

# CalFresh Handbook 63-03.02: Expedited Services

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## Summary:

The purpose of this handbook is to provide guidance on the Expedited Services CalFresh processing requirements for the CalFresh program.

This handbook is being updated to include information on the Service Center.

All changes are highlighted in blue.

## I. General:

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Expedited Services (ES) CalFresh are CalFresh benefits provided to households that meet certain Expedited Services CalFresh (ESCF) criteria within three calendar days after the date of application. Eligible households which meet the ES criteria may qualify for Expedited CalFresh benefits at initial application or recertification. ESCF is NOT a separate program from regular CalFresh. Households which qualify for ESCF:

- Must have CalFresh benefits made available to them by the third calendar day after the date of application, and
- May have some verification requirements waived.

## II. ES Eligibility:

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Eligible households must meet at least one of the following criteria to qualify for ES:

1. **The household's combined gross monthly income and liquid resources are less than the household's monthly rent or mortgage and utilities.**

Gross monthly income + liquid resources < (less than) monthly rent/mortgage + utilities

**Note:** If households have utility costs, the mandatory standard utility allowance must be used when determining ES entitlement. To determine which utility allowance a household is entitled to, refer to CalFresh Handbook 63-05.08: Utility Allowance Determination. The Standard Utility Allowance (SUA) must be used if the household is entitled to SUA, even if the actual expenses are lower or higher than the SUA amount. For those households not eligible for SUA, the Limited

Utility Allowance (LUA) or Telephone Utility Allowance (TUA) amount can be used.

**2. Household's monthly gross income is less than \$150 and liquid resources are \$100 or less.**

Liquid resources can include, but are not limited to cash on hand, checking or savings accounts, savings certificates, and lump-sum payments.

**Note:** Although resources are disregarded for CalFresh under Modified Categorical Eligibility, liquid resources are still counted for the purposes of determining ES entitlement.

**3. Destitute migrant/seasonal farm workers with \$100 or less liquid resources.**

**Note:** The Eligibility Services Technician (EST) shall use the ES criteria above to determine a household's eligibility for ES at screening and at any time during the application process.

### ESCF Eligibility Examples

**Example:**

A household of four applies for CalFresh benefits on 4/6. The household indicates they received \$1,200 in total income and are not expected to receive any other income in April. They also have \$150 in a saving's account. The rent is \$900 per month and the household has a PG & E bill for \$100.

Total income & resources = \$1,350 (\$1,200 income + \$150 liquid resources)  
Total rent & utilities = \$1,285 (\$900 rent + SUA \$385)

Since the total income and liquid resources is greater than the total rent and utility expenses, the household **is not** ES eligible.

**Example:**

An SSI/SSP mother with two children apply for CalFresh benefits on 4/6. She receives \$650 from SSI/SSP and has \$200 in her savings account. She pays \$400 in rent and \$100 in utilities.

The mother receiving SSI/SSP is ineligible for CalFresh and her SSI/SSP income and property is excluded in both the screening for ES and in the household budget.

Since the household's monthly gross income is less than \$150 and liquid resources are \$100 or less, the household **is** ES eligible.

**Example:**

A single adult refugee applies for CalFresh. The resettlement agency provided the applicant with a one-time payment of \$125 (Reception and Placement (R&P) grant) in the month of application. The applicant is enrolled in the Matching Grant program and the resettlement agency is providing a \$200 monthly cash allowance and \$75 for the client to purchase a monthly bus pass. The resettlement agency is paying the client's monthly rent of \$400. Utilities are paid separately from the rent.

Total income & resources = \$325 (\$200 monthly unearned income from the Matching Grant Program + \$125 liquid resources from the one-time lump sum R&P grant)  
Total rent & utilities = \$785 (\$400 + SUA \$385)

The household *is* eligible for ES.

