



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 16, 2016

Contact:

Sylvia Soublet

Social Services Agency, Public Affairs Director

O: (510) 267-9434 / C: (510) 207-2074

F: (510) 271-9189

ssoublet@acgov.org

LESSONS IN FOOD SECURITY FOR STUDENTS AND OTHER YOUNG ADULTS Alameda County's CalFresh Awareness Month Targets Often-Overlooked Groups

Oakland, CA – Alongside their education in subjects like biology and political science, college students and other young adults in Alameda County will learn about food assistance as part of CalFresh Awareness Month.

On May 10, 2016 the Alameda County Board of Supervisors kicked off the month-long campaign by issuing its fourth annual "May is CalFresh Awareness Month" proclamation. Known federally as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), CalFresh assists qualified households and individuals in meeting their nutrition needs. The Alameda County Social Services Agency (ACSSA) and Alameda County Community Food Bank (ACCFB) schedule activities throughout CalFresh Awareness Month to reach out to households and individuals who may not be aware that help is available.

"One of the highest priorities of the Alameda County Social Services Agency (ACSSA) is our commitment to reducing hunger and food insecurity in Alameda County by increasing access and participation in the CalFresh Program," explained Lori A. Cox, ACSSA Director.

She added that many County residents would be shocked by the statistics from their own community: one in six Alameda County residents misses a meal weekly. It is estimated that 13% of County residents live in poverty. Many students and young adults face food insecurity and make tough decisions daily, such as choosing between food and books. Several studies recently found that a large number of students nationwide struggle with persistent hunger. According to a California State University (CSU) study published in February 2016, one in four CSU students are food insecure and 12 percent of students are homeless. CalFresh can make all the difference, as UC Berkeley student Liliana Ibanez and others noted in a [video recently released by the Food Bank](#).

While current federal regulations restrict some students from qualifying for CalFresh, many students can still qualify. For example, exemptions to the student rule exist for students who are working a certain number of hours, approved for work study, participating in the Extended Opportunity Programs (EOPS), or caring for young children.

Ibanez, 20, found that her work-study job and financial aid did not meet all her needs, especially during the summer months. She struggled to pay for books and rent in an area where housing costs are skyrocketing. But although she is an EOPS participant, she believed that obtaining CalFresh benefits would jeopardize her financial aid until she met with a financial aid counselor who explained that it would not. She went on to attend an enrollment clinic at the University. Ibanez, who hopes to attend law school, finds that help from CalFresh and the Food Bank nourishes a healthier body and mind and makes it easier to focus on her studies.

“Before, I would buy food that would fill me up, maybe just meat and oil,” she recalled. “Now I can get foods like fruit, vegetables, milk...I've noticed a difference.” She believes many fellow students are suffering needlessly, either fearing their financial aid will be jeopardized or that they will be stigmatized for receiving CalFresh benefits. “Some people say, ‘You’re getting funded by the government,’” she noted, adding that she tells fellow students, “This isn’t for your whole life. You need the help right now since you’re a college student.”

ACSSA continues to partner with ACCFB on public awareness and outreach efforts throughout the year. During CalFresh Awareness Month, ACSSA and the ACCFB will host CalFresh outreach and enrollment events at various colleges throughout the county. The outreach efforts are designed to educate low-income students and other young adults about the benefits of CalFresh and the student exemptions available that potentially make students eligible to receive CalFresh assistance.

Application assistance is available for students and other young adults in need. Mariza Alvarado explains in the video how the Food Bank helped her family and why she refers others to their services. “At times when I didn’t have CalFresh, we used to go out, and it was ‘Oh Mom, can we get this, Oh Mom, can we get that,’ and I would have to say, ‘Oh no we can’t, we don’t have the money for it’ ...CalFresh has helped us a lot.”

A calendar of activities is available at ACSSA's website:

https://alamedasocialservices.org/public/services/food_assistance/awareness_month.cfm.

For more information contact [Sylvia Soublet](#), Public Affairs Director at (510) 267-9434 or (510) 207-2074 or [visit our web page](#).

