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**SUBJECT: CALFRESH STUDENT ELIGIBILITY: A GUIDE FOR COLLEGE
CAMPUSES TO INCREASE CALFRESH PARTICIPATION THROUGH THE
IDENTIFICATION OF LOCAL PROGRAMS THAT INCREASE EMPLOYABILITY**

Dear Campus Colleagues:

Meeting the basic needs of students is a persistent issue on California college campuses. Food insecurity in particular is increasingly being recognized as a pervasive problem across the higher education segments. Colleges have made great strides in improving food security including efforts related to CalFresh outreach and enrollment.

Historically, college student participation in CalFresh has been low due to the student eligibility rule, which prohibits students from participating in CalFresh unless they meet at least one of several exemptions. One exemption to this rule is student participation in a Local Program that Increases Employability (LPIE). These programs, described in greater detail below, exist on many college campuses through various adult education, undergraduate, graduate, and other programs.

This letter provides instructions to California public institutions of higher education for identifying campus-based programs that qualify as LPIEs by September 1, 2022, in compliance with [Assembly Bill 396](#). Any student enrolled in an LPIE meets the criteria for an exemption to the student eligibility rule and may be eligible to receive CalFresh benefits.

BACKGROUND

CalFresh Student Eligibility Rule

In accordance with [7 Code of Federal Regulations \(CFR\) 273.5\(a\)](#), a student is defined as any person who is enrolled at least half-time, as defined by the institution, at an institution of higher education. A student must be determined ineligible to participate in CalFresh unless the student meets the criteria for at least one of the exemptions specified at [7 CFR 273.5\(b\)](#). This is known as the “student eligibility rule.”

Student Exemptions

Exemptions from the student eligibility rule include:

- Enrolled less than half-time (Only count credit-bearing courses. Non-credit courses do not count toward half-time enrollment)
- Age 17 or younger or age 50 or older
- Approved for work study (even if a work study job has not yet begun or is not available), anticipates working, and has not refused a work assignment
- Taking only non-credit courses
- Approved for a TANF-funded Cal Grant A or B and received proof from California Student Aid Commission
- Working an average of 20 hours per week or a total of 80 hours per month
- Disabled
- Physically or mentally unable to work
- Does not expect to be enrolled next term
- Responsible for the care of a household member under the age of 6
- Responsible for the care of a household member under the age of 12 without adequate childcare
- A single parent responsible for the care of a household member under the age of 12
- Receiving California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) or Tribal TANF
- Participating in CalFresh Employment and Training
- Enrolled in a Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) program
- Enrolled in an On-the-job training program
- **Enrolled in an LPIE**
- Temporary Exemptions (only in effect during the federal COVID-19 Public Health Emergency)
 - Eligible for work study
 - \$0 Expected Family Contribution (EFC)

Once a student has been determined to meet the criteria for an exemption, they will remain exempt for the length of the certification period and not be reassessed at SAR 7 except in certain cases related to work study and work hours (see [ACL No. 20-08](#), issued January 22, 2021 for more information).

Local Programs that Increase Employability

Federal CalFresh regulations at [7 CFR 273.5\(b\)\(11\)\(iv\)](#) provide that a student is exempt from the student eligibility rule if they are enrolled or participating in a program that improves their employability. The programs under this provision must be operated by a state or local government where one or more of the components of the program are equivalent to an Employment and Training (E&T) component as specified in [7 CFR 273.7\(e\)\(2\)](#). The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) has the authority to determine whether a state or local program qualifies under this definition. The CDSS has termed these programs LPIEs.

The CDSS maintains a current list of approved LPIEs. The list can be found on the CalFresh Resource Center Policy Page, under "[CalFresh Student Eligibility: List of Approved LPIEs](#)." The List of Approved LPIEs is updated at the beginning of each month. CWDs must use the List of Approved LPIEs to check if a program that a student applicant/recipient is participating in has been approved.

Previous LPIE Approval Process

The CDSS introduced the process for LPIE submission for approval in [ACL No.17-05](#), issued February 14, 2017, whereby CWDs or campuses would submit a program for CDSS approval along with justification of how the program met the criteria for containing E&T activities. Since then, over 450 programs have been approved by CDSS staff.

AB 396 and SB 609

It requires all CCC and CSU programs that meet LPIE requirements to submit an application to CDSS on or before September 1, 2022 and requests UC programs to do the same. [Senate Bill \(SB\) 609](#) was signed into law on October 6, 2021. It requires CDSS to include Adult Education and CTE programs in the List of Approved LPIEs. [W&IC 18901 Assembly Bill \(AB\) 396](#) was signed into law on October 4, 2021. It requires all CCC and CSU programs that meet LPIE requirements to submit an application to CDSS on or before September 1, 2022 and requests UC programs to do the same. [Senate Bill \(SB\) 609](#) was signed into law on October 6, 2021. It requires CDSS to include Adult Education and CTE programs in the List of Approved LPIEs. [W&IC 18901](#) was updated in response to these two bills.

