Strategies for Increasing Access to Nutrition Assistance for College Students

June 26, 2024

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◆

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Hannah Betesh
Senior Associate, Abt Global
NAWRS Virtual Conference Co-Chair

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- *Centering family experiences in human services: Strategies for cultivating and leveraging family advisory councils in service delivery and research*

- *Navigating Success: Harnessing TANF Data for Family Economic Success*

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Panel Overview

- About the panelists
- *Connecting College Students to SNAP in Colorado*
- *Enhancing Student Access to CalFresh: Yolo County's role in a Collaborative Effort with UC Davis*
- *University Partnership with the County for CalFresh Student Support*
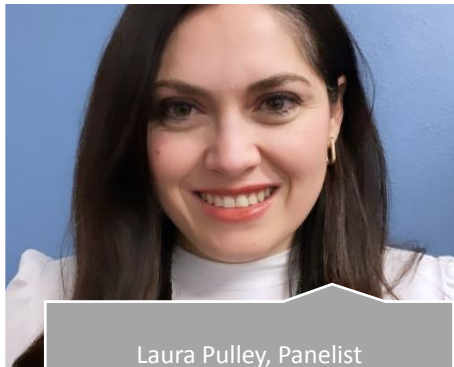- Q&A

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About the Panelists

Amelia Coffey, Moderator
Urban Institute
NAWRS Virtual Conference Committee Member

Lindsay Daugherty, Panelist
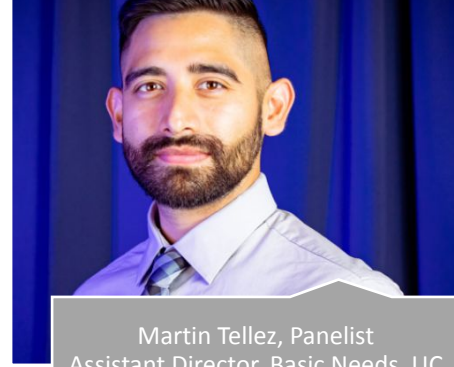Senior Policy Researcher, RAND Corporation

Jennifer Kret, Panelist
SNAP Research Analyst, Colorado Department of Human Services

Laura Pulley, Panelist
Program Manager II, Yolo County Health and Human Services Agency

Gabriel Gutierrez, Panelist
CalFresh Program Coordinator, Yolo County Health and Human Services Agency

Martin Tellez, Panelist
Assistant Director, Basic Needs, UC Davis Aggie Compass Basic Needs Center

Jeni Alvarado, Panelist
CalFresh Outreach Coordinator, UC Davis Aggie Compass Basic Needs Center

Connecting College Students to SNAP in Colorado

NAWRS Virtual Workshop

June 2024

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Department of Human Services

COLORADO
Department of Higher Education

RAND | EDUCATION AND LABOR

Today we'll be talking about cross-agency efforts to expand SNAP participation among college students

COLORADO Department of Higher Education

- 2020: Adopted Single Stop (a SNAP eligibility screening tool)

- 2021: Rolled out Hunger Free Checklist

- 2021: Distributed info on pandemic-related changes to SNAP eligibility

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- 2020: Established first college SNAP E&T partner; explored options to expand eligibility to SNAP E&T equivalent programs

- 2021: Distributed info on pandemic-related changes to SNAP eligibility

- 2022: Prioritized college students for SNAP Outreach efforts

- 2023: Two new college SNAP E&T

We'll also describe a partnership with RAND and the state agencies supporting these efforts
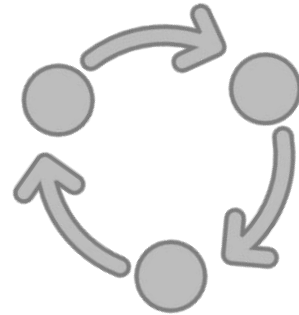
Study Aims: To build evidence on college student SNAP participation (and academic outcomes), and to explore different policy levers for expanding participation.

Single Stop was one of CDHE's first investments, offering a college screening tool for public benefits

7 colleges (2 universities, 5 community colleges) began implementing in 2021

Tool Benefits

- Provides colleges with a single point for case management, benefits screening, and other supports

- Perceived as user-friendly

Tool Limitations

- Requires robust planning and full-time basic needs staff to implement well

- Screener requires time (20-30 mins) and personal financial info

- Case management system doesn't speak to other student data systems

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Single Stop was one of CDHE's first investments, offering a college screening tool for public benefits

7 colleges (2 universities, 5 community colleges) began implementing in 2021

RAND conducted a randomized control trial in 5 CO colleges in 2021; unable to assess efficacy due to low take-up

Tool Benefits

- Provides colleges with a single point for case management, benefits screening, and other supports

- Perceived as user-friendly

Tool Limitations

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- Screener requires time (20-30 mins) and personal financial info

- Case management system doesn't speak to other student data systems

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CDHE also rolled out a Hunger Free Campus Checklist in 2021

https://cdhe.colorado.gov/resources/social-determinants-of-student-success

https://cdhe.colorado.gov/news-article/department-releases-healthy-minds-and-hunger-free-campus-checklists-in-an-effort-to

Focused Initiatives

Implement two programs in each of the focused initiatives

ACCESS
These programs offer direct assistance accessing food.

- ☐ Increase the capacity of food pantries
- ☐ Provide a variety of meal plans, including an option that provides 10 or fewer meals weekly to avoid interfering with SNAP eligibility
- ☐ Create or implement meal sharing programs, such as the FeedShare app
- ☐ Plant and maintain campus community gardens
- ☐ Implement healthy and affordable vending machines
- ☐ Innovation in access

AWARENESS
These programs educate staff, faculty and students on hunger and the resources available to help.

