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**MAY IS CALFRESH AWARENESS MONTH
Alameda County Takes Aim at Hunger and Obesity**

Oakland, CA (May 6, 2014) - Gaining access to CalFresh benefits is easier than many people realize – and so is preparing healthy meals on a budget. But only about half of those in need seem to be getting the message. In response, Alameda County is gearing up for another round in the battle against hunger.

For the second year, the County's Board of Supervisors will join the Social Services Agency (SSA) and a broad-based community collaborative in proclaiming May to be "CalFresh Awareness Month." The proclamation launches a month of programs and activities aimed at educating residents about CalFresh and removing barriers that discourage eligible individuals and families from applying. As part of its effort to reduce hunger and increase nutrition awareness, Alameda County will once again spread the message that "CalFresh is *Easy*."

Despite a record number of individuals receiving CalFresh in Alameda County (127,533 as of March 2014), the current estimate is that only about 55% of those eligible are receiving the food assistance. Many individuals and families who need food assistance are unaware that they may qualify. Many others need access to higher quality food and education about nutrition and exercise. Although Alameda County has considerable wealth, some neighborhoods have been declared "food deserts" because of their limited access to fresh, healthy food.

"In addition to increasing CalFresh awareness and access, we are committed to reducing the prevalence of obesity and its associated health risks within the Alameda County CalFresh population," noted Lori A. Cox, SSA's Director. "We will be collaborating with the Alameda County Nutrition Action Partners to promote the consumption of healthy foods and beverages and educate our customers on how to buy and prepare healthy meals on a budget. "

Due to reports that lower-income communities are at greater risks for obesity, diabetes and certain other nutrition-related diseases, SSA recently established weekly [Farm Stands](#) outside of its offices allowing CalFresh recipients to use their EBT card to make healthy food purchases. SSA will host enrollment clinics, trainings, and health fairs during the month of May to promote awareness and access to CalFresh and other food assistance programs offered throughout Alameda County. A calendar of events will be available on the Agency's public website as of April 30. The campaign will emphasize convenient methods of applying for services, such as [on-line applications](#).

For more information contact Sylvia Soublet, Public Affairs Director at (510) 267-9434 or (510) 207-2074 or visit www.mybenefitscalwin.org. ☎

