

Fact Sheet



June 2019

More Help On the Way to Alleviate Hunger for Seniors and People with Disabilities

Overview

Supplemental Security Income and State Supplementary Payments (SSI/SSP) provide support to seniors and people with disabilities who do not have enough money to cover their basic needs. Since 1974, SSI/SSP recipients have not been eligible to receive benefits through the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP), known as CalFresh in California. Instead, these individuals received a supplemental grant of \$10, known as “SSI Cash Out.”

This year, the California state legislature ended the cash out through the 2018-19 state budget. Beginning June 1, 2019, SSI/SSP recipients will continue receiving the \$10 supplemental grant and will also be eligible to receive CalFresh benefits. This change, also known as CalFresh Expansion, will support SSI/SSP recipients in our community by helping to alleviate hunger and reduce food insecurity.

Supplemental Security Income/State Supplementary Payments (SSI/SSP)

Beginning June 1, 2019, SSI/SSP recipients will be eligible to receive CalFresh benefits – for the first time since 1974.

SSI/SSP Eligibility

Individuals who are blind, disabled or over 65, with little to no income and few assets, are eligible for SSI.

The combined maximum SSI/SSP grant for an individual – \$931.72 per month – is equal to only 92 percent of the poverty line. Many SSI/SSP recipients struggle to afford basic needs like food, rent, and health-related expenses.

Accommodating More Enrollment and Funding

Contra Costa County has been working with the State and community partners to improve our ability to meet the new enrollment needs of this population. While CalFresh Expansion will provide food assistance for many senior and disabled residents, there may be negative impacts for current CalFresh recipients living with a family member on SSI/SSP. The state has provided funding to ensure that these families do not have reduced benefits because of CalFresh Expansion. Governor Newsom’s budget proposal for the upcoming fiscal year includes plans to make this funding permanent.

Contra Costa County’s SSI/SSP Recipients

There are approximately 25,000 SSI/SSP recipients living in Contra Costa County. Approximately 76 percent of them are blind or disabled (including more than 2,000 children), and 24 percent are elderly. These individuals face distinct challenges, such as high rates of housing instability, limited mobility, and mental health challenges such as cognitive impairments and dementia.

Based on preliminary state projections, there may be 10,000 SSI/SSP recipients who will be newly-eligible to CalFresh in the region after the cash out goes into effect. It is estimated that approximately 7,500 of these recipients will participate in CalFresh.

10,000 SSI/SSP recipients who may be eligible for CalFresh

Estimated 7,500 who will participate in CalFresh

Currently, there are more than 2,600 CalFresh households in Contra Costa County with at least one individual who is receiving SSI/SSP. Of these, it is projected that 950 families will experience an increase in CalFresh benefits; approximately 1,500 families may see their CalFresh reduced; and about 150 families may completely lose their food assistance.

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Meeting the Needs of SSI/SSP Recipients

There are many challenges to enrolling newly eligible SSI/SSP recipients into CalFresh, as well as serving families currently receiving food assistance who have a SSI/SSP recipient in their household.

More than 6,400 SSI/SSP recipients are currently being served through In-Home Support Services (IHSS), a program for disabled individuals who need assistance with tasks such as bathing, cleaning, and household shopping.

While the state will provide initial funding and guidelines for implementing CalFresh Expansion, many SSI/SSP recipients have limited mobility or other disabilities that will impact their ability to complete the application process. Once granted CalFresh, these individuals will also be subject to reporting requirements, such as income verification, for which they will need additional support and guidance.

Given the challenges unique to SSI/SSP recipients, the state, county, and our community partners are coordinating on effective outreach and application assistance to facilitate access. There is a special focus

on encouraging candidates to apply online through My Benefits CalWIN. As of early June, a significant portion of applications have come through this channel.

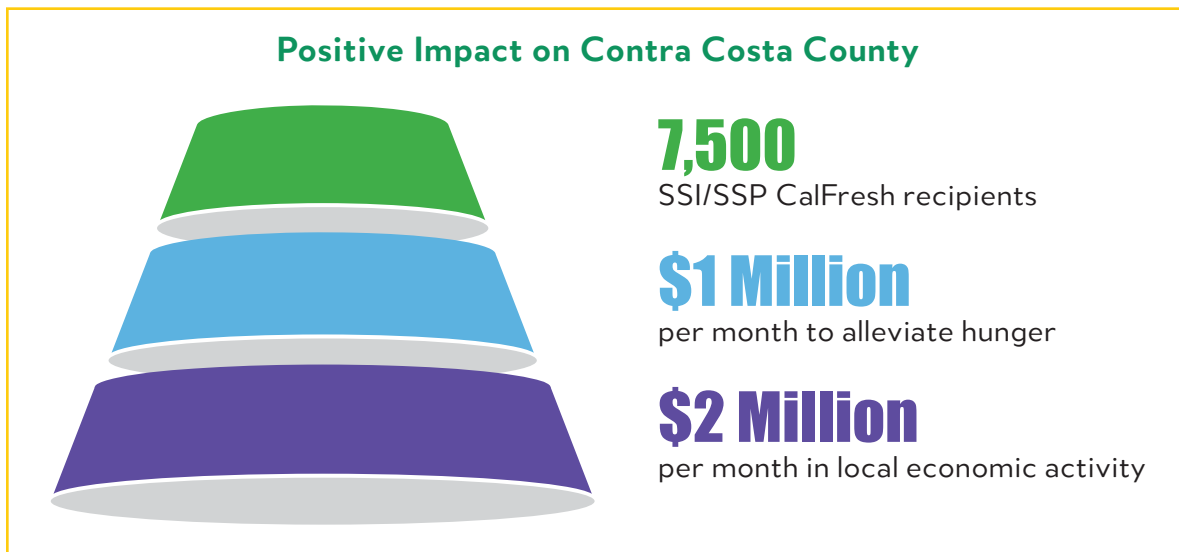
A successful enrollment and outreach strategy must include collaboration to overcome the barriers these individuals face, and guide them through the application and ongoing case management processes for CalFresh.

Positive Impact

In spite of the challenges, CalFresh Expansion presents a great opportunity to provide seniors and disabled people living in Contra Costa with much-needed help.

The state has set an ambitious goal of enrolling 75 percent of newly eligible households to CalFresh, though some advocates expect the total enrollment to be even higher. If achieved, this would provide food assistance to approximately 7,500 SSI/SSP recipients in Contra Costa County, bringing an additional \$1 million in CalFresh benefits per month to help alleviate hunger. This will positively impact the entire county, and can generate up to \$2 million per month in local economic activity.

The Employment and Human Services Department (EHSD) is committed to partnering with the community to maximize the positive impacts of CalFresh Expansion.



Document subject to revision as further analysis is completed.