- ☐ Educate student leaders on campus to create student-centered programs
- ☐ Change language to reduce stigma
- ☐ Provide an interactive food resource map
- ☐ Provide educational opportunities for students and staff
- ☐ Create an informational food security resource website
- ☐ Connect work study and financial aid recipients with SNAP outreach services and other food security support services on campus
- ☐ Participate in the #RealCollege Survey
- ☐ Innovation in awareness

INTEGRATION
These programs and services bring together different departments on campus to address a variety of barriers to basic needs that impact student food security.

- ☐ Make food pantries a hub for campus resources
- ☐ Pre-screen for SNAP eligibility and refer likely eligible students to application assistance during registration
- ☐ Partner with organizations that help with benefits screening
- ☐ Create a student organization to address food security
- ☐ Conduct regular staff meetings that focus on food security
- ☐ Innovation in integration

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Colorado institutions can seek a designation as Hunger Free campuses using the checklist

86% of the state's 14 universities are designated as Hunger Free campuses

42% of the state's 14 community colleges are designated as Hunger Free campuses

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The federal government rolled out temporary student SNAP eligibility criteria during COVID-19

- Changes rolled out in January 2021 and ended in June 2023

- Federal policy changes made the following groups of students eligible:

  - Had an EFC (Expected Family Contribution) of $0 for the semester, verified by the school or FAFSA documents
  - Were *eligible* for work-study (removing the participation requirement), verified by the institution of higher education

- CDHS and CDHE collaborated to get information out on these changes

Info on Changes to Student SNAP Eligibility

CDHS and CDHE distributed information to colleges and county offices

Are you a college student struggling to afford food?

You might be eligible for up to $234/month from the SNAP program to help purchase groceries. Students with spouses or children may be eligible for more.*

Rules around SNAP have temporarily changed as a result of COVID-19. Many students with low income who meet any of the following are SNAP-eligible:

- Students who are eligible for work-study even if they currently don't have a work study job on campus
- Students who have an Expected Family Contribution (EFC) of $0
- Students living off campus
- Students with a meal plan that provides less than half their meals
- Students working an average of 20 hours a week

*Students need to meet other SNAP rules. Learn more about SNAP and the benefit amounts at https://cdhs.colorado.gov/snap

Students can apply for SNAP online through the Colorado PEAK website: https://colorado.gov/PEAK

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This institution is an equal opportunity provider. This project has been funded at least in part with Federal funds from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the view or policies of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.

¿Eres un estudiante universitario que tiene dificultades para pagar la comida?

Podrías reunir las condiciones para recibir hasta $234/mes del programa SNAP como ayuda para comprar comestibles. Los estudiantes con cónyuges o hijos pueden tener derecho a más*.

Las normas relativas a SNAP han cambiado temporalmente como consecuencia de la COVID-19. Muchos estudiantes con bajos ingresos que cumplen con alguno de los requisitos siguientes reúnen las condiciones para recibir SNAP:

- Estudiantes que reúnen las condiciones del programa de estudio y trabajo aunque no tengan actualmente un cargo de estudio y trabajo en el campus
- Estudiantes que tienen una contribución familiar prevista (EFC) de $0
- Estudiantes que viven fuera del campus
- Estudiantes con un plan alimenticio que cubre menos de la mitad de sus comidas
- Estudiantes que trabajan en promedio 20 horas a la semana

*Los estudiantes deben cumplir con otras normas del SNAP. Infórmese más sobre el SNAP y los montos de los beneficios en https://cdhs.colorado.gov/snap

Los estudiantes pueden solicitar SNAP en línea por medio del sitio web de Colorado PEAK: https://colorado.gov/PEAK

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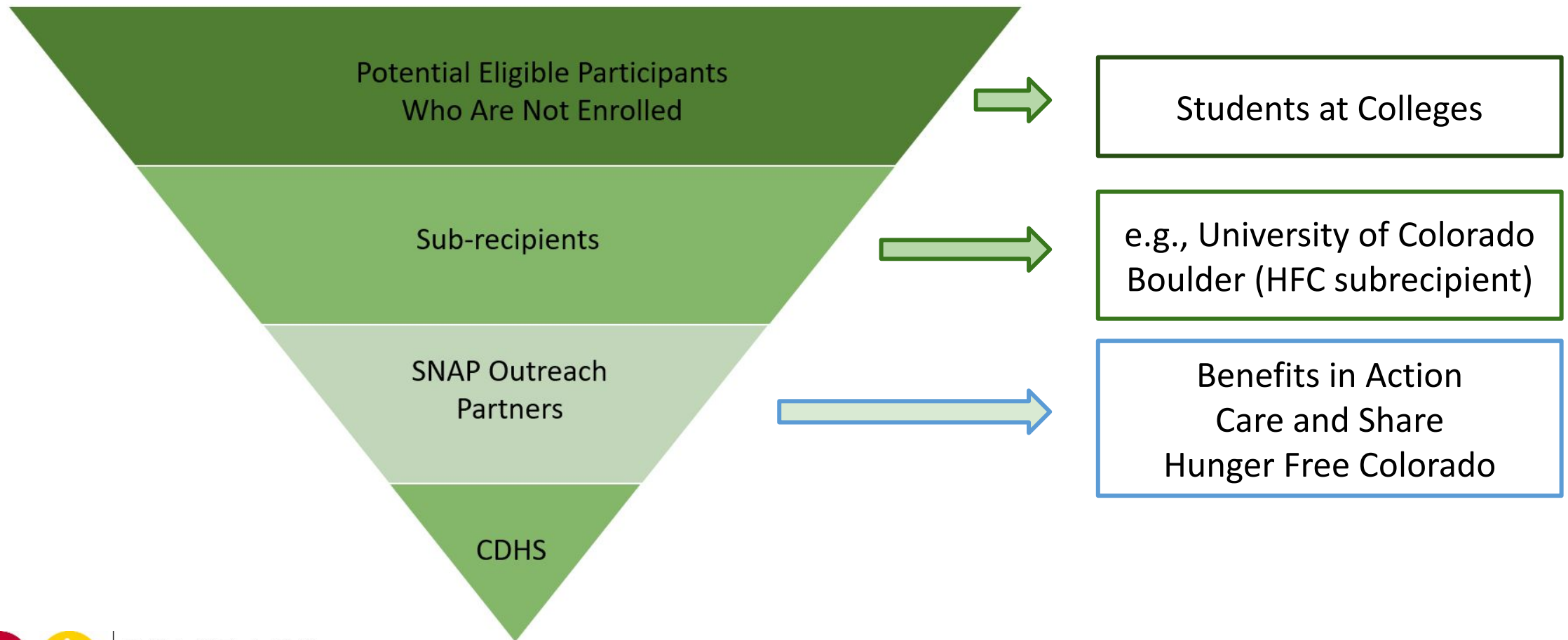# CDHS is expanding the Employment First (SNAP E&T) program to college partners