LPIE SUBMISSION PROCESS

To meet the requirements of [AB 396](#), the three higher education segments, CDSS, and other members of the CDSS Student Workgroup identified a streamlined process for identifying and submitting LPIEs to CDSS. One of CDSS's prime outreach contractors, Center for Healthy Communities (CHC), will be assisting in providing technical assistance to the three higher education segments and coordinating the submission of the LPIEs. According to [AB 396](#), all qualifying programs **must be submitted by September 1, 2022**. Any newly qualifying programs that meet the eligibility requirements to be an LPIE after September 1, 2022, must be identified within six months of the formation of the program.

Campuses will submit qualifying programs (LPIEs) via the following process:

1. CHC will work with segment leadership to identify and mass communicate to basic needs leaders on each campus how to collect campus programs effectively and efficiently.
2. Each campus will identify individuals who have knowledge of the requirements of their programs. These could include college counselors, deans, basic needs center staff, or other individuals.
2. The individuals identified will familiarize themselves with this letter and reach out to CHC with any questions at cforesourcehub@csuchico.edu.
3. Campus individuals will compile a list of programs that meet the criteria set forth in the *LPIE Identification* section below. It may be helpful to consult program websites, course catalogues, Community Engagement Centers, or program directors when identifying programs.
4. CDSS developed the LPIE Submission Spreadsheet (located on the [CDSS CalFresh Resource Center page](#)) to use in compiling a list of LPIEs. However, campus individuals are encouraged to explore alternative submission options with CHC to utilize the best submission process for their campus.
4. Campus individuals will submit LPIEs to cforesourcehub@csuchico.edu at any time, but no later than September 1, 2022.
5. CHC will combine all campus programs into one list for a segment-wide submission to CDSS.
6. Once received, CDSS will conduct a preliminary quality control review and reach out to CHC about any programs that appear questionable.
7. CDSS will then post the updated List of Approved LPIEs on the [CDSS CalFresh Resource Center page](#) under Student Resources by the 1st of each month.
8. After an LPIE is added to the List of Approved LPIEs, campuses may notify students enrolled in the LPIE that they meet an exemption to the student eligibility rule. CHC will provide templated emails for CalFresh outreach efforts.

Campuses should periodically review the List of Approved LPIEs for accuracy and comprehensiveness.

If a program no longer meets the criteria for an LPIE, campuses should do the following:

1. Campus individuals must email cforesourcehub@csuchico.edu to inform CDSS that a previously approved LPIE(s) is no longer eligible and should be removed from the List of Approved LPIEs.
2. CHC will compile all ineligible programs to be removed and inform CDSS on a monthly basis.
3. CDSS will then post the updated List of Approved LPIEs on the [CDSS CalFresh Resource Center page](#) under Student Resources.
4. Students already receiving benefits by being enrolled in the program will continue to receive benefits for the length of their certification period and not be reassessed at SAR 7. At the time of recertification, the student must meet the criteria for another exemption in order to continue receiving benefits.

REASSESSMENT OF PREVIOUSLY APPROVED STATEWIDE PROGRAMS

The automatic approval of most state-funded and foster youth programs listed in [ACL No. 20-08](#), will be removed on September 1, 2022. These programs must now be individually identified by counties, campuses, or the local program as meeting the standard of an LPIE. In preparation for these programs to lose automatic approval, campuses are encouraged to include the local versions of these programs in their larger LPIE identification effort. Campuses may begin submitting the below local programs for inclusion in the List of Approved LPIEs as a part of their regular LPIE Submission Process (introduced above) in order to prevent a gap in approval of eligible programs.

The programs which must be individually identified and assessed by campuses as containing the equivalent of an E&T component include:

- Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS)
- Educational Opportunity Program (EOP)
- Disabled Students Programs and Services (DSPS) & Student Academic Services (SAS)
- Cooperative Agencies Resources for Education (CARE) Program
- McNair Scholars Program
- Mathematics, Engineering, Science Achievement (MESA) Program
- Unaccompanied Refugee Minors (URM) Program
- Guardian Scholars Program
- Foster Youth Success Initiative (FYSI)
- Cooperating Agencies Foster Youth Educational Support (CAFYES)
- Chafee Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program
- Extended Foster Care (AB 12/AB 212)

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) will continue to receive automatic approval due to meeting the exemption listed at [7 CFR 273.5\(b\)\(4\)](#).