Note: Income earmarked by the Resettlement Agencies to be used for specific purposes like rent, utilities, or furniture is considered excluded income. The Reception and Placement grant that is not vendor paid and disbursed as a one-time payment is considered a non-recurring lump sum payment and is counted only as a resource in the month it was received. The vendor paid rent and utilities of \$400 is excluded from income because it is vendor paid. Refer to [Refugee Cash Assistance and Employment Newsletter: 16-01 Treatment of Reception & Placement Income.](#)

### **III. Informing Requirements**

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The ESCF regulations require counties to verbally inform each CalFresh applicant household of the availability of ES and how to initiate the process, and the availability of assistance in filling out the CalFresh application. Counties are required to identify households entitled to ES at the time the household files an application.

Counties are also required to provide information on the right to an agency conference at the time the household is informed of possible ES entitlement and processing. Notification is posted in the waiting rooms informing applicants of the right to agency conference.

#### **Supervising Eligibility Technician (SET)**

#### **Agency Conference for Households Not Entitled to ES**

Households have the right to request a face-to-face or telephone meeting with a Supervising Eligibility Technician (SET) to informally resolve any dispute as to whether the household meets ES criteria. SETs shall schedule the meeting within two working days of the request unless the household requests that it be scheduled later or states that they no longer wish to have the meeting.

Note: The agency conference does not supersede or interfere with a state hearing request.

**Documentation:** SETs are to document in Case Comments the client's request for an agency conference, including the scheduled date, and the results of the conference.

#### **IV. ES Screening Requirements:**

CalFresh Expedited Services regulations require counties to screen all CalFresh applications for entitlement of Expedited Services (ES) at the time the household files an application.

Counties are required to screen all CalFresh applications to determine if applicants meet the criteria for ES, even if they did not request ES by answering the ES questions either on the CF 285, SAWS 1, SAWS 2 Plus, or online application form (i.e., Benefits CalWIN). ESCF screening is done for all applications regardless of whether they answered the ES questions. Households which qualify for ESCF must have benefits made available to them by the third calendar day after the date of application.

An ESCF screening process includes both a review of the ES questions and the household's circumstances as listed on the CF 285, the SAWS 1, or SAWS 2 Plus, this also includes the Benefits CalWIN (BCW) application.

The Expedited Services Screening Worksheet, [Form 63-52](#) is available online for the EST to quickly determine step-by-step ESCF eligibility.

#### **Documentation**

All CalFresh applications should have ESCF screening results entered in case comments.

#### **Important Note:**

Although a household may be ineligible for ES, it does not mean that they are ineligible for CalFresh. If a household is ineligible for ESCF, the applicant should be advised that the regular application will be processed as soon as possible and no later than 30 calendar days from the date of application.

#### **Emergency Food Assistance Referrals**

A food referral can also be offered for all households in need of food assistance regardless of whether or not the household was found entitled to ES.

#### **V. ES Screening Process**

##### **A. ES Screening Process for Walk-In Applicants**

When an applicant walks into the office requesting CalFresh benefits, please refer to [General Process Handbook 50-00.3 Intake Process](#).

**B. ES Screening Process for CalFresh Applications Submitted when the Applicant is not in the Waiting Room (i.e. mail-in, fax, Community Based Organizations (CBOs), BenefitsCalWIN, etc.)**

**Clerical**

Clear the client and all family members in MEDS using their name and social security number. Print the MEDS screen. If client is currently active in another county follow the eICT transfer process per Generic Handbook 50-0.06. Clear CalWIN for the client and all family members using their name and social security number. Determine the appropriate case number or create a case number if needed.

1. Retrieve and register CalFresh applications throughout the course of the day. All CalFresh applications should have ESCF registered with the exception of incoming Intercounty Transfers (ICTs). Incoming ICTs do not need to have ESCF registered because they are receiving CalFresh in another county.
2. All CalFresh applications should be registered and assigned on the same day. If unable to be assigned the same day, the CalFresh application shall be assigned no later than the next day.
3. Schedule interview in CalWIN for all applications with CalFresh within the three day ESCF timeframe. The appointment letter (CF 29A) will be sent in batch.
4. WDT will auto-generate the ESCF Pending case action and assign it to the EST with the Application Pending case action.
5. View WDT to determine EST assignment and route case in CalWIN to the EST assigned to the Application Pending case action.
6. Applications should be immediately scanned and imaged to WebFiles.