- First college SNAP E&T Third Party Partner: Community College of Aurora (FFY20 to FFY22)

- Two more colleges brought on in FFY24: Fort Lewis College, Arapahoe Community College

- SNAP E&T Third Party Partner colleges:

  - Receive reimbursement for eligible E&T services

  - Can connect students to SNAP by recruiting prospective students into the program

  - Must ensure program leads directly to employment, includes wraparound supports as needed

  - Must identify non-federal funding that can draw down the 50 percent federal reimbursement, enroll students, run programs

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CDHS has also explored policy options for expanding access to SNAP E&T equivalent programs

- CDHS proposed to make SNAP available to students in qualified community and technical college programs (7 CFR 273.5(b)(11)(iv))

- Students who meet income requirements and are in programs that directly increase employability would become eligible

  - Career and Technical Education (CTE)/Perkins Act funded

  - Employment and Training Provider List (ETPL)/WIOA funded

  - Programs aligned with top job Career Pathways identified by CO Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE)

- FNS rejected plan (other states like CA, MA, PA have pursued expansion independently, view as outside FNS authority)

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SNAP Outreach informs colleges, eligible students about benefits, and sub-recipient model has expanded reach

Potential Eligible Participants Who Are Not Enrolled → Students at Colleges

Sub-recipients → e.g., University of Colorado Boulder (HFC subrecipient)

SNAP Outreach Partners → Benefits in Action
Care and Share
Hunger Free Colorado

CDHS

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SNAP Outreach began to recognize college students as a priority in 2022

- June 2021: Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) released SNAP Outreach priority areas, including college students

- CDHS included students in FFY22 SNAP Outreach State Plan (among other FNS priority groups)

- As of FFY24 all 3 outreach contracted partners have prioritized college students in their plans, engaging through

  - Contracts with colleges and universities to perform outreach activities on their campus

  - Invited engagements to conduct outreach activities on college campuses
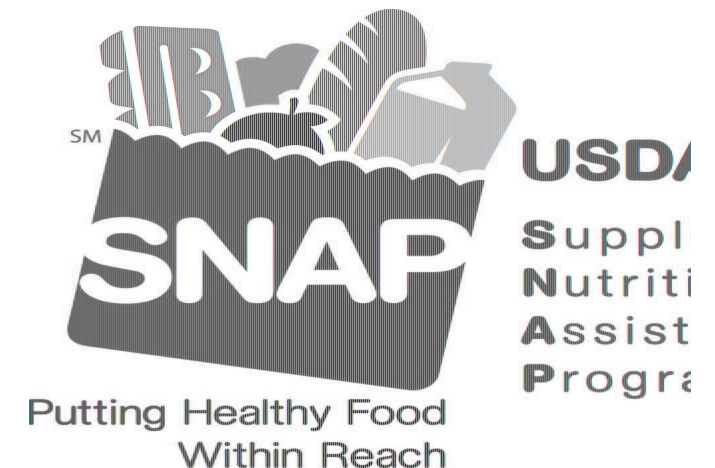
SNAP Outreach partners provide SNAP support through a variety of activities

- *Application assistance (in-person and by phone):* 30K SNAP applications and/or recertifications projected for FFY 24 by contracted partners

- *Hotline:* Direct SNAP support to individuals seeking SNAP services and food resources including students

- *Training and support to subrecipients:* free training, tools and support to subrecipients, e.g., colleges and universities

  - (1) Food insecurity screenings; (2) SNAP application assistance; (3) Referrals to local, no-cost food resources (4) Provide factual information and correct myths that community members might have of SNAP

  - Currently HFC network of subrecipients (SNAP PEAS program) has 4 universities, 1 community college; all other partners are also working to form partnerships with

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SNAP Outreach partners committed to a large increase in the goal for student applications in FFY24

