



Board Report

File #: 19-0348, **Version:** 1

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

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors:

a. Receive an oral report from the Department of Social Services (DSS) regarding the CalFresh Expansion for Supplemental Security Income/State Supplementary Payment (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 850 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.

Monterey County currently receives more than \$72 million a year in direct economic impact due to the CalFresh Program with \$129 million a year in total economic activity. The projected average CalFresh allotment for the newly eligible SSI/SSP individual is \$105 a month, which would result in \$7.5 million increase in total economic activity assuming a 75% participation rate due to this policy change. Source: CDSS Mathematical Fiscal Forecasting and Nutrition Policy Institute.

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. On April 29, 2019, DSS completed a presentation for our local community partners to educate them regarding the rule change and provide outreach tools they can share with their customers. Collaborative meetings are also taking

place with other departments including In-Home Supportive Services, Public Guardian, Area Agency on Aging (AAA) and Alliance on Aging to coordinate outreach efforts for this special population. The AAA plans to sub-contract with Alliance on Aging to assist seniors in the application process. A local media campaign will also begin in May 2019 to further make community members aware of this policy change.

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 CalFresh administration funds for the CalFresh SSI Expansion. Area Agency on Aging received \$35,000 for outreach and application assistance for the CalFresh SSI Expansion. The Department will return to the board later to increase appropriations, if needed.

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS STRATEGIC INITIATIVES:

This report correlates to the Health & Human Services Strategic Initiative adopted by the Board of Supervisors by working towards the goals of improving health and quality of life outcomes by providing supporting services to very low-income individuals and families.

Mark a check to the related Board of Supervisors Strategic Initiatives

- Economic Development
- Administration
- Health & Human Services
- Infrastructure
- Public Safety

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