



COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

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PRESS RELEASE

Date: January 14, 2019
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EARLY DISTRIBUTION OF FEBRUARY CALFRESH BENEFITS

The County of Santa Cruz is advising local CalFresh recipients that due to the federal government shutdown, most holders of Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards will see an early issuance of February benefits beginning the week of Jan. 16-20.

Recipients are advised that **no additional benefits will be issued during the month of February**. Families and individuals receiving early CalFresh benefits should plan their food budgets knowing these will be the only benefits provided through the end of February.

"The CalFresh program is critically important to thousands of Santa Cruz County families, providing them with a lifeline to nutrition and healthy meals," said Ellen Timberlake, Director of Human Services for Santa Cruz County. "While we are pleased to deliver February benefits on time, we want clients to know that additional funding will not forthcoming through February, and to plan accordingly."

There are 23,615 CalFresh beneficiaries in Santa Cruz County. Of those, more than 10,000 are children under the age of 18. The program provides approximately \$3.5 million in monthly spending for the local economy.

This change impacts most CalFresh recipients in Santa Cruz County. Clients who do not receive an early issuance will receive benefits on a normal schedule as long as they remain eligible. Those clients include recipients with a report due in January and whose eligibility determinations are made after the early issuance.

New applications will be handled according to normal processing guidelines, and clients who apply after the early issuance or after February 1 will receive February benefits under a normal schedule. However, there is no projection on how long federal reserve funds will continue to be available.

The EBT system continues to be operational.