LPIE IDENTIFICATION

The following is intended to assist campuses in identifying LPIEs. The E&T components listed are a simplified version that has been tailored to the LPIE effort. It is not intended for County Welfare Departments, nor does it impact CalFresh E&T.

Qualifying Programs

In accordance with [7 CFR 273.5\(b\)\(11\)\(iv\)](#), programs that qualify as an LPIE must meet two criteria:

1. Be government-run, and
2. Contain the equivalent of a CalFresh E&T component listed at [7 CFR 273.7\(e\)\(2\)](#).

Government-Run

Because LPIEs must be government-run, only the public higher education segments (i.e., CCCs, CSUs, and UCs) are considered to have LPIEs on their campuses. Programs can be, but are not limited to, academic or student service

programs. The program must be run by the public campus or by an auxiliary organization. For LPIE purposes, an auxiliary organization must be overseen by the CCC, CSU, or UC and must serve the institution of higher education. Programs that are run by student clubs and non-profit organizations other than auxiliary organizations do not meet the criteria of being government-run.

CalFresh E&T Components

A CalFresh E&T component is defined as a service, activity, or program designed to help CalFresh recipients gain skills, training, or work experience. Program activities must have a direct link to employment. Multiple activities may exist under each component.

Qualifying activities must be both **required** of students and be **ongoing**. Drop-in centers that offer services on an as-needed basis are not considered an LPIE. For example, a one-time resume writing workshop would not qualify a program to meet the criteria of having the equivalent of a CalFresh E&T component. Please note that students enrolled in non-credit programs are not subject to the student eligibility rule.

CalFresh E&T components/activities include:

1. Education
 - a. Adult Basic Education
 - b. CTE / Vocational Training
 - c. English Language Acquisition
 - d. Integrated Education Training
 - e. Work Readiness Training
2. Supervised Job Search
3. Work Experience
 - a. Apprenticeships / Pre-Apprenticeships
 - b. Academic Program which Requires an Internship
 - b. Campus Employment
 - c. Other Work Activities
4. Self-Employment Training

1. Education

The education component includes a wide range of activities that improve basic skills, literacy, and employability. All education activities must have a direct link to job-readiness and help participants move promptly into employment.

Allowable activities include, but are not limited to:

- a. Adult Basic Education
- b. CTE / Vocational Training
- c. English Language Acquisition
- d. Integrated Education Training
- e. Work Readiness Training

a. Adult Basic Education

Adult Basic Education programs serve adults working toward a High School Diploma, General Education Diploma (GED), improving basic literacy skills and/or preparing for post-secondary education or employment.

b. CTE / Vocational Training

Allowable educational programs or activities under a CTE / Vocational Training component may include, but are not limited to, courses or programs of study that are part of a program of CTE.

c. English Language Acquisition

In accordance with [34 CFR 463.31](#), English Language Acquisition is a program of instruction that:

- Is designed to help eligible individuals who are English language learners achieve competence in reading, writing, speaking, and comprehension of the English language, and
- Leads to attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent; and transition to postsecondary education and training; or employment.

Examples of ELA include but are not limited to:

- English as a second language (ESL)
- English language learner
- Vocational English

d. Integrated Education Training

Integrated Education and Training is an education model that combines occupational skills training and basic or academic skills instruction to increase and expedite the educational and career advancement of participants. As defined in the [34 CFR 463.35](#), integrated education and training is a service approach that provides adult education and literacy activities concurrently and contextually with workforce preparation activities and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster for the purpose of educational and career advancement.

e. Work Readiness Training

Work Readiness Training includes educational programs or activities designed to improve basic skills, build work readiness, or otherwise improve employability including educational programs determined to expand the job search abilities or employability of participants. Work Readiness Training can include instruction of topics such as general skills building, developing good work habits, and building a work history. These types of services may be provided through instruction, or other activities where the student can learn and apply knowledge. There must be a certain level of effort required. Individual, one-time workshops/seminars do not qualify.

Activities may include but are not limited to:

- Financial literacy;
- Orientation and mobility skills;
- Job-seeking skills; and
- Understanding employer expectations for punctuality and performance.

2. Supervised Job Search

As defined in [7 CFR 273.7\(e\)\(2\)\(i\)](#), supervised job search must be directly supervised and tracked. Tools used in the supervised job search program may include virtual tools, such as websites, portals, or web applications, to access supervised job search services. Supervision can occur separately from the participant's job search activities, but must be provided by skilled staff, either remotely or in-person, who provide meaningful guidance and support with at least monthly check-ins. Supervision must be provided in such a way as to best support the participant. Supervised job search activities must have a direct link to increasing the employment opportunities of individuals engaged in the activity. Supervised job search must provide participants a reasonable opportunity to find suitable employment and should not be established as a continuous, year-round supervised job search program.” Drop-in Centers that offer services on an as-needed basis are not considered programs that increase employability under this definition.

