

# Food Assistance Programs and Compliance

## **Commodity Supplemental Food Program**

The Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) is administered at the federal level by the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) administers the program at the state level. The Redwood Empire Food Bank is one of the food banks in California that administers the program at the local level along with partners.

The Commodity Supplemental Food Program is specifically designed to supplement needed sources of nutrients typically lacking in senior citizen diets. CSFP can play an important role in combating the negative health consequences of senior hunger and can ultimately help seniors avoid costly hospitalizations and nursing home placements. The program supplies one 30-pound food box of USDA commodities to participants each month. The CSFP food boxes contain canned and packaged food including vegetables, fruit, juice, pasta, milk, cereal, canned meat, and plant-based protein. The participants also receive a 2-pound package of cheese each month. The cheese must stay refrigerated and is not packaged in the CSFP food box. Individuals who qualify for CSFP may also qualify for CalFresh, TEFAP, Medi-Cal, and Medicare.

### [CSFP Income Guidelines](#)

The CSFP income limits are 130% of the Federal Poverty Income Guidelines per household. The income guidelines are updated every year in February or March.

### [CSFP Statement of Confidentiality](#)

### [Participant Rights & Responsibilities](#)

## **Religious Organizations**

Faith-based or religious organizations have requirements they must follow:

- The organization may not discriminate against beneficiaries based on religion or religious belief, a refusal to hold a religious belief, or a refusal to attend or participate in a religious practice
- The organization may not require beneficiaries to attend or participate in any explicitly religious activities that are offered by the organization and any participation by beneficiaries in such activities must be purely voluntary
- The organization must separate in time or location any privately funded explicitly religious activities from activities supported by direct federal financial assistance
- If a beneficiary objects to the religious character of the organization, the organization will undertake reasonable efforts to identify and refer the beneficiary to an alternative provider to which the prospective beneficiary has

no objection; the organization may not be able to guarantee, however, that in every instance, an alternate provider will be available

- Beneficiaries may report violations of these protections (including denials of services or benefits) by an organization to the state agency (CDSS). The state agency will respond to the complaint and report the alleged violations to their respective USDA FNS regional office

If an applicant objects to the religious character of the organization or requests a referral, the partner must refer the applicant to an alternative provider. The partner should have alternative provider information available in advance.

The partner must not engage in explicitly religious activities, such as worship, religious instruction, or proselytization as part of the program or to receive CSFP commodities. Religious activity that takes place must be separate in time or location from distributions. The partner must make it clear that any religious activities are not endorsed by the USDA. Funds or commodities cannot be used to support religious activities, speech, or materials.

## **Civil Rights**

All staff and volunteers who are involved with USDA programs in any capacity must complete the [level 1 USDA Civil Rights training checklist](#) (FDU 113) annually. Any lead staff or volunteers and managers must complete the [level 2 training annually](#).

[Level 1 Training](#)

[Level 2 Training](#)

[Civil Rights Complaint Form](#)

## **The Emergency Food Assistance Program**

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) is a federal program that helps supplement the diets of low-income Americans, including elderly people, by providing them with emergency food assistance at no cost. Through TEFAP, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) purchases a variety of nutritious, high-quality USDA Foods, and makes those foods available to state distributing agencies.

The amount of food each state receives out of the total amount of food provided is based on the number of unemployed persons and the number of people with incomes below the poverty level in the state. States provide the food to local agencies that they have selected, usually food banks, which in turn distribute the food to local organizations, such as soup kitchens and food pantries that directly serve the public.

[TEFAP Income Guidelines](#)

**Non-Discrimination Statement**  
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