

Know Your Rights

3 Month Time Limit For Some Adults on CalFresh



Time Limits on CalFresh: Some adults **ages 18 through 64** on CalFresh must be exempt from or do work, education or training activities to get CalFresh for more than 3 months between June 1, 2026 and January 1, 2029. Your county calls this “Time Limits or “ABAWD” rules. It calls the activities “work or community engagement.” This rule also applies to the state CFAP food benefits program from June 2026 through September 2027.

➔ **You Must Be Exempt or Meet the Rules to Get CalFresh More Than 3 Months**

Does The Time Limit Apply to Me?



The county must first check to see if you need to meet the rules before they can start applying them. They will do this in your interview when you apply. If you are already getting CalFresh, the county will do this at your next Recertification. Many adults **do not have to meet** (are exempt from) the rules.

You only have to meet these rules – or tell your county you are exempt – if the county sends you a [CalFresh Notice Of Work Rules](#) that lists your name in Section 2 of the form.



You Have a Right To...

- Tell the county if you are exempt or meeting the Time Limit Rules (see next page for details). If not exempt, this is 80/hours/month (work/school/volunteer).
- Have the county act on your reports before your next CalFresh benefit goes out. You can upload a document reporting your change through your [BenefitsCal account](#). If you don't have an account the upload button [is here](#).
- Ask the county worker to help you get verification
- [Appeal](#) if the county incorrectly reduces or ends your food benefits. Get free advice or help from legal aid services: find your county office(s) [here](#)

Fill out [this form](#) from the California Association of Food Banks to share your story about how the time limits are impacting you.

Told You Must Meet the Time Limit Rules?

You are exempt (don't have to meet the rules) if you have any of the reasons below.



Work or School Reasons:

- Make \$217.50 or more/week at work
- Work 30 hours/week
- Get or applied for unemployment benefits
- In school or training program half time or more



Family Reasons:

- In a CalFresh household with a child under 14 (even if child isn't eligible for CalFresh)
 - Care for a child under 6, or a child or adult who is disabled or needs your care (even if not living together or related)
- Get CalWORKs cash benefits (for families with children under 18 or will graduate before 19) and not sanctioned



Personal Reasons:

- Are getting Extended Foster Care (age 18-21) or in Independent Living Transitional Independent Living
- Alaska Native, or a member of an American Indian, Native American, Urban Indian, or California Indian tribe (or has a parent or grandparent who is a member)



Health Reasons:

- Have a short or long term health issue (physical or mental) that makes it hard to work 20 or more hours/week (30 hours to be exempt from work registration)
 - Have personal circumstances that impact your physical or mental health *and* which make it hard to regularly do an average of 80 hours/month of work. Examples:
 - Don't have a regular place to sleep at night
 - Issues from current or past domestic abuse
 - Trauma history (veteran's, foster care, other)
 - Struggling with substance use issues
- Pregnant
- Get or applied for a disability payment like SSI, SDI, Worker's Compensation, or Paid Family Medical Leave
- In substance use treatment program

Tell the County if You Meet the Rules

You are meeting the rules if you do any combination of the below for 80 hours/month:

- Doing paid or unpaid work. Examples of unpaid work include internships, work exchange (like doing chores for reduced rent) or caring for family or friends who aren't disabled or under age 6)
- Going to school/in training (less than ½ time)
- Volunteering or doing community service

Note: Tell the county if you had a **good reason you couldn't meet the rules** (like transportation issue, personal or family emergency, illness). This can help you stay on CalFresh.

How to tell the county you are exempt, met the rules, or had a good reason not to

Fill out [this exemption form](#) or explain the information to the county in a written, signed statement (handwritten note is fine) and send it in by:

- Online turning in the exemption request through [BenefitsCal](#)
 - *If you have an account*, log in to your account and go to "Support Requests" – mark all the exemptions that apply to you. Click to submit.
 - *If you don't have an account*, save the filled out exemption form as a PDF or take a picture of it. Upload the exemption request. Make sure your case identifying information is on whatever you upload. From the [BenefitsCal](#) homepage, click the [upload documents](#) button. Look for a document category related to "ABAWD" or time limits. Print/capture the image of the receipt.
- Call 1-877-847-3663 and enter your zip code to reach a CalFresh worker at to your county office, or call directly using this [county office directory](#).
- Go to a [local office](#) to speak with a CalFresh worker or use a lobby kiosk to scan a document into your case record.
- Mail to your [local office](#), making sure to list your application or case number, name and date of birth.