**Note:** BenefitsCalWIN applications do not need to be scanned and imaged to WebFiles. BenefitsCalWIN applications are automatically scanned to WebFiles once the application has been assigned a case number. CalWIN runs a nightly batch job to move the documents received in the external window to WebFiles. BenefitsCalWIN applications can also be viewed from the external referral window in CalWIN.

**Eligibility Services Technicians**

1. Receives the CalFresh Application Pending and ESCF Pending case action. The application must be screened for ES the same day the application is assigned. If unable to be screened the same day, the CalFresh application shall be screened no later than the next day. ESTs screen

for ESCF and determine eligibility for expedited services CalFresh benefits as follows:

A. Review the ES sections/questions on the application for an ESCF request; and

B. Review all of the information provided on the CalFresh application to determine if the applicant meets ES criteria.

**Example:** No ES questions were answered, but the applicant provided information on the application that indicated that their total monthly gross income and liquid resources combined was less than their total rent and utilities combined. This application should be processed as ESCF.

**Example:** Only the name, address and signature are provided on the CalFresh application. The application is considered complete, but there is insufficient information to determine ES entitlement. This application should be processed as regular CalFresh.

**Document** in CalWIN case comments both that the case was evaluated for ES and the ES screening results.

**Note:** All CalFresh applications should have ES screening results in case comments.

### **How Often to Certify Households with the ES Process**

There is no limit to the number of times a household can be found entitled to ESCF benefits, as long as prior to each expedited services finding, the household provided all postponed verification from the previous request or has received benefits under normal processing. ESTs shall ensure that the household has met the above requirements prior to issuing benefits under ES processing on a different request.

## **VI. ESCF Verification**

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### **ESCF Mandatory Verification**

Verification of identity is the only verification needed before issuing ES benefits. A picture or photo ID is NOT required. Any document that reasonably establishes the applicant's identity can be accepted. Acceptable forms of ID include, but are not limited to the following:

- ID already on file in WebFiles
- ID verified through MEDS
- Social Security Card
- A work or school ID
- Library Card
- Health benefits or another assistance program ID
- Wage stub
- Driver's License or State ID
- 3rd party collateral contact
- Document that reasonably establishes identity

If the applicant has applied for benefits in the past or is a current recipient of benefits, the EST should first check to see if the applicant's ID can be located in the applicant's case file or can be verified through MEDS before requesting ID verification. If an acceptable form of ID is found in the applicant's case file then the EST is to accept the ID as already verified and should not ask for ID verification a second time.

Self-attestation from a collateral contact who confirms the applicant's identity may be used to verify identity, as a last resort.

### **ESCF Verifications That May Be Postponed**

All reasonable efforts must be made to verify other eligibility factors before issuing ESCF. **However, benefits cannot be delayed beyond the ES issuance deadline in order to obtain the verification(s).**

The following verifications may be postponed when necessary to issue ESCF benefits on time:

- Residency
- SSN or proof of SSN application
- Income
- Noncitizen status
- Expenses
- All other required verification

### **Postponed Verification**

- Postponed (mandatory) verification must be provided within the 30-day regular CalFresh application timeframe. Refer to [CalFresh Handbook 63-03.05 Application Process](#).
- The EST shall provide the household with a written request (CW 2200 "Request for Verification") and allow the household 10 days (12 days if mailed) to provide any postponed verification. No other needs letter can be substituted for form CW 2200 when requesting verification.
- Households that apply on or before the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the month will be issued CalFresh benefits for the month of application only.
- Households that apply on or after the 16<sup>th</sup> of the month that qualify for ES must receive the prorated initial month's benefits and the second month's full benefit (combined allotment) within the expedited services time frame.
- Missing mandatory verification(s) will still need to be provided within 30 days.
- For applications taken after the 16<sup>th</sup> of the month, deductions for expenses can be allowed in the first two months without verification.
- If verification for a postponed mandatory verification is not provided within 30 days of the application the household shall be discontinued.
- If the household fails to provide verification for any previously allowed postponed deduction/expense, the CalWIN expense entry must be end dated.

