



CalFresh: Restaurant Meals Program (RMP)

History

The Restaurant Meals Programs (RMP) was established in 1978 for adults over the age of 60 and people with disabilities who were recipients of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. This allowed the recipients to purchase prepared food at authorized vendors. In 1996 the program expanded to include the homeless. California began its pilot program in the early 2000s in San Francisco County. This program was available, but it was only active historically in bigger counties with large urban populations in California due to the administrative work it took to get restaurants interested in the program.

In 2021 RMP switched from being county managed, to being a statewide initiative handled by the California Department of Social Services (CDSS). The goal of this change was to get chain restaurants involved and create RMP access throughout the state, including in rural areas like Humboldt.

Starting in 2024 Humboldt County has RMP-participating businesses that bring the ability for households in the target demographic to access prepared meals. Burger King is the primary area business.

What is it?

The RMP gives certain people at high risk for food insecurity the option to use their CalFresh benefits to buy prepared meals at approved participating restaurants. They can swipe their EBT card and have CalFresh funds pay for these meals.

Who can use it?

Adults aged 60 or older, a person with a permanent disability (and the in-home spouses of those two groups), or a person experiencing homelessness can utilize the RMP. Spouses do not have to meet the age or disability criteria, but households that include at least one member who does not meet the RMP eligibility criteria are ineligible for the RMP.

What restaurants accept the RMP in Humboldt County?

Participation is limited by which restaurants opt in and have the current permits to accept CalFresh. For the most up-to-date information, we encourage CalFresh recipients who are eligible to the RMP to look for the EBT sticker at local businesses when looking to utilize benefits. Often businesses will advertise their ability to accept EBT to help notify customers of this option.

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I know if I can use the RMP?

CalFresh Approval notices will say when RMP is approved for households that can access them.

I am unable to cook due to a hurt arm, but I was told I can't buy prepared meals. Why is that?

CalFresh allows the RMP for people who have a permanent disability. This means that they have disabled status with Social Security Administration, through the California Disability Determination Service Division (DDSD), or by having a 100% disability determination as a Veteran.

I would like to buy prepared foods at more locations in the county; why is it so limited?

Businesses must willingly sign up and complete the steps with the state to be allowed to participate in RMP. This is often more financially feasible and advantageous for larger businesses to complete.

Why does a fast-food business get to accept EBT? Shouldn't benefits only be allowed for healthy food options?

Food insecurity is a complex issue. The goal of CalFresh is to supplement people's meals. It is not intended to provide all food or nutrition for recipients. The ability to have a hot meal is an important part of this picture, regardless of personal feelings about the quality of the food.