



Monterey County

Board of Supervisors
Chambers
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Board Report

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Receive an oral report from the Department of Social Services regarding the CalFresh Expansion for Supplemental Security Income/State Supplementary Payment (SSI/SSP) Recipients, effective June 01, 2019.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Health, Housing and Human Services (HHHS) Committee receive an oral report from the Department of Social Services (DSS) regarding the CalFresh Expansion for SSI/SSP Recipients, effective June 01, 2019.

SUMMARY/DISCUSSION:

In 1974, policy was established in California which prohibited SSI/SSP recipients from receiving CalFresh food assistance benefits. California Assembly Bill 1811 passed on June 27, 2018, reversed this policy. As of June 1, 2019, SSI/SSP recipients may now be eligible for CalFresh food assistance benefits if all other eligibility criteria are met. This policy change will allow many seniors and individuals with disabilities in our community who are receiving SSI/SSP to qualify for CalFresh food assistance benefits without a change or reduction to their existing SSI/SSP payment amount.

Monterey County has over 8,000 SSI/SSP recipients that will be potentially eligible to CalFresh benefits for the first time since they were approved for SSI/SSP benefits. SSI/SSP recipients who are not part of an existing CalFresh household will be considered as newly eligible and existing CalFresh rules for elderly and/or disabled individuals will apply when determining their eligibility. There are approximately 800 SSI/SSP recipients who are already excluded members of an existing CalFresh household. They will be added to the existing case at the next periodic report or annual recertification. These households may also make a voluntary request to add the SSI/SSP recipient at any time. If adding the SSI recipient increases a household's CalFresh benefits, they will begin receiving the increased allotment. In some situations, adding the SSI/SSP recipient to the household will result in a reduction or termination of benefits due to the inclusion of the SSI/SSP individual's income. Two new state-funded nutrition benefit programs will be implemented to mitigate benefit reductions and loss of eligibility to existing CalFresh households; the Supplemental Nutrition Benefit (SNB) and Transitional Nutrition Benefit (TNB) programs. Informational flyers on these new programs will be included in DSS outreach, intake and recertification packets and will be included on the Department's website.

DSS has been planning for the June 1st implementation of this rule change for months in coordination with the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), County Welfare Director's Association and other California counties. CDSS will mail letters to all active SSI/SSP recipients in the month of May 2019 to notify them of the rule change and the ability to apply for CalFresh food assistance benefits on or after June 1st. Monterey County will be providing outreach tools and presentations for our community partners to educate them regarding the rule change so they can share with their customers. Collaborative meetings are also taking place with other departments including In-Home Supportive Services, Public Guardian and Alliance on Aging to coordinate outreach efforts for this special population.

DSS will train Eligibility Supervisors and Specialists on the new rule change and computer system enhancements in May 2019. Reception and lobby staff will be increased in preparation for the potential for increased applications in June 2019. Additional Eligibility Specialists will also be assigned as needed to the intake function to take and process the new applications from SSI/SSP recipients to ensure timely and accurate processing.

DSS will track and monitor on a monthly basis the number of SSI/SSP recipients who are approved and/or denied eligibility for the CalFresh SNB and TNB programs. Outreach efforts will be ongoing to ensure that we educate and encourage SSI/SSP recipients to apply for available CalFresh Food Assistance benefits.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

No other agency was involved in development of this report.

FINANCING:

Monterey County received \$293,400 in additional Federal and State CalFresh administration funds for the CalFresh SSI Expansion.

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