### ***Important Note:***

Verifications for potential deductions/expenses such as shelter, utilities, dependent care, child support and medical expenses are not mandatory verifications and shall not be required as part of the regular CalFresh application process. A CalFresh application shall not be denied if a household fails to submit verification for a deduction that has been reported on the application. The household's eligibility shall be determined without allowing a deduction for unverified expense(s).

## VII. Processing Applicants Entitled to ES

If the household is entitled to ES and the applicant is in the waiting room, please refer to General Process Handbook 50-00.3 Intake Process.

For all other applications, if the household is entitled to ESCF the EST will make contact with the client immediately to conduct a telephone interview and register the ESCF program in CalWIN, if not already registered. The methods of contact can include a telephone number, an email address, or a message phone.

Interview Attempt	Applicant Available	Applicant Unavailable
1st Interview Attempt	If the applicant was available, the interview was conducted, and the household was found to be eligible for ESCF, refer to <b># 2 below, Approval of Expedited Services</b> .	If the applicant was unavailable for the 1st attempt at a telephone interview then the EST will dictate in Case Comments that the client was not available on the 1st attempt at a telephone interview and include the date and time the client was contacted.
2nd Interview Attempt	If the applicant was available and the interview was conducted then the EST should advise the client to disregard the appointment letter that has been mailed. If the applicant was found to be eligible for	The EST will make a 2nd attempt at a telephone interview. If the applicant was unavailable by phone for the 2nd interview attempt and the applicant has a voicemail option, a message should be left for the applicant containing information relative to the interview. If leaving a message in order to maintain confidentiality, the EST must leave a message using the <b>exact</b> script below:  <i>“Hello, my name is [name of worker]. This call is for [name of client]. I am calling in regards to your recent application submitted [date of application].”</i>

	<p>ESCF, refer to <b>#2 below, Approval of Expedited Services.</b></p>	<p><i>You have been scheduled for a telephone interview on [date of interview] at [time of interview]. If you cannot make the scheduled appointment time, please call back at your earliest convenience at [phone number] to reschedule your interview appointment. Thank you.</i></p> <p>The above script can also be used in an email message if permission is obtained from the household to contact the applicant via email.</p> <p>The EST will dictate in Case Comments that the client was not available for the 2nd attempt at a telephone interview. Case comments should include the date and time the 2nd attempt was made.</p>
<p>Scheduled Interview Attempt</p>	<p>If the applicant was available for the telephone interview, the interview was conducted, and the household was found to be eligible for ESCF, refer to <b>#2 below, Approval of Expedited Services.</b></p>	<p>The EST <b>will receive an Interview case action on the day of the scheduled interview.</b> The EST will call the applicant at the scheduled interview time. If necessary, attempt two calls to reach the applicant. If the applicant was unavailable for the scheduled interview and the interview was not conducted by the third day then the EST will dictate in Case Comments that the client was not available for the scheduled telephone interview. Case Comments should include the date and time the scheduled interview attempt was made. Deny the ESCF program and process the application within the 30-day timeframe as regular CalFresh. Refer to <b>#1 below, Denial of Expedited Services.</b></p>

**Note:** ESTs are encouraged to make additional contacts to reach the applicant or Authorized Representative (AR) to conduct the interview within the three-day timeframe when possible. If the household is homeless, it is recommended that ESTs attempt additional contacts to reach the applicant or AR.