SNAP Application Goals Set by CDHS SNAP Outreach Partners
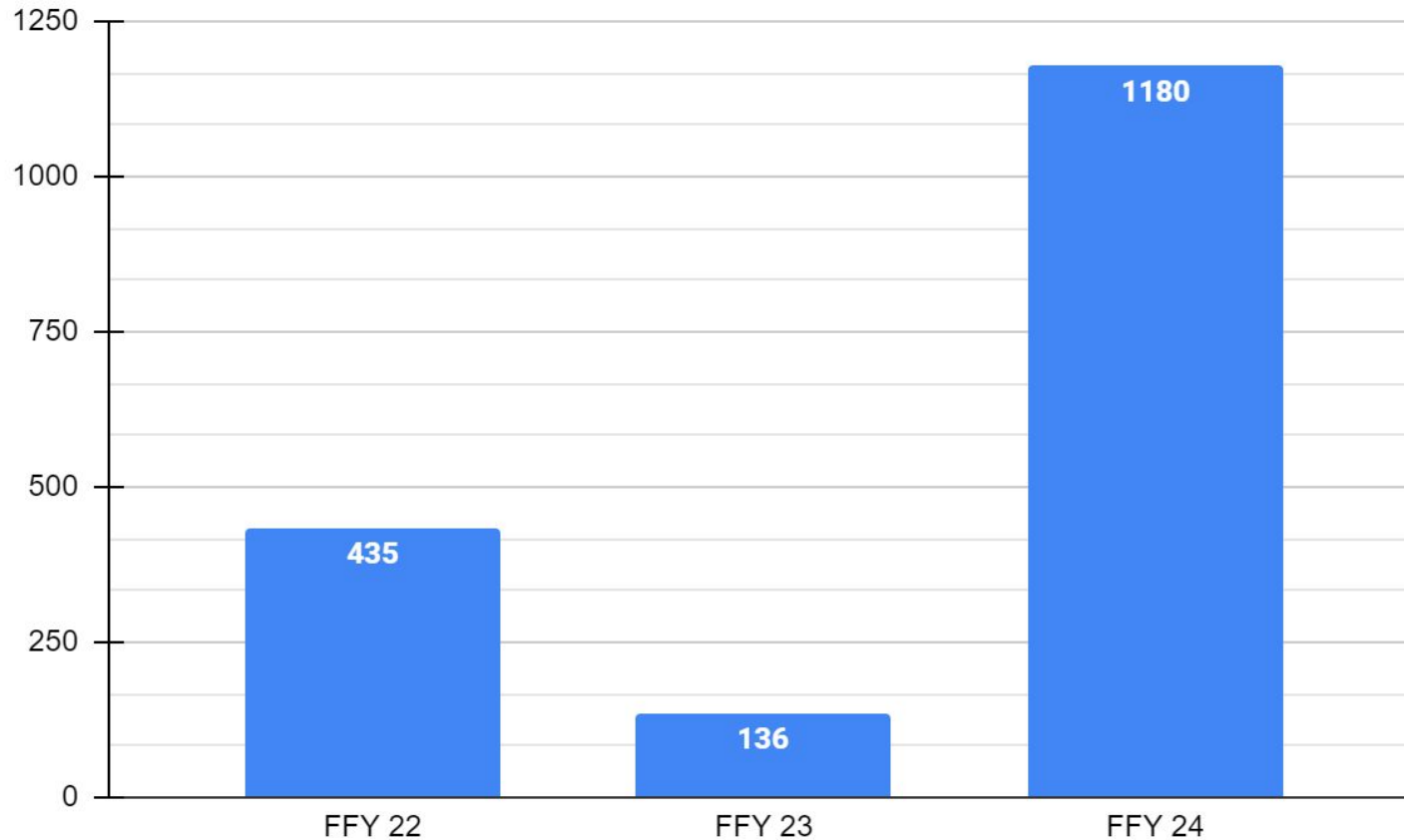
RAND partnered with CDHE and CDHS to carry out research and support evidence-based policy and practice

Analysis of state longitudinal data on SNAP
- Assess SNAP participation among college students over time, across colleges, and across student groups
- Examine relationship between SNAP participation and academic outcomes

Survey and interviews with colleges
- Assess promising approaches
- Explore relationships between local practices and SNAP participation

Policy interviews and simulation analysis around four scenarios:
- Federal eligibility changes
- Expanded outreach and application support
- SNAP E&T expansion (or expansion of SNAP E&T-equivalent programs)
- Expanded SNAP access through Work Study

Colorado institutions have scaled SNAP outreach and support services over the past five years

Universities are particularly likely to provide SNAP support

College ever provided	Community/ Technical Colleges	Universities	All Public Institutions
Information about SNAP eligibility	69%	100%	81%
Assistance with SNAP application	69%	100%	81%
One-on-one case management support with SNAP	25%	82%	48%
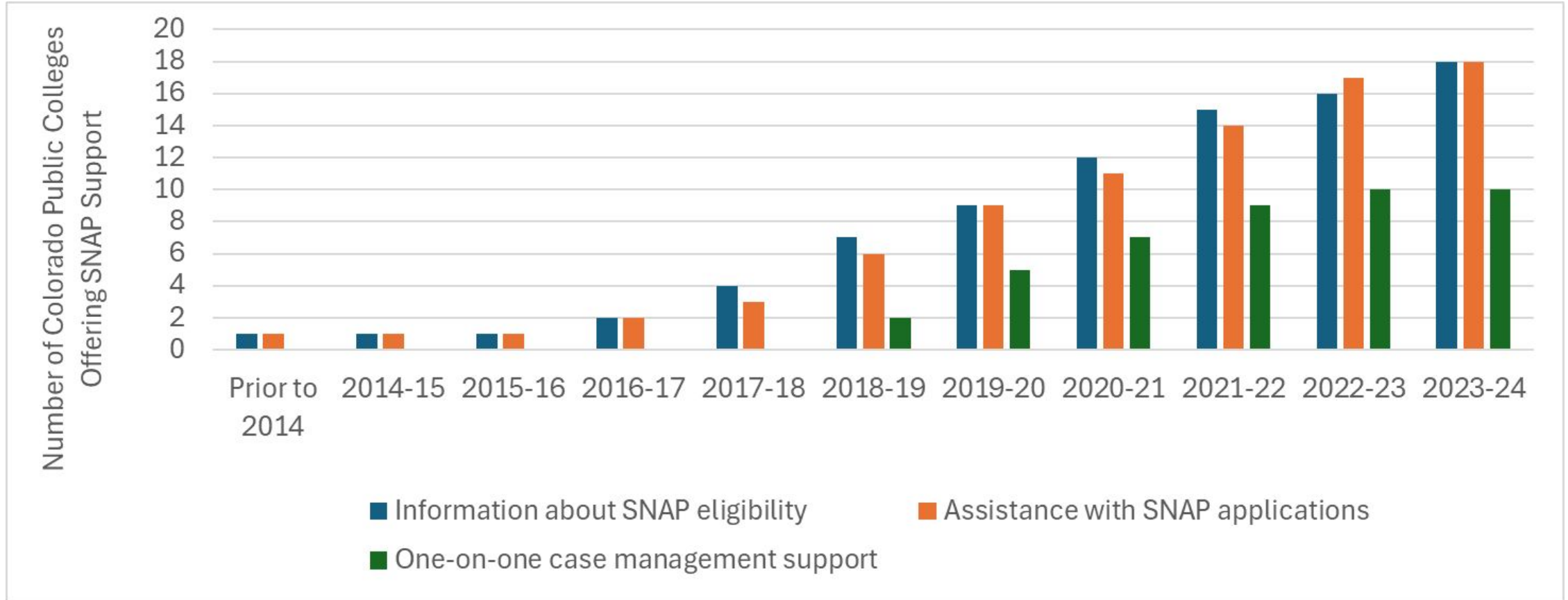
Source: Survey of all public colleges in Colorado conducted by RAND, March-April 2024
Notes: Overall, 27 of 31 public institutions included the survey, including 2 of the 3 technical schools, 14 of the 14 community colleges, and 11 of the 14 universities. We group technical schools with community colleges as "2-year colleges" for the purposes of this analysis.