Services and activities under this component may include, but are not limited to:

- Job search training
- Mock interviews
- Resume development
- Master application creation

3. Work Experience

Work experience is a planned, structured learning experience that takes place in a workplace or simulated work environment for a limited period of time. The work experience regulations at [7 CFR 273.7\(e\)\(2\)\(iv\)](#) and [ACL No. 21-48](#), issued April 23, 2021 divide work experience into two categories: work-based learning and work activities.

Work-based learning must include sustained interactions with industry or professionals in work/real world settings to the extent practicable, or simulated environments at an educational institution that foster in-depth, firsthand engagement with the tasks required in a given career field, that are aligned to curriculum and instruction. Work-based learning includes apprenticeships, pre-apprenticeships, internships, and customized training.

Work activities must be designed to improve the employability of participants through actual work experience and/or training and to enable individuals employed or trained under such programs to move promptly into regular public or private employment. Work activities includes campus employment and other work activities.

a. Apprenticeships / Pre-Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships, as defined by the United States Department of Labor (DOL), are industry-driven, high quality career pathways where employers can develop and prepare their future workforce, and individuals can obtain paid work experience, classroom instruction, and a portable, nationally recognized credential. In order to fulfill this component, a program must be pre-approved and appear on either the Industry-Recognized Apprenticeship Program (IRAP) or the Department of Industrial Relations' (DIR) Division of Apprenticeship Standards (DAS) approved lists. A pre-apprenticeship program is a program or set of strategies designed to prepare individuals to enter and succeed in an IRAP or DAS Registered Apprenticeship. The program must have a verified/established link to an IRAP or DAS Registered Apprenticeship approved apprenticeship program.

Apprenticeships may include but are not limited to:

- Automotive
- Culinary
- Construction
- Cosmetology
- Refrigeration

Pre-Apprenticeship Program Examples:

- Pre-construction

b. Academic Program which Requires an Internship

An internship is a professional learning experience that offers meaningful, practical work related to an individual's field of study or career interest. This can include internships, externships, or fieldwork experience. An internship gives the participant the opportunity for career exploration and development, and to learn new skills. Academic programs which require an internship would qualify as containing an E&T component.

c. Campus Employment

Students employed by their campus or a recognized auxiliary organization are considered to be participating in a Campus Employment Program.

d. Other Work Activities

Work activities must be designed to improve the employability of participants through actual work experience and/or training and to enable individuals employed or trained under such programs to move promptly into regular public or private employment. A program requiring other work activities qualify when it is designed to improve the employability of participants through actual simulated work practice. This training develops career knowledge and skills to improve employability in a selected career path. Other work activities may be paid or unpaid. These may include, but are not limited to:

- Research Assistantships
- Teaching Assistantships

- Fellowship programs with small stipend
- Capital Fellows Program
- AmeriCorps
- Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC)
- Student Government positions
- Academic programs which require practicum or clinical hours (Nursing, Social Work, Counseling, Teaching, Law Clinic, etc.)
- Academic programs which require a Capstone Project (must contain a work experience component)

4. Self-Employment Training

This component improves the employability of participants by providing training in opening and operating a small business or other self-employment venture. This could include programs aimed at assisting participants in entering gig employment, freelance work, or starting a business.

CALFRESH ELIGIBILITY REMINDERS

CalFresh eligibility related to college students can be found in [ACL No. 20-08](#). Here are a few important reminders for campuses conducting CalFresh outreach:

- Any individual under 22 years old residing with their parents, must include their parents (and parents' income) on their CalFresh case ([7 CFR 273.1\(b\)\(1\)\(ii\)](#)).
- Exemptions to the student eligibility rule only require verification if questionable or student unfitness is not evident to the eligibility worker. If questionable, acceptable verification can include but is not limited to a transcript, an email from an instructor, or verbal affirmation from a campus official. Additionally, targeted outreach emails from campuses to LPIE enrollees are acceptable verification. Refer to [ACL No. 21-58](#), issued May 21, 2021, for further guidance on questionable information.
- Most educational grants and loans are excluded from consideration when determining CalFresh eligibility and benefit level. This guidance was released in [ACL 21-137](#), issued November 12, 2021.

If you have any questions or need additional guidance regarding the information in this letter, contact the CalFresh Policy Bureau at CalFreshPolicy@dss.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Original Document Signed By

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