### 1. Denial of Expedited Services

If during the interview the EST discovers that the applicant is not ES eligible **or the appointment was rescheduled for a date later than the 3 day timeframe**, the ESCF must be denied in CalWIN. **The EST shall do the following:**

- Deny ESCF only ensuring any other programs are left in pending status
- Complete case comments
  - Include the reason for the ESCF denial

- Include the date and time the scheduled interview call was made.
- Mark the ESCF pending case action complete in WDT.
- Mark Interview case action complete.
- Process the regular CalFresh application as soon as possible, no later than the 30th day after the application date.

If the household fails to attend the interview and an interview was not conducted by the third day, then the EST should deny the ESCF in CalWIN and process the application within the 30-day timeframe as regular CalFresh.

To deny ESCF, the EST should:

- Not initiate the interview appointment in CalWIN
  - A Notice of Missed Interview (NOMI) - CF 386 to remind the household to reschedule their interview prior to the 30<sup>th</sup> day after the application date – will be mailed automatically in Batch
- Deny ESCF on the Collect Withdraw/Deny/Cancel/Terminate window using the reason of Client Did Not Keep Appointment.

**Important: Do NOT send a manual NOA regarding the ESCF denial.**

- Run EDBC and **authorize** the failure for the ESCF only.
- All other programs should be left in **pending** status.
- Dictate in case comments that the client was not available for the scheduled telephone interview.
  - Case comments should include the date and time the scheduled interview call was made.
- Mark ESCF Pending and Application Interview case actions as complete in WDT.
- Process the regular CalFresh application as soon as possible, no later than the 30th day after the application date.

## 2. Approval of Expedited Services

If an interview was conducted by the third day and the applicant was found to be eligible for ESCF, then the EST will approve the ESCF program. To approve the ESCF program, the EST should:

- Enter the information in CalWIN.
- Run EDBC.
- Always review the wrap-up screen to ensure accuracy of benefits.
- Authorize the ESCF Program.
- Check the print queue for Client Correspondence. Print and review the CalFresh approval NOA CF 377.1 with the applicant **or mail in Batch if the interview was completed over the phone.**
- Request EBT card, if applicable and ensure that the household has an active EBT card within the three-day timeframe.

- Mail or provide the client with the CW 2200 requesting any outstanding verification.
- [Create a Need Letter case action in WDT](#)
- Forward any verification received to WebFiles.
- [Complete case comments](#)
- [Mark ESCF Pending and Application Interview case actions as complete in WDT.](#)
- Process the regular CalFresh application as soon as possible within the 30-day timeframe.

## VIII. Processing Time Standards:

### Initial Application

At initial application, all ES eligible households should receive their CalFresh benefits no later than the third calendar day following the application date.

- Day one begins with the day following the application date
- Saturday and Sunday count as one calendar day
- If the third day falls on a non-work day (holiday or weekend), CalFresh benefits must be available on the workday preceding the non-work day

If the application is received on.....	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Benefits deposited in EBT no later than....	Thursday	Friday	Friday	Monday*	Tuesday

\*If the Monday following the application date is a holiday, benefits must be deposited by the first working day immediately preceding the nonworking day.

**Example:** An eligible household files a CalFresh application on Thursday (day zero). Monday is a holiday. Benefits must be issued by Friday (day 1) because the third day falls on the Monday holiday and benefits must be issued the first working day immediately prior to the nonworking day.

Meeting the three-day timeframe includes providing the household with an active EBT card and PIN number to access benefits that have been posted onto their EBT account and made available to use within the ES issuance deadline. The EBT card should be available for pick-up (with benefits posted to the EBT account and the PIN number issued) or mailed within the three-day timeframe. Mailing time does not count toward the opportunity to participate and does not affect the ES three day timeframe.

**Example:** An applicant comes into the office on Monday and submits the CalFresh application (day zero). The EST screens the application and determines the applicant to be ES entitled. The applicant cannot stay for the same day interview appointment and is given an appointment letter for a scheduled phone interview for the following day, Tuesday (day one). On Tuesday, the EST calls the applicant on the phone and

conducts a telephone interview. That same day the EST informs the applicant of the option to come into the office to pick up his/her EBT card or have the EBT card mailed. The applicant asks the EST to mail the EBT card. The EST requests the EBT card and PIN number be mailed to the household that afternoon (the ES clock stops when the county mails the EBT card and Pin number to the household). The ES timeframe is met in day one when the EBT card and PIN number are mailed to the household.