RAND

Many institutions report that critical factors are in place to support successful delivery of basic needs support

Promising practice	Community/ Technical Colleges	Universities	All Public Institutions
College leadership views basic needs services as a key strategy for student success and retention.	100	82	93
Staff members and students work to alleviate stigma associated with accessing basic needs services.	94	82	89
Staff members dedicate time to ensuring integration between basic needs services and other student support programs.	75	82	78
Students are involved in implementation of basic needs services and/or decision-making about basic needs services.	56	64	59

RAND

Many institutions report that basic needs services are accessible and students are aware of them

Promising practice	Community/ Technical Colleges	Universities	All Public Institutions
Services and locations for accessing basic needs services are centralized and easy to find.	69	36	56
The college effectively shares information about basic needs services with students through various outreach methods.	63	73	67
Most students in need are aware of basic needs services at this college.	63	55	59

There have been several factors supporting Colorado's college student SNAP efforts

Signals that college student SNAP access is a federal priority

- Recent guidance from federal agencies around college students as a priority population for SNAP Outreach, SNAP E&T
- Broad expansion of SNAP eligibility for college students under COVID-19

Strong support from leadership in Colorado

- The governor's office, state agency leadership, and college leadership have all established

Intermediaries and leading states that can offer guidance and support

- Higher education access organizations (e.g., TICAS) and SNAP access organizations (e.g., Hunger Free Colorado) are advocating for policy changes and creating resources
- States like CA, MA, OR, PA, and WA have offered examples as leaders, provide evidence of feasibility
- Efforts to build evidence around SNAP policy, practice and outcomes (e.g., RAND)

THANK YOU!

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This presentation includes preliminary results from an ongoing study that has not yet gone through RAND's peer review process. It should not be cited or distributed without the authors' permission.

Photo: College students with computers by goodluz via Adobe Stock

Acknowledgements

In addition to the state agencies supporting the work and our advisory group, there are two other partners we'd like to acknowledge.

Enhancing Student Access to CalFresh

Yolo County's Role in a Collaborative Effort with UC Davis

- Background and History

- Challenges for Students

- Present Day Partnership

- Student Application Process

- Benefits

- Lessons Learned

- Key Takeaways

Background

- Yolo County is a midsized county (population 220,000) that houses a large university (40,000 students)

- UC Davis students comprise over 18% of Yolo County's population, adding significantly to the counties poverty rate

  - In comparison to other California counties, this is a substantial percentage.

    - UC Santa Barbara student population makes up approximately 5% of the county's general population

    - UC San Diego student population comprises 1%

- The city of Davis's poverty rate is 28.8%, which is much higher than the national rate of 12.8%, with students representing most of the resident's experiencing poverty.

Background

- Prior to the Yolo County Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) and UC Davis partnership, HHSA leadership looked at county CalFresh data and noticed a substantial disparity between the county's high rates of poverty and the low CalFresh enrollment.

- A study done by the California Food Policy Advocates, now known as Nourish California, ranked all California counties by the Program Access Index (PAI) which indicated the degree to which low-income individuals have access to SNAP benefits. The PAI initially ranked Yolo County as number 57 out of 58 California counties.

- The study was able to break down PAI by zip codes which led Yolo to look at the town of Davis and realized that a large proportion of eligible students weren't applying for CalFresh and thus we began our journey to identify effective outreach.

Student Challenges in Accessing CalFresh

- College students face more barriers to CalFresh program access than others, as federal SNAP rules exclude many students and require them to meet an allowable exemption.

- The CalFresh application process can be difficult and time consuming, which doesn't always fit into a student's busy schedule.

- There is a stigma to using public benefits.

Historical Timeline

2015: Yolo County HHSA leadership reached out to UC Davis to initiate student outreach collaboration efforts. HHSA placed a CalFresh worker on campus to assist students with the application process and answer questions.

2016: Yolo county took advantage of the opportunity to work with Code for America to create a streamlined online CalFresh application portal, GetCalFresh, which UC Davis adopted for student use.

2018: Aggie Compass was established at UC Davis which formed an outreach team comprising UC Davis employees and student interns.

2020: During COVID, Yolo County HHSA determined we could continue serving students remotely and would leverage Aggie Compass as the on-campus CalFresh presence.

2022 – Current: HHSA and UC Davis have a partnership with defined roles based on prior years experiences. Both entities maintain close contact with one another to discuss how to most effectively outreach and provide CalFresh to students.

Present Day Partnership

- Trial and error efforts over the years have led to our current collaboration methods.

- The primary focus of our efforts is to ensure CalFresh communication directed towards students is clear and accurate.

- To manage the volume of applications received at the beginning of the spring quarter, the UC Davis Financial Aid Department distributes CalFresh notification letters to potentially eligible students in waves.

