



## California Counties Work to Improve SNAP Access May 20, 2011

- ❖ **Significant Caseload Growth Continues in California:** SNAP caseload has increased 110 percent in since 2007, and that growth is expected to continue, with caseload rising to over 2 million families in California by June 2012.
- ❖ **Business Process Improvements: Coordinated, Effective Automation is Leading the Way to Increase Client Access and Improve County Efficiency**
  - **Web Portals/Online Application:** Clients can apply online for CalFresh (Food Stamp) benefits in most counties right now, and in all counties by June 2011.
    - [www.benefitscal.org](http://www.benefitscal.org)
  - **Document Imaging:** Currently a majority of counties use document imaging, and use of this technology is quickly expanding. Document imaging allows counties to access client information more quickly, and from multiple locations, to improve client service and county efficiency.
  - **Interactive Voice Response (IVR):** Clients use IVR to access benefit information via telephone. IVR is available in most counties now for incoming calls, and many counties developing outgoing IVR call capability.
  - **Call Centers:** At least 10 counties currently have call centers, and many others are planning or considering implementation. Call centers offer improved customer service and increase county efficiency.
  - **Client Self Service and Lobby Kiosks:** Counties are in the planning stages to implement kiosks.
  - Many of these automation improvements were funded with ARRA SNAP Admin dollars, including web portals, document imaging, and IVR.
- ❖ **Recent Policy Improvements:**
  - **Inter-County Transfer:** Counties took the lead in 2010 to sponsor state legislation to establish a streamlined process for clients who move from one county to another, without completing a new application.
  - **Face-to-Face Waiver:** Applicants are given the choice of applying over the phone, online, or in-person in most counties. A face-to-face visit is generally not required, except for those also applying for cash aid.

- **Restoration of Aid Waiver:** Clients with recently discontinued cases can have their cases restored with minimal paperwork, under a federal waiver that counties implemented in 2010.
- **Asset Waiver:** Client eligibility is now based solely on income; assets are no longer used to determine SNAP eligibility, except for those also applying for cash aid.
- ❖ **Outreach Partnerships with Food Banks and CBOs.** Counties have longstanding partnerships with Food Banks and other CBOs to coordinate SNAP outreach and application assistance.
- ❖ **Outreach Campaigns.** Many counties have significant outreach efforts. A recent example is Los Angeles County's "CalFresh Awareness Month" in May 2011: <http://www.ladpss.org/dpss/calfresh/>
- ❖ **Federal Partnership for Immigrant Outreach.** Since immigrant families tend to have a lower than average SNAP participation rate, Los Angeles County DPSS has partnered with the Bureau of United States Citizenship and Immigration Services, to launch a campaign against the myths that SNAP recipients will become a "public charge" or will affect his/her application for naturalization. The campaign targets not only the immigrant population, but also immigration lawyers. Counties are considering how they might expand this program statewide.
- ❖ **Statewide SNAP Modernization Conferences, jointly sponsored by CDSS, CWDA, and USDA,** were held in October 2008, April 2009, and July 2010.

**Addendum:  
California SNAP Comparisons with Other States**

- ❖ **Participation rate comparisons between California and other states are not “apples to apples,” since the federal participation rate does not reflect California’s 1.2 million SSI recipients who receive a cash substitute for SNAP.**

California is the only state that provides all SSI clients a “cash equivalent” instead of SNAP benefits. This decision was made decades ago, to reduce SNAP administrative costs. But under the methodology used to calculate state SNAP participation, California gets zero participation credit for the over 1 million SSI individuals getting a cash equivalent, while SSI clients receiving SNAP in other states are included in their participation rates.

In fact, the USDA/Mathematica annual report on state participation rates notes that although SSI individuals are removed from California’s denominator, “It might be useful in some other contexts, however, to consider participation rates among those eligible for SNAP benefits or a cash substitute.”

Including SSI recipients in California’s participation rate provides an “apples to apples” comparison with other states. If only 80% of California’s SSI recipients were counted as participating in SNAP or a cash substitute, the state’s 2007 participation rate would increase from 48% to 58%.

Note that California’s cash-out program is similar in many ways to the Combined Application Projects (CAPs) in 18 other states, including FL, MI, NJ, NY, NC, PA, and TX. CAPs involve a partnership between the state and the Social Security Administration to integrate the SNAP application process into SSI application process and facilitate automatic SNAP enrollment for SSI clients. States with CAPs have a very high SNAP participation rate for SSI clients (some close to 100%).

- ❖ **California’s Administrative Cost per Case is Similar to Other States, when adjusted for our \$100 million Nutrition Education grant, and SSI Cash-out cases. California’s adjusted 2008 cost per case month is approximately \$24, close to the national average of \$19.49.**

As shown in the first table below, California has a large Nutrition Education component (almost 40% of the nation’s total nutrition funding), which skews our administrative costs. If nutrition education is excluded, California’s 2008 cost per case month goes from \$46.50 to \$36.84.

As noted above, every other state includes SSI recipients in their SNAP program. Since SSI clients have fixed incomes, and in many large states are administered via a low-cost CAP program, the administrative cost per case for these recipients is much lower than the cost for low-income families and individuals. Even though California’s cash-out program is administered in a similar fashion to other states’ CAP systems, SSI cases are not counted in our cost per case, while SSI cases in other states are

counted in their cost per case. When adjusted\* to include SSI Cash-out cases, California's 2008 administrative cost per case is reduced from \$46.50 to approximately \$30 per month.

When both adjustments are made (Nutrition Education funding is excluded and SSI Cash-out cases are included), California's 2008 administrative cost per case is reduced from \$46.50 to approximately \$24 per month.

**2008 SNAP Administrative Costs  
(dollars in millions)**

	<b>California</b>	<b>% of CA Costs</b>	<b>US</b>	<b>% US Costs</b>
Certification	\$207	41%	\$1,651	55%
Quality Control	\$11	2%	\$62	2%
Fraud Control	\$33	6%	\$130	4%
Automation – Eligibility	\$55	9%	\$237	8%
EBT	\$31	6%	\$154	5%
Employment and Training	\$42	8%	\$296	10%
Nutrition Education	\$106	20%	\$270	9%
Unspecified	\$18	4%	\$134	4%
Other	\$6	5%	\$44	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$510</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$2,978</b>	<b>100%</b>

<b>Methodology*</b>	<b>CA Cost per Case Month</b>
Exclude SSI Cash-out cases and Include Nutrition Education	\$46.50
Include SSI Cash-out cases	\$29.94
Exclude Nutrition Education	\$36.84
<b>Include SSI Cash-out cases and exclude Nutrition Education</b>	<b>\$24.09</b>

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\* The adjustment in this table to include SSI Cash-out cases assumes that the 1.2 million SSI recipients in California in 2008 is equivalent to 600,000 additional SNAP cases. The adjustment also assumes that each of these additional cases has a monthly cost per case equal to 25 percent of the monthly certification cost of all other non-SSI California SNAP cases.