

Foster Youth Participation in the CalFresh Program



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**Child Welfare Council's Data Linkages and Information
Sharing Committee**

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Agenda



- Background: Foster youth study
- CalFresh benefits & eligibility
- Research question
- Matching methodology
- Matching results
- Next steps

Background

- CalYOUTH Study was presented at the last meeting outlining the challenges foster youth face
- Study highlighted a low participation rate in the CalFresh Program
- CDSS examined administrative data to validate the participation rate

CalFresh Introduction

- California's implementation of the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- 4.4 million individuals in 2.1 million households participate each month.
- During Federal FY 2016, the average monthly CalFresh benefits are \$254.73/household and \$125.67/person.
- Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) is the method of distribution for CalFresh benefits via a debit card.
 - Formerly transferred via physical food stamps

CalFresh Basic Eligibility

- A CalFresh household is a group of individuals who purchase and prepare meals together.
- To participate in CalFresh, households must meet certain income eligibility standards:
 - Gross below 200%, Net below 100% Federal Poverty Level

| | <u>Gross monthly income</u> | <u>Net Monthly income</u> |
|------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 person = | \$1,962 | \$981 |
| 2 person = | \$2,656 | \$1,328 |
| 3 person = | \$3,350 | \$1,675 |

CalFresh Participation Barriers



- Group-living/multi-family households
 - *Individually* low incomes may sum to more than the household eligibility criteria
- Restrictive student eligibility criteria
 - Work hour requirements, dependent care, etc.
- ABAWD waiver expiration in 2017
 - Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents
- Real (and perceived) hurdles in application and reporting process
 - Scheduling interview, providing verifications, etc.

Research Question:

Are former foster youth (FFY) and Non-Minor Dependents (NMDs) accessing CalFresh benefits?

Foster Care Population

- Derived from the Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS):
 - 20,585 youth age 18-20 during Calendar Year 2015 who were in foster care on their 18th birthday
 - Youth could have exited foster care (FFY) or continued in extended foster care (NMD)
 - Supervising agencies of Child Welfare and Probation

CalFresh Recipient Population

- Derived from the Medi-Cal Eligibility Data System (MEDS)
 - Individual-level demographics, multi-program participation, identification information
 - Monthly, historical MEDS extracts
- Filtered by age, relevant CalFresh eligibility codes for any month during Calendar Year 2015

Matching Methodology

- Linked CWS/CMS client data with CalFresh enrollment data from MEDS
- Probabilistic, multi-step algorithm of exact, inexact matches using SAS v.9.4
 - SSNs, dates of birth, first and last names

Overall Match Results

- 20,585 total FFY and NMDs identified for Calendar Year 2015
 - Four mutually exclusive ways of participating in CalFresh:

| CalFresh Category | Description |
|----------------------------|---|
| Out of Care Only | Aged 18-20, received CalFresh only after exiting care |
| In Care Only | Aged 18-20, received CalFresh only while in extended foster care |
| Both In/Out of Care | Aged 18-20, received CalFresh both in foster care and after exiting |
| Out of Age Range | Received CalFresh only after turning 21 during 2015 |

Overall Match Results

- 8,200 FFY, NMDs (40%) matched with 2015 CalFresh recipient population

| CalFresh Category | Count of FFY, NMDs | Percent of Population (20,585 youth) |
|-------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Out of Care Only | 3,454 | 17% |
| In Care Only | 3,106 | 15% |
| Both In/Out of Care | 878 | 4% |
| Total Aged 18-20 | 7,438 | 36% |

- 762 were out of age range (4% of total)

Youth Not Participating in CalFresh by Age

| Age | All Youth | Percent Not Participating |
|--------------|---------------|---------------------------|
| 18 | 10,532 | 60% |
| 19 | 4,330 | 63% |
| 20 | 5,723 | 59% |
| Total | 20,585 | 60% |

- Overall results here are broadly consistent with estimates from CalYOUTH study of youth at age 19.

Youth Not Participating in CalFresh by Foster Care Status

| Foster Care Status | All Youth | Percent not Participating |
|-----------------------|---------------|---------------------------|
| NMD Only ¹ | 11,218 | 69% |
| FFY Only ² | 6,221 | 50% |
| Both ³ | 3,146 | 49% |
| Total | 20,585 | 60% |

¹ Youth in foster care during entire period

² Youth not in foster care during entire period

³ Youth in and out of foster care during entire period

CalFresh Barriers Revisited



- Group-living/multi-family households
- Restrictive student eligibility criteria
- ABAWD waiver expiration in 2017
- Real (and perceived) hurdles in application and reporting process

Next Steps

- Further discussions
- Presentation at December Child Welfare Council meeting
- Potential to continue monitoring this population

In Closing...



Q&A and Discussion

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