



# U.S. Congressman Jimmy Panetta

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## COVID-19 Action – Food Assistance

### Food Assistance

The CARES Act provides more than \$25 billion in federal food assistance. This legislation includes \$15.8 billion for emergency Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, known as CalFresh in California, and \$8.8 billion in additional funding for child nutrition programs. This legislation also provides \$450 million to provide food banks with additional resources for food and distribution.

The CARES Act builds on several changes enacted in the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, which provide necessary funding, flexibility, and expanded eligibility for federal nutrition programs, including SNAP, WIC, and child nutrition programs, during this heightened time of need. Highlights include:

- Suspending SNAP work requirements for Able Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) until one month after the national emergency ends. This suspension means that the ABAWD waiver rule previously set to take effect on 4/1/20 will not have an impact during this period.
- Giving schools the authority to send children home with food.
- Waiving the requirement for individuals to be physically present in order to be certified or recertified to receive benefits through the Special Supplemental Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).

### **I lost my job/have been forced to work reduced hours. Am I eligible for CalFresh?**

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act and CARES Act work together to ensure Americans receive the food they need, especially if they are newly unemployed.

You must apply for SNAP in the state where you currently live. In order to apply for SNAP, or CalFresh, in California, contact the CalFresh office at 877-847-3663. You can also access the online application at: <http://www.benefitscal.org/>.

### **Do I qualify for CalFresh if I am getting unemployment insurance?**

Your household must meet certain requirements to be eligible for CalFresh and receive benefits, even if you are getting unemployment insurance. If the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), which administers CalFresh, determines you are eligible to receive benefits, you will receive benefits back to the date you submitted your application.

### **How long will I be able to get CalFresh?**

If you are determined to be eligible for CalFresh, you will receive a notice from the CDSS that tells you how long you will receive benefits. The Families First Coronavirus Response Act gives USDA the authority to allow states to extend the period for households to continue receiving SNAP without re-enrolling. Additional information on states with this option is available at:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/disaster/pandemic/covid-19>.

### **How much will I receive?**

The state of California currently calculates monthly CalFresh benefit amounts for each household, based on the household's net income, up to the maximum monthly allotment amount for the household's size. Current maximum monthly allotment amounts are available at:

<https://fnsprod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/media/file/FY20-Maximum-Allotments-Deductions.pdf>.

### **What can I buy with CalFresh benefits?**

You can use CalFresh benefits to buy most food items, except hot foods; prepared foods for immediate consumption; alcohol; tobacco; vitamins, medicines, and supplements; and any nonfood items.

## **My child relies on Food and Nutrition Service programs to eat. What assistance is available?**

As more schools close due to coronavirus, Congress has provided emergency funding for child nutrition programs to ensure students can still receive their free or reduced-price school meals during this time. On March 6, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) released [guidance](#) for how schools, child care institutions, and community organizations can continue to deliver reimbursable meals to food-insecure children during coronavirus-related school closures.

States can work with partner organizations to provide meals at safe, designated non-school sites or in congregate settings to limit disruption for children in need of food assistance.

### **Local Resources**

#### **Food Assistance**

In addition to the unemployed and those who are most at risk for contracting coronavirus, I'm especially concerned for families that rely on school lunches to make ends meet or seniors who are counting on Meals on Wheels.

Schools are stepping up to ensure students continue to receive meals:

- Monterey: List of schools that are offering pick-up meals: [here](#)
- Santa Cruz: Student meal pick up information can be found [here](#)
- San Benito: According to <https://www.sbcoe.org/>, school districts are providing students with information on where to pick up meals. Seven elementary and middle schools are providing meals and snacks within the [Hollister School District](#); San Juan Bautista/San Juan Unified Schools are also providing meals at [several locations](#)
- Santa Clara: Despite closures, many schools in Santa Clara county are continuing to provide nutritious meals to the community. [This document](#) includes a list of participating schools and additional information

No one should go hungry. If you need assistance accessing meals, but don't know where to begin, **call 211** (free, confidential, and available 24/7 in multiple languages, operated by United Way) or **call/visit your local food bank:**

*Monterey County Residents*

Food Bank for Monterey County

Phone Number: 831-758-1523

Address: 353 W Rossi St., Salinas, CA

Email: [mkendrick@food4hungry.org](mailto:mkendrick@food4hungry.org) (Melissa Kendrick, Executive Director)

*Santa Cruz County Residents*

Second Harvest Food Bank Santa Cruz County

COVID-19 Hotline: Call 831-662-0991 any day, between 8:30AM-4:00PM, to find a food distribution site near you.

Phone Number: 831-722-7110

Address: 800 Ohlone Parkway, Watsonville, CA 95076

Email: [des@thefoodbank.org](mailto:des@thefoodbank.org)

*San Benito County Residents*

Community Food Bank of San Benito

Phone Number: 831-637-0340

Address: 1133 San Felipe Road, Hollister, CA 95023

\*Drive through service is available at the marketplace, Fridays and Saturdays, 9AM-12PM. Customers who normally come to the food bank will be able to stay in their vehicles and have bags of groceries brought to them.

Email: [marialynn@communityfoodbankofsb.org](mailto:marialynn@communityfoodbankofsb.org) (Maria Thomas, CEO) or [info@communityfoodbankofsb.org](mailto:info@communityfoodbankofsb.org)

*Santa Clara County Residents*

Second Harvest of Silicon Valley

Find Free Groceries: Call 1-800-984-3663, M-F, 8:00AM-5:00PM

Food Connection Hotline: 1-800-984-3663 or email [foodconnection@shfb.org](mailto:foodconnection@shfb.org)

Locations

- Curtner Center: 750 Curtner Ave, San Jose, CA 95125  
Phone Number: 408-266-8866  
Open M-F, 8:00AM-5:00PM
- Cypress Center: 4001 North First Street, San Jose, CA 95134  
Phone Number: 408-266-8866  
Open M-F, 8:00AM-5:00PM
- Bing Center: 1051 Bing St, San Carlos, CA 94070  
Phone: 650-610-0800  
Open M-F, 8:00AM-5:00PM