- Yolo County and UC Davis Basic Needs are in constant communication to keep each other informed with policy changes and trends that may be impacting student CalFresh eligibility.

- When a student has a CalFresh question, they don't need to wait on our county phone lines. They can go directly to Basic Needs who are all well versed on CalFresh and provide most of the answers to their questions.

- If a Release of Information (ROI) is on file, Basic Needs can check in directly with the county on the status of a students CalFresh case and quickly relay this information over to the student.

Student Application Process – Yolo's Perspective

- When a student completes the CalFresh screening tool on the UC Davis Basic Needs website, a potentially CalFresh eligible student will be directed to GetCalFresh.org to apply for CalFresh.

- The application is imaged and sent over to the county via email.

- The student will be scheduled a phone interview directly with a Yolo County eligibility worker specializing in student applications.

- Yolo County tracks the status of these cases (approval, no show, denial), and if a Release of Information (ROI) is on file for these students, we can share this information with the UC Davis Basic Needs department who can assist with student follow up.

Benefits of Partnership

- Allows County to provide direct support to students, who are historically a hard population to reach.

- Supporting a well-informed Basic Needs department on campus, alongside a dedicated website tailored for students, contributes to significantly reducing the stigma of receiving and using CalFresh benefits.

- Approval rates among the applications we receive from the Basic Needs Department improved.

- Having the Basic Needs Department schedule the intake appointments with the students gives students the opportunity to coordinate with their schedules, which in turn, reduced the no-show appointment percentage.

- Lower rates of incomplete application. UC Davis outreach staff provide capacity that the county lacks to follow up with students individually who do not complete applications.

- Having multiple entities available to serve students allows us to better meet the needs of students more than what a single agency could accomplish.

Lessons Learned

- When we initially placed a county worker at the UC Davis food pantry, we put all our efforts into informing as many students as we could about the CalFresh program. This led to the county being inundated with applications, though many of them were from ineligible students. This led us to refine our methods and start focusing more on quality applications vs quantity.

- UC Davis Basic Needs helps to prevent an influx of applications from students who are ineligible. The Basic Needs department directs students to complete a screening so they can make an informed decision to apply or not.

Key takeaways – Broad Level

- Importance of maintaining balance between managing the workload and student outreach.

- Identifying the right communication strategy for the student population.

- It is crucial to understand what tools are available to the county and how they can help.

- Active and innovative efforts from leadership at both the county and the university is essential in the creation of an effective outreach partnership.

Key takeaways – Low-Level

- Identifying County resources and how to efficiently focusing the efforts.

- Yolo found it beneficial to allocate FTE resources to only work on incoming student applications.

- Having a Release of Information on file facilitates communication between the county and the Basic Needs Department.

- Importance of supporting Basic Needs staff to ensure the information they relate to students is accurate and up to date.

U.S Census Bureau. (2020). American Community Survey: 2019. U.S Census Bureau

UC Santa Barbara. "enrollment Dashboard." 2024. The Regents of the University of California.
Enrollment Dashboard | Office of Budget & Planning (ucsb.edu)

U.S. News& world Report L.P. "Best Colleges U.S. News; University of California, San Diego" 2022.
https://www.usnews.com/best-colleges/university-of-california-san-diego

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Partnership" 2023.

www.urban.org/sites/default/files/2023-03/Meeting%20Young%20People's%20Basic%20Needs%20through%20Strategic%20Partnership.pdf

California Policy Lab "Filling the Gap: CalFresh Eligibility Among University and California Community College Students". 2024
www.capolicylab.org/filling-the-gap-calfresh-participation-among-university-of-california-and-california-community-college-students/

THANK YOU

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A University Partnership with the County for CalFresh Student Support

Martin Tellez
Assistant Director, Basic Needs

Jeni Alvarado
CalFresh Outreach Coordinator

Presenters

Martin Tellez
Assistant Director,
Basic Needs

Jeni Alvarado
CalFresh Outreach
Coordinator

Overview

| Team | History | Outreach | Internal Application Process | Support |

CalFresh Team

History

Pre-Pandemic

ONE COUNTY WORKER ON CAMPUS

- Benefits:
  - General Questions
  - Application Assistance
  - Case Review
- Challenges
  - Minimal
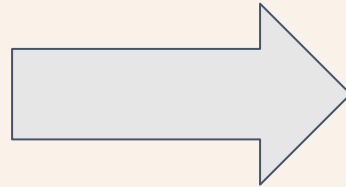
Post-Pandemic

NEW PARTNERSHIP

- County Liaison
- Dedicated County Staff
- University CalFresh Staff

Internal Process

Pre-Screening
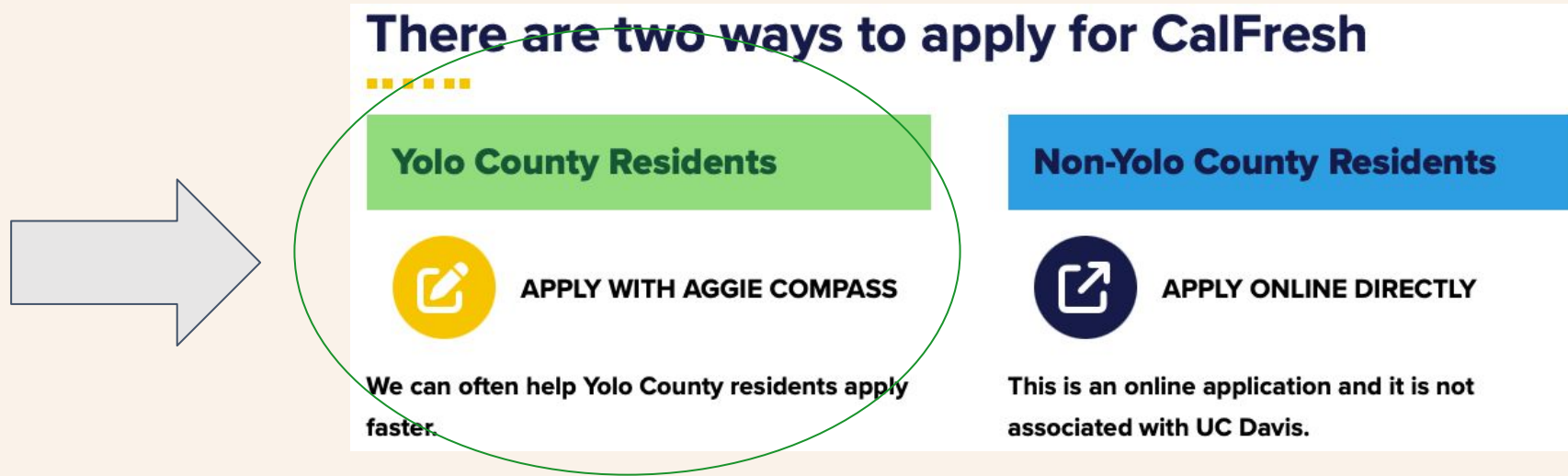
Application / Appointments