**Example:** An applicant completes and files an application online for CalFresh benefits on the afternoon of Friday, September 1 (day zero). The EST screens the application for ES entitlement and determines the household is ES entitled. The EST calls and is unable to speak with the applicant and calls and leaves a detailed recorded message with the specific date and time of the interview for Tuesday, September 5 (this is day 3). The household missed the interview on September 5 (this is day 3). The EST [completes the process to deny ESCF for a missed appointment](#). The household contacts the EST two days later and is scheduled for a second interview on September 10. On September 10, the household completes the interview and the household is determined ES entitled (this is day one for ES tracking). If the county determined ES entitlement and eligibility, and provided the household with an EBT card the same day, then the county has met the ESCF timeframe on day one.

### **Recertification**

Households found entitled to ES are subject to the same recertification requirements as all households. Households reapplying after less than one-month break in certification should be screened for ES and processed as ESCF if found entitled to ESCF.

## **IX. Processing Late Determinations of ES**

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If ES entitlement is discovered at the interview or at any time during the application process the ES time clock starts from the date the County became aware the household was entitled to ES (this is the date of discovery). In this circumstance, the three-day processing standards must be calculated from the date of discovery not the date the application was filed.

**Example:** An application is submitted on May 1st with only a name, address, and signature (day zero). The application is screened and determined ineligible for ES on May 2nd (day one) because the county does not have enough information sufficient to make an ES entitlement determination, and is routed for regular processing. An interview appointment is rescheduled for May 10th. During the interview the applicant provides new information making them entitled to ES and eligible for benefits. This day becomes the date of discovery (day one). If the EBT card is loaded and the PIN made available to access their benefits that same day, the ES timeframe has been met on day one.

**Example:** On June 4<sup>th</sup> a household submits an application with only a name, address, and signature (this is day zero). The next day the EST screens the application and realizes that the application has insufficient information and the EST cannot make a

determination for ES entitlement because the application is missing all of the necessary information. The EST attempts to contact the client to complete the interview but was only able to leave a voicemail reminding the client of their scheduled interview. The client is unavailable on the day of the scheduled interview. The EST doesn't initiate the interview in CalWIN, denies the ESCF, enters case comments, and completes associated case actions. On June 18<sup>th</sup>, the EST receives a call from the client wanting to complete the telephone interview and the EST is available to complete the interview. During the interview on June 18<sup>th</sup> the EST discovers that the household meets one of the ES criteria and is determined entitled to ES (this is day one). The same day the household is provided their loaded EBT card, their PIN number and are able to access their benefits. The ES timeframe has been met.

**CalWIN Entry Note:** When the Discovery Date is enabled, it will default to the Application Date for the CalFresh program. For Late ES Determinations, the EST will need to validate the Discovery Date, change the date if necessary, and select a Discovery Reason. Refer to CalWIN [Release 28 Highlights](#).

## X. Processing/Tracking System

The State requires counties to report on ESCF application processing. To provide these mandated statistics, the date of the ES application and the date of its approval or denial must be processed in CalWIN.

## XI. Certification Period:

All households issued CalFresh benefits under ES will be certified for the maximum certification allowable, in accordance with the household's circumstances.

Household Classification	Certification Period
All CalFresh households	12 months
All members are elderly or disabled	24 months

## XII. References:

Food Stamp MPP 63-301.5

ACL 12-74

ACL 16-14

ACL 16-14E

Release 28 Highlights

Generic Processes Newsletter: 15-05 Emergency Food Assistance Referrals

CalFresh Handbook 63-05.08: Utility Allowance Determination

Refugee Cash Assistance and Employment Newsletter: 16-01 Treatment of Reception & Placement Income

CalFresh Handbook 63-03.05 Application Process