

Expanded Federal SNAP/CalFresh ABAWD Requirements

MEDIA BRIEF - Effective June 1, 2026 | Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties

WHY THIS MATTERS

Beginning June 1, 2026, California will implement expanded federal SNAP work requirement rules enacted under H.R. 1 that affect Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs), a category used by SNAP to determine who may be subject to work and community engagement requirements. While ABAWD requirements are not new to SNAP, known as CalFresh in California, the changes expand work-requirement screening and tracking to additional groups, including adults ages 55 to 64, parents whose youngest child is 14 or older, veterans, people experiencing homelessness and former foster youth.

While some of these groups may still qualify for exemptions, counties will be required to screen a significantly larger population as the new rules are implemented through the application and recertification process. As a result, more CalFresh recipients may be asked to document work, training, education or other qualifying activities to maintain benefits.

For many households, maintaining access to CalFresh is an important part of keeping food on the table. CalFresh helps households afford groceries and maintain access to food during periods of financial hardship. As the changes take effect, Second Harvest of Silicon Valley is monitoring local implementation, helping residents understand eligibility rules, and connecting community members with CalFresh enrollment assistance and other food resources.

AT A GLANCE

- **The Basic Rule:** Starting June 1, 2026, certain CalFresh recipients who are subject to ABAWD requirements may be limited to three months of benefits in a 36-month period unless they meet federal work requirements or qualify for an exemption.
- **The Hourly Threshold:** To keep full benefits, those subject to the rules must complete an average of 20 hours per week (totaling 80 hours per month) of qualifying work, training, school or volunteering.
- **The Affected Population:** According to the [CDSS website](#), this new group includes CalFresh recipients who are:
 - Ages 18-64 who do not have a qualifying exemption
 - People who do not have a disability
 - Parents whose youngest child is 14 or older
 - Populations previously exempt are no longer, including those who are:
 - Experiencing homelessness
 - Veterans
 - Currently or were in foster care on their 18th birthday
- **The Timeline:** This is not happening all at once. New applicants will be screened starting June 1, 2026, while current recipients will be screened at their next scheduled recertification review.
- **The Community Impact:** Impacts will build gradually as households cycle through recertification, not all at once.

BY THE NUMBERS

Santa Clara & San Mateo Counties

- 168,000 residents receive CalFresh across both counties
- ~55,000 Santa Clara County residents potentially affected by new requirements
- ~13,700 San Mateo County residents potentially affected by new requirements
- ~40% of local CalFresh recipients estimated to be subject to new requirements

Statewide — California

- ~1 million Californians required to document 20+ hours/week of work activity
- ~665,000 Californians may not meet the new requirements, per state estimates

WHAT CHANGED

- **Expanded Tracking Population:** New federal rules broaden the population subject to ABAWD screening and tracking, including adults ages 55-64, parents whose youngest child is 14 or older, and groups that previously qualified for specific exemptions, including veterans, people experiencing homelessness and former foster youth.

- **New Work Requirement Categories:** Adults ages 55-64 and parents of children ages 14-17 are newly subject to the work requirement unless they qualify for another exemption.
- **Exemptions Remain Available:** Veterans, people experiencing homelessness and former foster youth have lost their specific exemptions under the new rules. They are now subject to ABAWD requirements unless they independently qualify under a remaining exemption category (such as disability or living with a child under 14).
- **Expanded Student Eligibility Pathway:** Effective June 1, 2026, California expanded its Local Programs that Increase Employability (LPIE) provision. Students enrolled at least half-time in associate or bachelor's degree programs at California Community Colleges, California State University (CSU) campuses and University of California (UC) campuses are now considered to be participating in an approved LPIE for CalFresh purposes. As a result, many students may qualify for CalFresh without needing to meet other student eligibility pathways, such as working 20 hours per week or participating in a work-study program.

WHAT REMAINS UNCERTAIN

- **Local Procedures:** County implementation procedures may continue to be refined after June 1.
- **Timeline of Impact:** The full scale of community impact will become clearer across 2026-27 as households cycle through recertification.
- **Administrative Barriers:** The extent to which eligible recipients may experience challenges navigating documentation, reporting or eligibility review requirements remains unclear.

TIMELINE

June 1, 2026	New rules take effect. New applications and recertifications include ABAWD work-requirement screening.
Summer 2026	Existing recipients begin encountering new requirements at their scheduled recertification reviews.
Oct. 2026+	Impacts become more visible as time limits begin affecting recipients who have not met requirements.

LOCAL CONTEXT

The need for food assistance remains high across Silicon Valley. Second Harvest serves 1 in 6 people in Santa Clara and San Mateo counties each month, and roughly half are children and seniors. For many residents, CalFresh helps stretch limited budgets and provides a reliable source of food assistance while households balance the rising costs of housing, healthcare, childcare, transportation and groceries.

Second Harvest is monitoring implementation across both counties and tracking shifts in demand at food distributions and through CalFresh enrollment outreach. As a primary point of contact for residents who lose access to benefits, Second Harvest is positioned to observe community impact in real time.

SECOND HARVEST'S ROLE

What Second Harvest does

- Helps residents understand changing eligibility rules and connect with available food resources
- Provides CalFresh enrollment assistance — applications, benefit questions and navigation support
- Connects residents to food distributions across Santa Clara and San Mateo counties regardless of CalFresh eligibility
- Operates a multilingual Food Connection Hotline: 1-800-984-3663, Mon.-Fri., 8 a.m.-5 p.m.
- Offers volunteer opportunities that may help some recipients supplement qualifying activity hours

What Second Harvest does not do

- Determine CalFresh eligibility or ABAWD classification — those decisions are made by county agencies
- Process, approve or administer recertifications

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