SAR-7 & Recertification
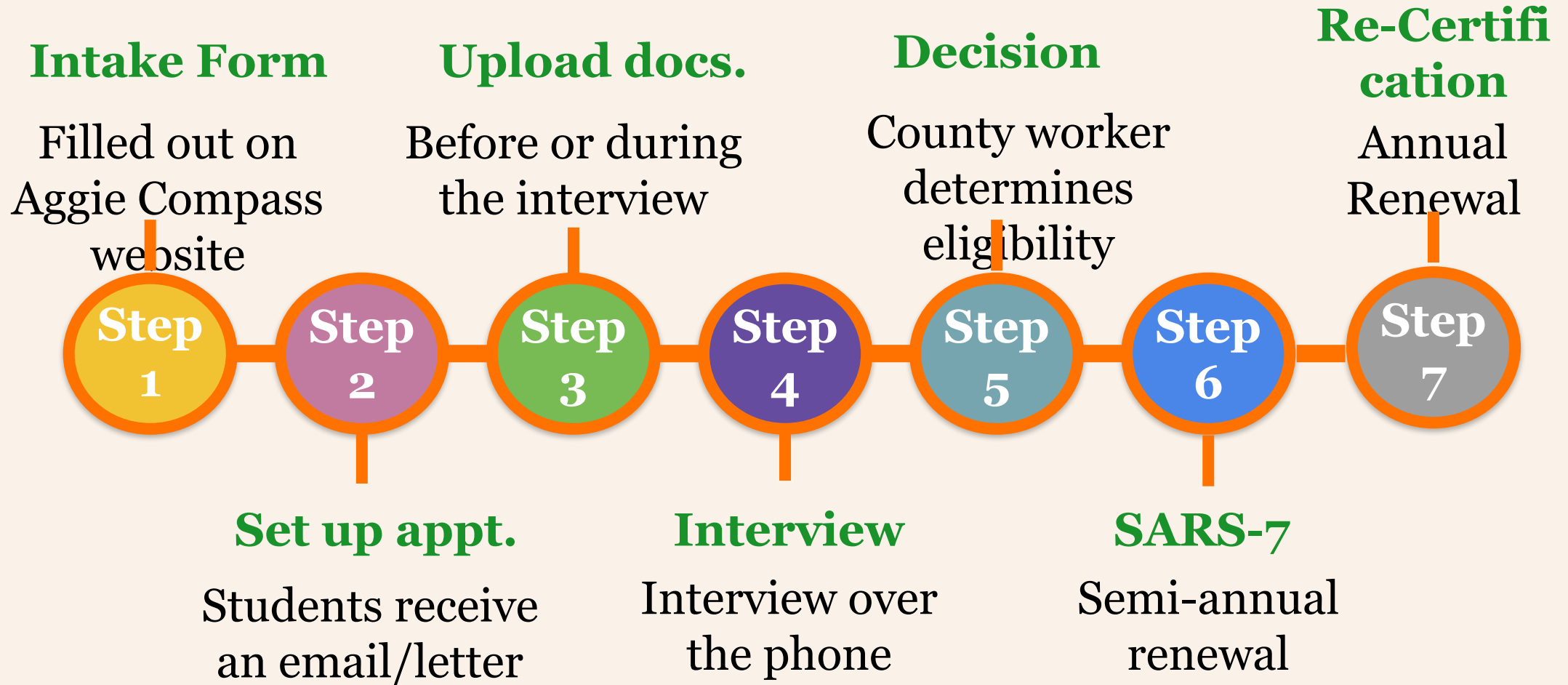
Intake Form

There are two ways to apply for CalFresh

Yolo County Residents

✎ APPLY WITH AGGIE COMPASS

We can often help Yolo County residents apply faster.

Non-Yolo County Residents

↗ APPLY ONLINE DIRECTLY

This is an online application and it is not associated with UC Davis.

- Pre-screen student eligibility for CalFresh
- Contact eligible students to visit our office to apply
- Ask follow up questions if needed based off intake response
- Assist students in meeting the Local Program Increase Employability (LPIE) if they meet all other eligibility requirements

Application

- Students complete highlighted sections on the application.
- No sensitive information is requested.
- Students optionally sign and date the Release of Information (ROI) form.
- After application completion, the CalFresh team starts their CalFresh application process

