



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **CA Seniors, people with disabilities newly eligible for both CalFresh & SSI**

**SD Hunger Coalition stands ready to assist CalFresh enrollment**

San Diego, May 1, 2019 – Starting June 2019, major changes are coming to Californians who receive Supplemental Security Income/State Supplementary Payment (SSI/SSP). This is the program that provides a monthly cash benefit to seniors, the blind, and people with disabilities. **California is one of the only states in which SSI/SSP recipients are precluded from participating in CalFresh (SNAP). This will end in June** when SSI/SSP recipients will either be eligible to apply for CalFresh or will automatically be enrolled if they live in a house with other people who already receive CalFresh benefits.

Under the revised policies, seniors with a fixed income will only need to reapply every three years. Individuals who are granted CalFresh benefits may receive as much as \$120 per month.

**San Diego Hunger Coalition** was active and instrumental in gathering the momentum necessary to end *SSI Cashout* (see background section below) and reinstate state funding to increase SSI benefit payments and a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA). **These changes have the potential to significantly reduce food insecurity amongst seniors and people with disabilities in San Diego County and across the state of California.**

*San Diego Hunger Coalition research indicates that in San Diego County **1 in 11 seniors are food insecure and 50% of adults experiencing food insecurity are living with a disability.***

**The Hunger Coalition is actively training and working with local nonprofit organizations, the County of San Diego Health & Human Services Agency, and the California Department of Social Services** to educate and inform those affected by the changes and encourage those eligible for CalFresh (SNAP) benefits to apply.

The biggest change with June's end of SSI Cashout is that **those receiving SSI/SSP benefits will now be eligible to apply for CalFresh (SNAP)**. CalFresh (SNAP) is the United States' most successful public assistance program and most effective tool for ending hunger in America. Access to CalFresh will help low-income seniors and people with disabilities get enough to eat to live healthy and active lives.

**Background:** In 1974, the federal government began its SSI program. At the time, states were given the option to include a cash benefit in SSI payments in lieu of providing food stamps to SSI recipients. This was known as the "SSI Cashout." California went with this option because it would save the state money in the form of reduced administrative costs. In 1974, that cash option was \$10/month for food. In the intervening 45 years, that amount has not changed.

**The current individual SSI/SSP benefit total is at the same level as it was in 1983.** An individual on SSI/SSP will receive an average benefit of \$932/month. The 2019 Federal Poverty Level is \$1,040/month. **Many Californians are below the poverty level, are struggling to meet their basic needs and having to make tough choices between paying for housing, medicine, and food.**

**San Diego Hunger Coalition is available for interviews, information, and to facilitate connections with any of our over 100 local hunger relief partners.** Please contact Joe Shumate, Communications Officer at 619.501.7917 ext. 106 or [joseph@sdhunger.org](mailto:joseph@sdhunger.org).