



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CA Seniors, people with disabilities newly eligible for both CalFresh & SSI

SD Hunger Coalition stands ready to assist CalFresh enrollment

San Diego, May 1, 2019 – Starting June 2019, major changes are coming to Californians who receive Supplemental Security Income/State Supplementary Payment (SSI/SSP). This is the program that provides a monthly cash benefit to seniors, the blind, and people with disabilities. **California is one of the only states in which SSI/SSP recipients are precluded from participating in CalFresh (SNAP). This will end in June** when SSI/SSP recipients will either be eligible to apply for CalFresh or will automatically be enrolled if they live in a house with other people who already receive CalFresh benefits.

Under the revised policies, seniors with a fixed income will only need to reapply every three years. Individuals who are granted CalFresh benefits may receive as much as \$120 per month.

San Diego Hunger Coalition is ready to provide interviews and a b-roll opportunity with San Ysidro Health. Additionally, the San Diego Hunger Coalition is hosting a CalFresh Task Force meeting on **Thursday, May 28, 2019 from 10 am to 12 pm**. The meeting will have guest speakers from the **California Department of Social Services, the State Council on Developmental Disabilities, and San Diego Legal Aid**. Press are welcome to attend, please see attached agenda for approximate timing.

San Diego Hunger Coalition was active and instrumental in gathering the momentum necessary to end *SSI Cashout* (see background section below) and reinstate state funding to increase SSI benefit payments and a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA). **These changes have the potential to significantly reduce food insecurity amongst seniors and people with disabilities in San Diego County and across the state of California.**

*San Diego Hunger Coalition research indicates that in San Diego County **1 in 11 seniors are food insecure and 50% of adults experiencing food insecurity are living with a disability.***

The Hunger Coalition is actively training and working with local nonprofit organizations, the County of San Diego Health & Human Services Agency, and the California Department of Social Services to educate and inform those affected by the changes and encourage those eligible for CalFresh (SNAP) benefits to apply.

According to Hunger Coalition research, in San Diego, 91% of food assistance comes from federal programs (SNAP, WIC, school lunch, etc.) while 9% come from private charity (food banks, pantries, senior meal delivery, etc.). Altogether, senior congregate meals and meal delivery provide a little over 2 million meals annually. This is the equivalent of feeding nearly 2,000 seniors 3 meals/day. Currently in San Diego, 1 in 4 households receiving CalFresh (SNAP) have seniors over the age of 60, many of whom have previously not been eligible to apply for CalFresh due to SSI Cashout (description in background section).

SSI Cashout background and meeting info on the reverse.



Background: In 1974, the federal government began its SSI program. At the time, states were given the option to include a cash benefit in SSI payments in lieu of providing food stamps to SSI recipients. This was known as the “SSI Cashout.” California went with this option because it would save the state money in the form of reduced administrative costs. In 1974, that cash option was \$10/month for food. In the intervening 45 years, that amount has not changed.

The current individual SSI/SSP benefit total is at the same level as it was in 1983. An individual on SSI/SSP will receive an average benefit of \$932/month. The 2019 Federal Poverty Level is \$1,040/month. **Many Californians are below the poverty level, are struggling to meet their basic needs and having to make tough choices between paying for housing, medicine, and food.**

San Diego Hunger Coalition is available for interviews, information, and to facilitate connections with any of our over 100 local hunger relief partners. Please contact Joe Shumate, Communications Officer at 619.501.7917 ext. 106 or joseph@sdhunger.org.

CalFresh Task Force Meeting
5/30/2019 10:00 am – 12:00 pm
City Heights Center
4305 University Avenue, Ste. 640
San Diego, CA 92105

Working towards a San Diego County where residents are informed, empowered, and have access to the necessary resources to become self-sufficient.

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| 1. Welcome & Introductions | 10:00-10:10 |
| 2. SSI and CalFresh Expansion | 10:10-11:45 |
| a. Social Security Administration Presentation | 10:15-10:25 |
| <i>Jeffrey Rodriguez, Social Security Administration</i> | |
| b. Overview of SSI Eligibility & Material Presentation | 10:25-10:55 |
| <i>Jessica Cooper, CA Dept of Social Services & Maribel Gallegos, County HHSA</i> | |
| c. SSI Outreach Panel | 10:55-11:30 |
| i. State Council on Developmental Disabilities (15m) | |
| ii. Senior Serving Organization (10m) | |
| iii. San Diego Legal Aid (15m) | |
| d. Q&A and Discussion of Next Steps | 11:30-11:45 |
| 3. Connecting College Students to CalFresh | 11:45-11:50 |
| a. QR Codes for College Same Day Workshops | |
| b. CalFresh Flowchart for College Pantries | |
| 4. CalFresh Program Updates | 11:50-12:00 |
| <i>Maribel Gallegos & Ismael Lopez, County HHSA</i> | |

Interviews may be possible at the CalFresh Task Force Meeting. Please contact Joe Shumate ahead of time to discuss timing joseph@sdhunger.org.