

## College Student and CalFresh Eligibility

### Introduction

College students have some of the most complicated eligibility requirements for the CalFresh program. Individuals who meet the CalFresh definition of “student,” must either work 80 hours a month or meet a specific exemption in order to be eligible for benefits. In an effort to clarify eligibility, the State of California has outlined a list of programs that could exempt students from the work requirement.

Outlined below is a brief definition of a “CalFresh Student” and a full list of programs that now qualify as exemptions from the work requirement. Please note that students must still meet income guidelines in order to be eligible.

### Definition of a Student

The first step is to determine if the student meets the definition of a student for the purposes of the CalFresh program.

- Is the student between the age of 18 through 49, and
- Is the student enrolled at least half-time in an institution of higher education, and
- Is the student physically and mentally able to attend school and work?

If the student does not answer yes to all three questions, they are not considered a student for the purposes of CalFresh and they do not need to meet any additional exemption.

### Exemptions for College Students

Students who meet the CalFresh definition of a student must meet **ONE** of the following exemptions to be potentially eligible for CalFresh. Please note that the list below is **NOT** intended to be exhaustive, there might be additional programs that are referred locally by another name.

#### Programs that increase employability

- Please refer to the CDSS Policy Guidance for an updated list monthly: <https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/calfresh-resource-center/policy>
- On campus jobs at any public institution

#### Programs for current and former foster youth

- Guardian Scholars Program
- Foster Youth Success Initiative (FYSI)
- Cooperating Agencies Foster Youth Educational Support (CAFYES)
- Chafee Educational Training Voucher (ETV) Program
- Extended Foster Care (AB 12/AB 212)

#### Other Exemptions

- Receipt of CalGrant A or B\*
- Eligible for work study\*\*
- Have a \$0 Expected Family Contribution (\$0 EFC)\*\*
- Having dependent children under the age of 6
- Having dependent children older than 6 but younger than 12 and no adequate child care services
- Recipient of CalWORKs
- Working 20 hours per week or an average of 80 hours per month (if self-employed, earning must at least equal federal minimum wage)

*\*Please see next page for information about receipt of CalGrant A or B*

*\*\*Please see next page for information about pandemic related college student exemptions*



## Receipt of a Cal Grant

There are four different types of Cal Grants: Cal Grant A, Cal Grant B, Cal Grant B Access and Cal Grant C. Only Cal Grant A and B will count as an exemption and it depends on the school system the student attends.

- **CSU or UC students** must receive **Cal Grant A or Cal Grant B** **AND** meet the following guidelines to be exempt:
  - Currently unmarried; **and**
  - Be 25 years of age or younger; **and**
  - Have a household income of \$50,000 a year or less when they applied for the Cal Grant
- **Community College students** must receive **Cal Grant A** **AND** meet the following guidelines to be exempt:
  - Currently unmarried; **and**
  - Be 25 years of age or younger; **and**
  - Have a household income of \$50,000 a year or less when they applied for the Cal Grant

## Other useful information about the most common programs:

- **Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) and Extended Opportunity Program Services (EOPS):** The EOP program is available at the UC and CSU systems (please note that at UC San Diego, EOP is called OASIS) while EOPS is available at community colleges. Both programs provide assistance for first generation college students and students from low income households and disadvantaged backgrounds.
  - **Cooperative Agencies Resources for Education (CARE) Program:** This is a supplemental component of EOPS that specifically assists students who are single heads of households with dependent children. Every CARE student is also an EOPS student.
- **Extended Foster Care (AB 12/AB212):** Foster care typically ends at the age of 18, but recent legislation in California has extended foster care until age 21. Individuals who are part of extended foster care are designated as “non-minor dependents” (NMDs) and the legislation allows the safety net of support for youth to continue until the age of 21. For the CalFresh program, extended foster care is treated as an exemption.
- **State and Federal Work Study:** Work study is a program that helps college students with financial need get part-time jobs. Students apply for work study when they apply for financial aid (Free Application for Federal Student Aid or FAFSA). If students are participating in work study, they are exempt from additional work requirements, regardless of how many hours they are working. Students who are eligible for work study but have not found a job placement and they anticipate to work during the school term will still meet the exemption. Please note that the exemption does not continue when there is a break of a full month or longer, meaning that students must meet another exemption during the winter and summer breaks that are a full month or longer unless the student is participating in work study during the break.
- **Pandemic Related College Student Exemptions:** In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, two new temporary college student exemptions were introduced: 1) students eligible for work study or 2) students with an Expected Family Contribution (EFC) of \$0. While the regular work study exemption requires students to be approved for work study and anticipate working, the new exemption expands CalFresh eligibility to students who are eligible for work study. The second temporary exemption applies to students having a \$0 EFC. A student's EFC is determined by the school's financial aid office. All students newly eligible for CalFresh with these new exemptions will receive notice via e-mail, which can serve as verification of their student exemption. These temporary exemptions expire 30 days after the COVID-19 public health emergency is lifted.

