



COUNTY OF SONOMA

575 ADMINISTRATION
DRIVE, ROOM 102A
SANTA ROSA, CA 95403

SUMMARY REPORT

Agenda Date: 4/30/2024

To: Board of Supervisors

Department or Agency Name(s): Human Services, Health Services

Staff Name and Phone Number: Angela Struckmann 707-565-5800, Tina Rivera 707-565-4774

Vote Requirement: Majority

Supervisorial District(s): Countywide

Recommended Action:

Adopt a Gold Resolution declaring May 2024 as CalFresh Awareness Month in Sonoma County

Executive Summary:

The designation of May 2024 as CalFresh Awareness Month is a collaborative effort across Sonoma County to highlight the benefits of the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program to increase access and participation in food assistance, to reduce hunger, and to promote good nutrition and physical activity. The California Department of Social Services, as well as counties throughout the state, traditionally celebrate CalFresh Awareness Month in May each year. This year, the continued recognition of the CalFresh program and the scope of support it offers is even more important given the increased need and scope following the pandemic and economic impacts on Sonoma County residents.

Discussion:

In Sonoma County there are three components of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP): CalFresh benefits, CalFresh Healthy Living (SNAP-Ed), and CalFresh vendors. While CalFresh vendor enrollment and oversight is coordinated by the State of California, various county and non-profit organizations coordinate CalFresh benefits and/or SNAP-Ed efforts locally, including the Human Services Department (HSD), the Department of Health Services (DHS), Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Santa Rosa, Petaluma Bounty, Aliados, Redwood Empire Food Bank, the Area Agency on Aging, and United Way of the Wine Country's 2-1-1 program. Among other efforts, these partnerships seek to raise awareness and improve utilization of CalFresh benefits and healthy nutrition practices in our community.

CalFresh benefits are critical to healthy nutrition for many county residents. CalFresh benefits supplement household food budgets, allowing families to put healthy and nutritious food on the table. Over the past 4 years, the need for CalFresh has increased as it provides critical food benefits to residents following the end of the pandemic and lingering economic impacts. CalFresh has become ever more essential in our community, with increased application volume and higher than ever active cases. Currently, Sonoma County has approximately 36,000 people actively receiving CalFresh benefits. Of these beneficiaries:

- 34% are children under 18
- 22% are seniors age 60 and over
- 13% are unhoused individuals
- 5% are documented immigrants

In addition to the immediate ability to provide food and decrease hunger insecurity among our most vulnerable residents, CalFresh generates \$1.79 of economic activity for every \$1.00 of benefits spent. This results in approximately \$12.5 million dollars entered into our local economy each month. The CalFresh program and economic benefits also support local farmers markets and help community supported agriculture and local grocers sustain jobs in our community.

HSD and DHS partner with community organizations and agencies to provide CalFresh outreach, education and enrollment services throughout Sonoma County. Collaboration is central to reaching our residents and engaging the community where the need is greatest. Sonoma County is also in the process of conducting a countywide food assessment, to be completed this fall, to map the local food system, identify community needs and gaps, and provide direction for future investment in the local food ecosystem.

SNAP-Ed programs work collaboratively with community partners on upstream factors that affect nutrition security and access to physical activity. SNAP-Ed partners with local daycares, schools, parks, low-income housing sites, farmers markets, food pantries, community gardens, and numerous coalitions to make policy, systems, and environmental changes that impact the health of Sonoma County residents.

CalFresh Awareness activities will be done primarily in virtual and online platforms during the month of May, highlighting the program, benefits and partnerships across the county. A series of coordinated social media posts will be launched in partnership with trusted community agencies to share information about the CalFresh program, how to apply, and how to maintain benefits. Additional information will include:

- Dispelling the myths and stigma associated with the CalFresh program
- Available technology options for applications and ongoing case activities
- Strategic outreach efforts in partnership with community organizations
- Farmers Market Local Incentive for Food and Economy market match program for CalFresh customers at participating farmers markets
- Discounts including Sonoma County Regional Parks passes, utility programs, and memberships for CalFresh recipients

Prior Board Actions:

Adopted a resolution recognizing CalFresh Awareness Month on these prior dates:

05/11/2021

04/28/2020

05/14/2019

05/08/2018

05/02/2017

FISCAL SUMMARY

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

N/A

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

N/A

Agenda Date: 4/30/2024

Attachments:

Gold Resolution

Related Items "On File" with the Clerk of the Board:

None