32. Application Processing For Displaced Households Due To California Disasters and Replacement Benefits Due To Household Misfortune

32.1 Available Emergency Assistance

Assistance For Displaced Households (HHs)

New applicants or continuing HHs that have been Displaced by California disasters, but no Presidential Declaration has been granted can request services under displaced services.

Important:

Only Disaster CalFresh (D-CalFresh) requires a Presidential Declaration with Individual Assistance (IA). Information on D-CalFresh is located in Chapter 33 of this handbook.

Replacement Benefits For a Continuing HH

Continuing HHs can request CalFresh Replacement Benefits when the HH experiences food loss due to a general HH misfortune or a disaster.

32.2 CalFresh HHs Displaced by California Disasters

32.2.1 New CalFresh Applicants

Statewide counties will serve displaced applicant HH under regular CalFresh (CF) eligibility rules, including screening for Expedited Services, regardless of whether or not the HH is a permanent resident of the county the HH is applying in.

Expedited Service (ES)

Counties are required to screen all applicants to determine if the applicant displaced HH meets the criteria for ES. When the CF application indicates that a HH meets one of the three ES criteria, the application must be processed within three calendar days. [Refer to chapter 7.2 for ES eligibility information]
Residency Verification

When verification of residency is impossible due to unusual circumstances, such as a disaster, the Eligibility Worker (EW) will accept self-certification, and this must be documented in the case record. No length of residency is imposed in this situation.

There are several options to ensure that the displaced HH, without a permanent mailing address, receives notices and these may include:

- Using the address of a friend or family member,
- Using the address of a local shelter,
- Holding correspondence at the local office for pick-up, or
- Sending correspondence to a local post office as general delivery.

Other Verification

If a displaced HH is unable to provide necessary verifications requested due to unusual circumstances, telephonic signature, or a signed and dated written affidavit, or as a last resort self-certification can be used in place of the requested verification. If self-certification is used as a last resort this must be clearly be documented in the case record.

32.2.2 Continuing Displaced CalFresh HH

Counties statewide will serve displaced households who have an active CF case in the disaster-affected area. During a disaster, special contact instructions may be provided to the public and counties to expedite the process of assisting CF HH from the disaster affected area.

If a county receives a CF related request from a HH with an active case in a disaster-affected county, the may contact the county with the active case to assist with processing request such as:

- EBT card replacement, or
- Replacement benefits, or
- SAR 7 processing, etc.

Processing Request From a Disaster-Affected County

When a resident county with the active case calls the assisting county or vice versa, a “warm hand off” must always be provided. The initiating county worker will:

- Remain on the line with the HH until the call is answered, and
- Explain the HH’s situation and needs to the other county worker in the county with the active case, and
- Ensures that the HH’s needs can be met.
Example:

A Sonoma County worker contacts Santa Clara County to assist a Sonoma County client/resident who is requesting a replacement EBT card. Both the Sonoma and Santa Clara County worker remain on the line to ensure that the displaced HH’s needs and all the necessary information has been provided in order to print the EBT card in a location most convenient for the displaced HH.

32.3 Replacement Benefits [CFR 274.6]

Federal regulations provide for the replacement of food lost by individual recipients due to a HH misfortune or disaster. Examples of these are:

- Power outage,
- Equipment failure,
- Fire,
- Flood or other disaster, etc.

Only continuing CalFresh HH(s) qualify to receive replacement benefits.

Replacement Benefit Procedures

Prior to issuing CF replacement benefits, the EW must verify the HH misfortune. Verification includes, but is not limited to collateral contact, obtaining documentation from a community agency such as the utility company, fire department, or the Red Cross.

In cases where available documentation indicates that a household’s request for replacement benefits appear to be questionable or fraudulent, the EW may delay or deny the issuance of replacement benefits. A delay of replacement issuance may last for up to seven additional days and the reason for delay must be clearly documented in the case record.

Replacement and Affidavit/Authorization (CF 303)

After a CF household (HH) contacts the Eligibility Worker (EW) to report the food loss and request replacement benefits, the EW must provide the CF HH with the “Replacement and Affidavit/Authorization” (CF 303) form as soon as possible. The CF 303 is an affidavit attesting to the food loss.

The HH may be provided the CF 303:

- In person, or
- By mail, or
A HH has ten days from the date their food was destroyed to report the food loss to be considered timely.

However, if the tenth day falls on a weekend or holiday, and the CF 303 is received the business day after the weekend or holiday, then the CF 303 is considered to be received timely. The ten-day time-frame applies unless the HH's county of residence has been approved for an extension of the timely reporting rules.

If the signed CF 303 is not received within the ten days of the date the food was destroyed, no replacement benefits will be issued and the EW must document this in the case record.

The CF 303 may be signed through telephonic signature or may be returned to the EW:

- In person, or
- By mail, or
- By fax, or
- Through the Online benefits portal.

**Approval/Denial**

The CF 303 must be approved or denied. If approved the CF replacement benefits must be issued within two business days of signed form being submitted. The EW must document all approvals and denials of requests for replacement benefits in the case record.

The HH must be informed of their right to a fair hearing via the NA Back 9, which is located on the backside of the CF 303. The HH can contest the following:

- A denial of CF replacement benefits.
- The amount of CF replacement benefits that were issued.
- A delay in CF replacement benefit issuance.

**Note:**

If a county is approved to issue mass replacement benefits, HHs that have already received individual replacement benefits will be excluded before mass replacement benefits are issued.

**Important:**

During a disaster response, it is possible that an entire county or specific ZIP codes within a county will be approved for a Timely Household Reporting of Food Loss Waiver. This waiver would extend the amount of time in which a HH has to report food loss, allowing up to 30 days from the date of the disaster to report instead of the normal ten days.
32.3.1 Methodology for Calculating Replacement Benefit Amount

When making an individual benefit replacement request, if a HH can verify the amount of food lost due to a household misfortune, the EW must determine the benefit replacement based on that amount. The EW must clearly document this determination of replacement benefits in the case record, including how the HH verified this amount of food loss.

If the HH cannot verify the amount of food lost, the EW must calculate the benefit replacement based on the assumption that CF benefits issued to the HH have been fully expended at the time of the HH misfortune. Then, by determining the amount of days between the household misfortune and the HH next monthly issuance, the final replacement amount is determined.

The method to determine the amount of benefit replacement takes into consideration both the household’s daily issuance amount and the date of the disaster or household misfortune start date.

Example:

A HH of three requests benefit replacement on April 7th. The HH’s next issuance day is May 3rd. The monthly allotment for the HH is $487 divided by 30 days in the month = $16 of daily issuance amount. The daily issuance amount is $16 multiplied by the 26 days between the HH misfortune and the next benefit issuance equals the final replacement amount of $416.

Power Outages

When calculating the benefit replacement amount due to power outages, it is considered that a HH typically spends 70% of their monthly CF benefits on perishable food items.

Example:

Using the same scenario as in example 1, but now the HH misfortune was due to a power outage the amount of $416 is multiplied by 70% which equals the final benefit amount of $219.

Reminder:

For structural loss or irreparable damages, the benefit replacement amount must not be limited to 70%.

32.4 Replacement Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) Cards

[Refer to Common Place Handbook Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT)]