash-out. The report states that 126,000 out of the 1.3 million SSI recipients living in a mixed household would experience an average of \$88 in reduced CalFresh benefits while those who qualify would receive an average of \$75 a month.

Chart # 1 reveals that while 126,000 families with an SSI recipient will see an average \$88 monthly reduction in benefits, over 900,000 independently living SSI recipients will see a \$75 gain each month.

CHART #1

Ending SSI Cash-Out Impact on the SSI Caseload		
	Less Food Stamps (living with SSI recipient)	More Food Stamps (Independently living SSI beneficiaries)
Households	126,000	900,000
Monthly Amount	(\$88)	\$75
Annual Impact	(\$133,056,000)	\$810,000,000

HOW MANY PEOPLE WOULD RECEIVE CalFresh IF CASH-OUT IS ENACTED?

There are two (2) estimates of the number of SSI recipients who would get CalFresh if cash-out goes into effect: Mathematica at 29% and DSS at 75%. Both estimates assume that the individual SSI recipient applies with the welfare department to get food stamps.

Chart #2 below, reveals the outcomes of current CalFresh applications for households, who apply for

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Cash-Out- Continued from page 1

CalFresh through the county welfare. Only 64% of the applications are approved. 40% of the denials resulted from applicants were ineligible and a whopping 60% of the denials were due to procedural reasons, e.g., “A household failed to complete the application process by not signing the application, not attending the interview, or failed to provide the requested verification”.

CHART #2 - February 2018 CalFresh Application Outcome - CF 296

Applications Received and Disposed of During February	138,938	100%
Applications approved	89,045	64%
Applications Denied	49,893	36%
Denial Reason - Ineligible	19,905	40%
Denial Reason - Procedural Reasons	29,988	60%

The Mathematica estimate is an accurate estimate if the assumption is that the aged, blind and disabled would have to enroll in CalFresh through the county process. The DSS estimate of 75% is a pipe dream that has no evidence to support such an inflated estimate, if it includes applying for aid at the county welfare office.

WHAT IS THE ALTERNATIVE?

Today, DSS knows how much income each SSI recipient gets each month because the State has to pay a portion of the SSI check. The [DSS Bendex](#) system has the current income for each SSI recipient.

Most elderly disabled and blind do not use the medical deduction because of the difficulty of providing verification of their minimum \$35 medical expenses to the welfare office before the county will even consider a medical deduction allowance.

Many states use a standard housing cost that

simplifies the program and negates the necessity to provide housing cost verification.

Today, with 21st century technology, benefits programs should be administered much more efficiently. In the 21st century no one should have to go to the welfare office to apply for CalFresh. California can adopt a “simplified CalFresh enrollment” process.

HOW WOULD SIMPLIFIED ELIGIBILITY FOR SSI RECIPIENTS WORK?

All SSI recipients automatically receive Medi-Cal. They do not apply for Medi-Cal with the county. The Medi-Cal case can be viewed in the MEDS system.

CalFresh benefits are calculated by looking at the following factors (1) income; (2) utility costs; (3) housing costs; (4) medical expenses; and (5) household composition.

California’s Simplified Ending SSI Cash-Out benefits would use the standard housing allowance and without medical deduction. In California everyone gets a utility deduction through “heat & eat” and the computer knows exactly how much income each SSI recipient gets. Using this information CalFresh benefits can be computed and loaded on the EBT card.

The SSI recipient will receive an EBT card loaded with CalFresh benefits, just like a credit card. The EBT card can be activated just like activating the credit card. Before card activation, the SSI recipient would complete an IVR process to determine if they are eligible for simplified eligibility or would have to be interviewed by the county

HOW WOULD IT WORK?

Question #1 - “Do you want CalFresh? Yes? No? “No”. **End.** If “yes”, ask the person if he/she customarily purchases and prepares food separately and have an individual under the age of 22 living in the home. If the answer is “no”, they can now start using the card. If the answer is “yes”, they shall be directed to contact the county welfare office to process the application.

On page 3, there is a flow chart showing the simplified CalFresh eligibility determination process for California’s SSI beneficiaries.

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Simplified Ending CalFresh Cash-Out for SSI Beneficiaries

STEP #1	SSI Beneficiary - Receives the EBT card and calls the 800 number to activate it, just like a credit card coming in the mail.	No	End of Call
		Yes	Go to Step #2
STEP #2	IVR – Do you want food stamps/Cal-Fresh?	No	Refer to CWD
		Yes	Go to Step #3
STEP #3	IVR – If you live with others, do you purchase and prepare your food separately?	No	Go to Step #4
		Yes	Refer to CWD
STEP #4	IVR – Is there anyone under the age of 22 living with you?	No	Go to Step #5
		Yes	Refer to CWD
STEP #5	IVR – You can now use you EBT card to buy food.	End of Call	

End of Call

**Finally, \$75 of food stamps
(also known as SNAP/CalFresh)
available each month to combat SSI
beneficiary food insecurity in California.**

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Under this simplified process the majority of SSI beneficiaries will receive CalFresh by bypassing the immense barriers that come with going through the county welfare office application process. About 75-80% of the SSI cases live independently, according to data from the State Department of Social Services from 2015. See

Chart #3. Thus, perhaps 5-10% of the persons getting the card would have to contact the CWD.

The county will still be able to do case clearance without having the SSI beneficiary applying for CalFresh with the county in-person or on-line as all of this information is already in MEDS and MEDS has an interface with the SAWS system.

CHART #3

Recipient Type	State Living Arrangement										Total
	Independent	Non-Medical Board and Care	Independent with Meals	House-hold of Another	Disabled Child	NMO-HCHH of Another	Disabled Child HH of Another	Title XIX Facility	Other	Other	
Aged Individual	246,121	3,795	3,041	34,271	0	121	0	4,090	599	0	292,038
Aged Spouse	63,528	169	155	6,153	0	18	0	191	0	0	70,214
Blind Child	1,886	71	0	121	78	5	3	75	0	0	2,239
Blind Individual	11,309	438	2	619	0	13	0	154	0	0	12,535
Blind Spouse	619	4	0	10	0	0	0	1	0	0	634
Disabled Child	51,499	5,507	701	5,758	107,536	71	3,539	1,719	0	0	176,330
Disabled Individual	578,287	37,248	36,790	33,085	0	525	0	8,442	2	1	694,380
Disabled Spouse	41,583	156	127	630	0	3	0	57	0	0	42,556
Total	994,832	47,388	40,816	80,647	107,614	756	3,542	14,729	601	1	1,290,926

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, while there are over 900,000 SSI households living independently, the LAO, based on DSS' information, concludes that only 383,000 or 30% would qualify for CalFresh. While SSI advocates are focused on the 126,000 that may lose \$88 a month, they fail to focus on the real issue effecting SSI recipients, that with 21st century technology, will allow all 900,000 and more to qualify and receive CalFresh benefits.

Not using all of our 21st century tools to make sure the maximum number of SSI recipients receive CalFresh benefits is unconscionable.