

CalFresh Provider Guide

Serving Asian American and Pacific Islander Communities in Los Angeles



BACKGROUND

While a large CalFresh enrollment gap persists among all eligible California residents, the disparity is particularly prevalent among eligible Asian American, Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander (AA and NHPI) households in the state. In 2015, only about 70% of eligible California residents received CalFresh benefits—already one of the lowest participation rates in the United States (1). Of the total number of households that receive CalFresh, only 5% are AA and NHPI backgrounds, even though these groups comprise around 16% of

the state's total population (2).

Extremely small percentages of various Asian ethnic groups actually receive CalFresh, even when they qualify. According to 2015 data from Los Angeles County, 23% of AA and NHPI residents live in food insecure households and 11% of API children live in communities with poor or fair access to fresh food (3-5). **AA and NHPI households are missing out on key resources to supplement their nutrition and diet. Read this guide to learn more about barriers and strategies to address this gap.**

BARRIERS TO CALFRESH UTILIZATION

Asian Pacific Island Forward Movement (APIFM) partnered with researchers in 2016-2017 to gather insight on barriers to CalFresh utilization and suggestions for outreach in four AA and NHPI communities (Tongan, Vietnamese, Chinese, and Filipinx) (6). Louie al. (2020) identified the following four key barriers to CalFresh participation from their qualitative study:



Unclear Program Information

- Lack of information about the program
- Unclear eligibility criteria
- Fear of consequences



Application Process

- Complex application
- Time-consuming
- Lack of in-language support
- Lack of access to DPSS office
- Unhelpful staff



Shame

- Social stigma (shame associated with acknowledging situation of poverty)



Pride

- Strong sense of family-reliance and self-reliance
- Not wanting to admit need; "saving face"
- Not wanting to depend on government

Suggestions for Providers

Unclear Program Information

- Conduct more outreach with AA and NHPI ethnic media outlets
- Create more concise, simple, in-language information about eligibility and necessary paperwork
- Share posters in local supermarkets and community events

Application Process

- Train front-desk staff about CalFresh eligibility criteria and to answer questions
- Increase in-language staff capacity dedicated to CalFresh support



Shame

- Refrain from describing CalFresh as a program for "low-income" people, or just for people "in need"
- Emphasize not feeling ashamed using CalFresh because it's just another regular part of their benefits (especially among seniors)

Pride

- Emphasize that CalFresh benefits the local economy
- Describe that CalFresh can be used temporarily when they are in need of additional support; "If you decide later on that you are making enough money to stop using CalFresh, your tax dollars will be put into the program to help others after you."

Sources cited:

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5. California Department of Social Services. *DFA358S - CalFresh Participants by Race/Ethnicity - State-Only Households*. California Department of Social Services; 2018. Accessed November 5, 2018. <http://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/Research-and-Data/CalFresh-Data-Tables/DFA358S>
6. Louie NT, Kim LP, Chan SE. Perceptions and Barriers to SNAP Utilization Among Asian and Pacific Islanders in Greater Los Angeles. *American Journal of Health Promotion*. 2020;34(7):779-790. doi:10.1177/0890117120925746