

AB 1326 Best Practices Exchange Q&A

1. To College of the Canyons – is the BenefitsCal app on your campus website?

It's not on our campus website just yet. We're in the works of revamping our page. So hopefully in the near future, it will be. Currently, we send follow up emails after they've already applied, so we do send all the information about BenefitsCal and what it is for.

2. How do we find out who our county Liaison is?

CDSS will send out an updated list on a quarterly basis to counties and higher ed stakeholders.

3. We hear from campus leads that counties are sharing they are “backlogged” and “amidst training” – how are folks navigating this landscape given the start of academic year launches next week for campuses on semester calendars?

UC Merced's office is in communication with their liaison who lets them know what the volume looks like for their team. They try to communicate that out to students just to let them know that they may be experiencing this increase and there may be a little bit slower turnaround time when it comes to that initial phone call and to be ready. And also with the use of BenefitsCal, we encourage students to create a profile, we'll have them list in the comments their availability with multiple dates and times so that hopefully the county can contact them within that window.

They also try to communicate early on for their students to have submitted as much of the verification forms at the beginning, even if it feels like it's excessive, so that the county has the information ahead of time, rather than needing to follow up since they have heard that an additional need for forms or not being able to get a hold of the student right away with the 1st phone call is really what leads to delays.

4. Is there any issue with campus staff using BenefitsCal to submit applications to the counties? Some counties would like to start moving over to the new platform before the GetCalFresh Sunsets.

For CHC partners on the CalFresh Outreach Higher Ed contract, our guidance is to continue to utilize GetCalFresh.org due to our required state reporting metrics. We are working behind the scenes on a reporting framework to meet the reporting requirements with BenefitsCal and the California Department of Social Services (CDSS). At this time, the state anticipates this framework will be available in late 2024 or 2025.

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We know how important county and campus relationships are and appreciate county partners' patience in the continued use of GetCalFresh by campus and CBO partners at this time. If you run into any issues with continuing to use GetCalFresh from the county, please let CHC know. If you transition to using BenefitsCal.org as your primary method of submitting applications, this would alter how you submit your quarterly SOW reports. We would need you to add all applications submitted via BenefitsCal.org to the application tab in your SOW Activity Log in order to get credit for those applications. To make reporting easier on your end, this is another reason our guidance is to continue to use GetCalFresh.org.

5. Has anyone created a data tracking program for their university/college on their own approval rates with the students they help?

UC Merced: We have not. We connect with our county for approval rates of all student applicants in Merced County.

Riverside County DPSS Community Outreach Branch tracks all CalFresh, Medi-Cal and/or CalWORKs applications taken during outreach events at each of the colleges/universities.

6. How do colleges communicate/relay information to students: in-person, emails, meetings, other ways?

UC Merced: We use all of these methods depending on the impact and applicable audience. We also use social media and mass-communications with our Financial Aid office and other campus partners (such as LPIE programs) to share eligibility information.

Mt. San Jacinto College communicates with students in-person, by email, face-to-face meetings and on zoom.

At Norco College, we too communicate with students the same as Mt. Jacinto in addition to canvas. We are creating program specific community shells to support students through that option. We also use groupme, and other apps to connect with students. We facilitate mid semester check-in meetings one-on-one with our Educational Advisor and CalWORKs students.

7. Do any campuses provide dedicated office/meeting space on campus for their liaison? If so, what kind of MOU do you use?

UC Merced: Center for Healthy Communities developed a MOU outline in

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partnership with CDSS, and this is the outline we use for our partnership with the county and we have a dedicated office which they will visit biweekly this Fall.

Mt. San Jacinto college offers a dedicated space in the college CalWORKs office. The county provides the computer and printer for their workers.

- 8. I remember submitting my information on the online form (ticket) as the campus liaison but does the list that will be emailed with the county contact include just the name or will it also have their phone number/email? Will it specifically say who is assigned to our community college?**

The staff liaison list includes name, title, email, and phone number. Some counties have decided to designate specific liaisons for individual schools, however most have designated 1 – 2 liaisons to cover all campuses within the county.