



## San Francisco State University

### CalFresh Help Clinic

#### Program Report

Fall 2018- Spring 2020

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### Program Summary

Access to quality food is essential for students to reach their full potential at San Francisco State University. In 2018, 47% of San Francisco State students surveyed reported experiencing food insecurity. Students who lack the resources necessary to obtain food on a regular basis are at heightened risk for negative physical and mental health outcomes, and experience lower academic achievement (Crutchfield & McGuire, 2018). In 2018, SF State received grant funding from the CSU Chico Center for Healthy Communities to establish a CalFresh assistance program on campus. CalFresh is a federally funded nutrition program that provides qualified low-income households with benefits to purchase food. The SF State CalFresh Help Clinic (CFHC) launched in October 2018 as part of a larger [Basic Needs Initiative](#). The CFHC aimed to support student achievement and improve health outcomes by increasing food access, destigmatizing and normalizing services, assisting students with obtaining benefits and connecting students with other campus food access and nutrition programs. Trained student volunteers and paid student assistants supported CalFresh outreach, education, eligibility screening and application assistance. These CalFresh Navigators provided drop-in assistance four days a week at the CFHC as well as community weekly outreach and assistance at the AS Food Pantry and Farmers Market. Additionally, large-scale campus events were implemented each semester in alignment with national awareness days.

## Program Outcomes

From October 2018 to May 2020, the CalFresh Help Clinic directly served **645 students**, while CalFresh outreach supported the initiation of **2,014 SF State CalFresh applications**. In 2019, 383 SF State students were approved for benefits, providing up to \$192 each month to purchase food and groceries. Over the course of four semesters, **forty-two student CalFresh assisters were trained**, providing professional development, leadership opportunities and direct-service experience. Following campus-wide promotion and culture change-work to normalize CalFresh, the **total number of students served increased nearly seven times** when compared to the previous year. The CFHC worked with campus partners to provide focused services to students at heightened high risk for food insecurity including first-generation college students and former foster care youth. Due to COVID-19, CalFresh services moved to virtual modalities in early March, 2020. Sixty-one students accessed services via email, phone and Zoom appointments. Additionally, outreach to support students who applied for CalFresh on their own was intensified. April 2020 marked a month economically stifled by City and State Shelter in Place orders. **There was a 205% increase in SF State CalFresh applications** in April 2020 when compared to the previous year, indicating during times of uncertainty and financial crisis students rely on the University to connect them to meaningful resources.

**Table:** CalFresh Assistance Oct 2018- May 2020

	Fall 2018	Spring 2019	Fall 2019	Spring* 2020	Total
<b>Students Served</b> Direct service- CalFresh screening, application assistance and other support	40	157	272	176	<b>645</b>
<b>Online applications received</b> Direct and indirect service- Includes students who did not utilize in-person CalFresh assistance.	132	656	635	591	<b>2,014</b>
<b>Applications Approved</b> Application approved by the student's County.	UNK	383		TBD	<b>TBD</b>

\*In-person CalFresh services were halted on 3/10/2020 due to COVID-19 precautions. CalFresh assistance move to remote modalities for the remainder of the semester, 61 students were served virtually post COVID shut down.

## Best Practices and Lessons Learned

**A peer-to-peer staffing model increased service capacity and provided student leadership opportunity-** Involving student leaders in the staffing and operations of the program, many of whom were CalFresh recipients, expanded the frequency and quality of CalFresh assistance and community outreach, while also providing an opportunity for student growth, experience and professional development. Student staff were trained using cultural humility, health equity and anti-stigma frameworks.

**CalFresh outreach is a means to connect students to other food access programs-** When a student was served at the CalFresh Help Clinic or community outreach tables, they were also provided information about all other free food resources on campus.

**Partnerships with local Food Banks are essential to success-** Local food banks often have a legacy of working with their County to support CalFresh enrollment. The SF-Marin Food Bank provided the CFHC with critical program support including interpreting CalFresh policy changes, providing frameworks and best practices, advocating on behalf of students to the County, providing trainings and skill building and serving as a liaison between SF State and the County to bring Eligibility Workers to campus for CalFresh enrollment events.

**Working with campus partners is essential to reach high-need students-** The CalFresh Help Clinic collaborated with Associated Students to provide CalFresh assistance weekly at the AS Food Pantry and Farmers Market. Additionally, the CFHC collaborated with Guardian Scholars program and EOP to reach first generation students and former foster care youth.

**CalFresh outreach is visibility work that normalizes and destigmatizes accessing food resources** – Providing weekly tabling at the AS Food Pantry, Farmers Market and quad, displaying marketing materials in offices around campus and promoting CalFresh on social media and in newsletters, permeated campus awareness to normalize utilizing food access programs as acceptable and routine.

**Follow-ups are important-** Though a student may be eligible, obtaining benefits does not occur solely by submitting an application. The heavy-lift is submitting verification documents and completing a County phone interview. After applying, it was important to follow-up with students to ensure they had support retrieving student exemption paperwork and were able to interpret County paperwork.

**Organized data tracking is important-** Tracking weekly outcomes from varying program locations, e.g. drop-in hours vs. food pantry tabling, provided early insight on outcome trends, allowing for process program improvements.

## Challenges

**Serving students from multiple Counties-** SF State is a commuter school, serving students from 7+ surrounding Counties. Each of these Counties manages CalFresh independently. It proved unrealistic to accomplish a magnitude of partnership building with all 7+ Counties, making it difficult to maximize support for students who lived in a County with whom we did not have a formal relationship.

**Constantly changing CalFresh policy and practices-** CalFresh policies and practices are ever evolving. Federal attacks on SNAP initiated harmful CalFresh policy changes, unannounced practice changes at the County level resulted in inconsistent approval and denials and COVID-19 initiated an array of (mostly positive) program changes, all of which must be communicated to CalFresh Assisters and recipients in a comprehensible and timely manner.

## Moving Forward

Reflecting on the establishment and expansion of the CalFresh Help Clinic, the SF State Basic Needs Initiatives takes pride in the exponential growth of students served and trained. As we look toward the next phase of this program, we hope to increase the number of students who successfully obtain CalFresh benefits, connect CalFresh students to robust nutrition education programs, as well as expand campus outreach and awareness.

## References

Crutchfield, R., & McGuire, J. (2018, January). Study of Student Basic Needs. California State University.

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