County Worker Appointments

- CalFresh team schedules students with Yolo County workers using about 100 appointments monthly.
- Students receive available dates and times, and the CalFresh team sends their applications to the county.
- Appointments fill quickly, especially during peak season
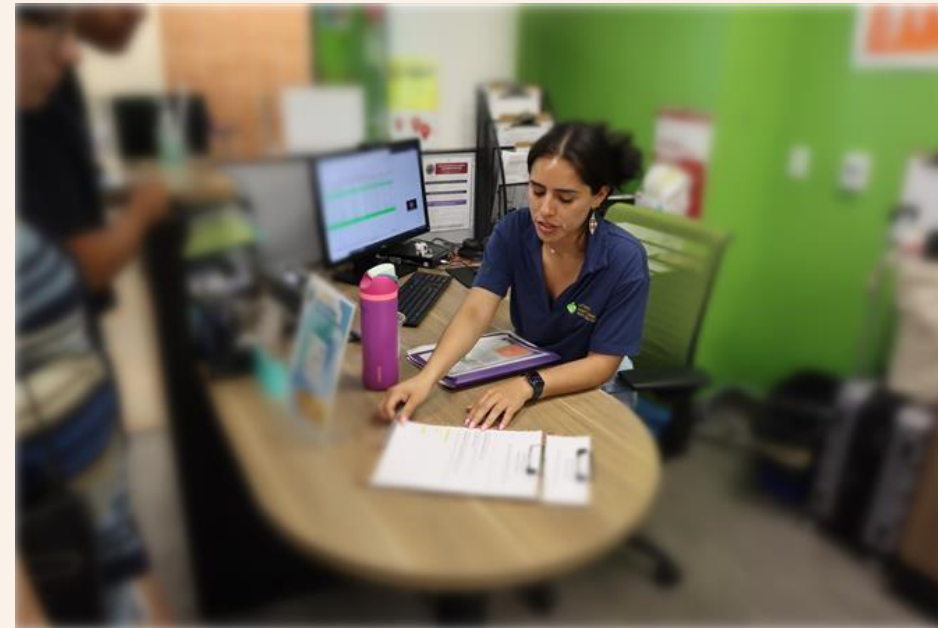
SAR-7 & Recertification

REPORTING TIMELINE CHART:

MOST HOUSEHOLDS	
MONTH 1	Started receiving CalFresh
MONTH 5	Save pay stubs!
MONTH 6	SAR 7 Due! Late by the 11th
MONTH 7	Can still turn in SAR 7 for prorated benefits
MONTH 8	Will need to reapply if no SAR 7
MONTH 12	CF RE

- We provide reminders to students who applied through our office & were approved
- Staff is trained to help with both reporting periods

Support

Yolo County

Case Log

UC Davis CalFresh Data

County Support

Yolo County

A County Liaison

2 Case workers

Management Involvement
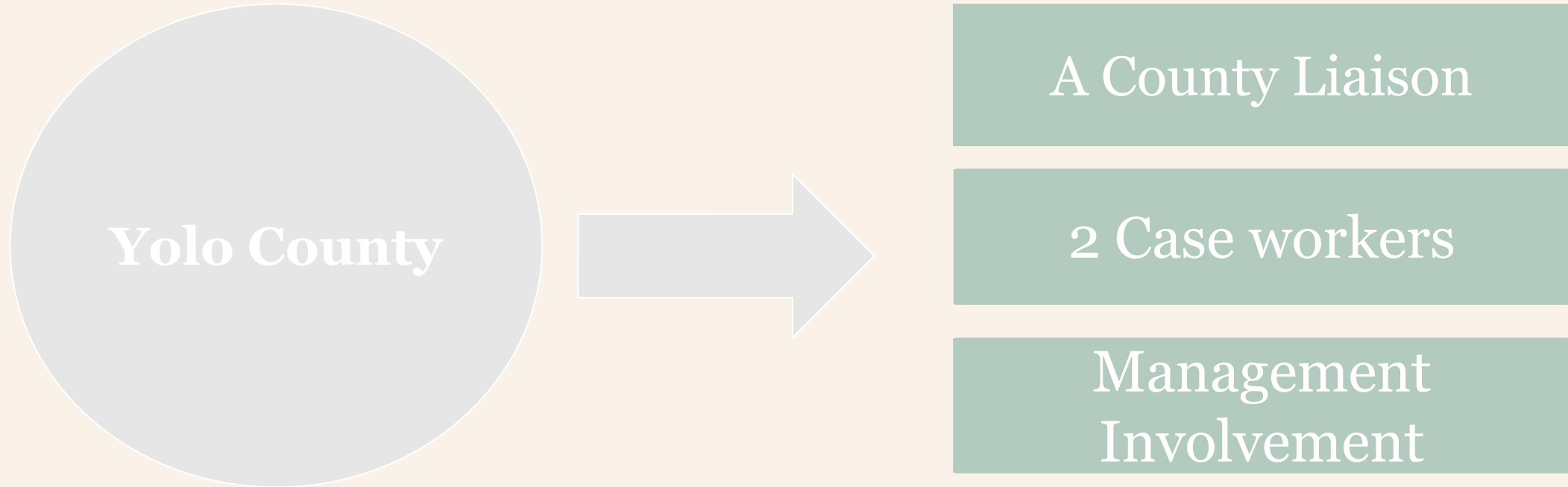
The county team supports us in understanding CalFresh guidelines, conducting student interviews, and addressing the needs of UC Davis students.

Case Questions & Updates

- Facilitate communication between county & student
- Release of Information (ROI) enables staff to access case information
- Any student can fill out an ROI to receive assistance
- Yolo County reviews weekly & provide updates

STATE OF CALIFORNIA – HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

APPLICANT'S AUTHORIZATION

FOR RELEASE OF INFORMATION

To: (AGENCY OR INDIVIDUAL FROM WHOM INFORMATION IS REQUESTED)

I, _____, RESIDING AT YOLO COUNTY

HEREBY AUTHORIZE YOU TO RELEASE TO THE
AGGIE COMPASS BASIC NEED CENTER - UC DAVIS

INFORMATION REQUESTED BY THIS AGENCY WHICH I CANNOT PROVIDE CONCERNING
MY CALFRESH APPLICATION

THIS INFORMATION IS NEEDED FOR THE FOLLOWING PURPOSE
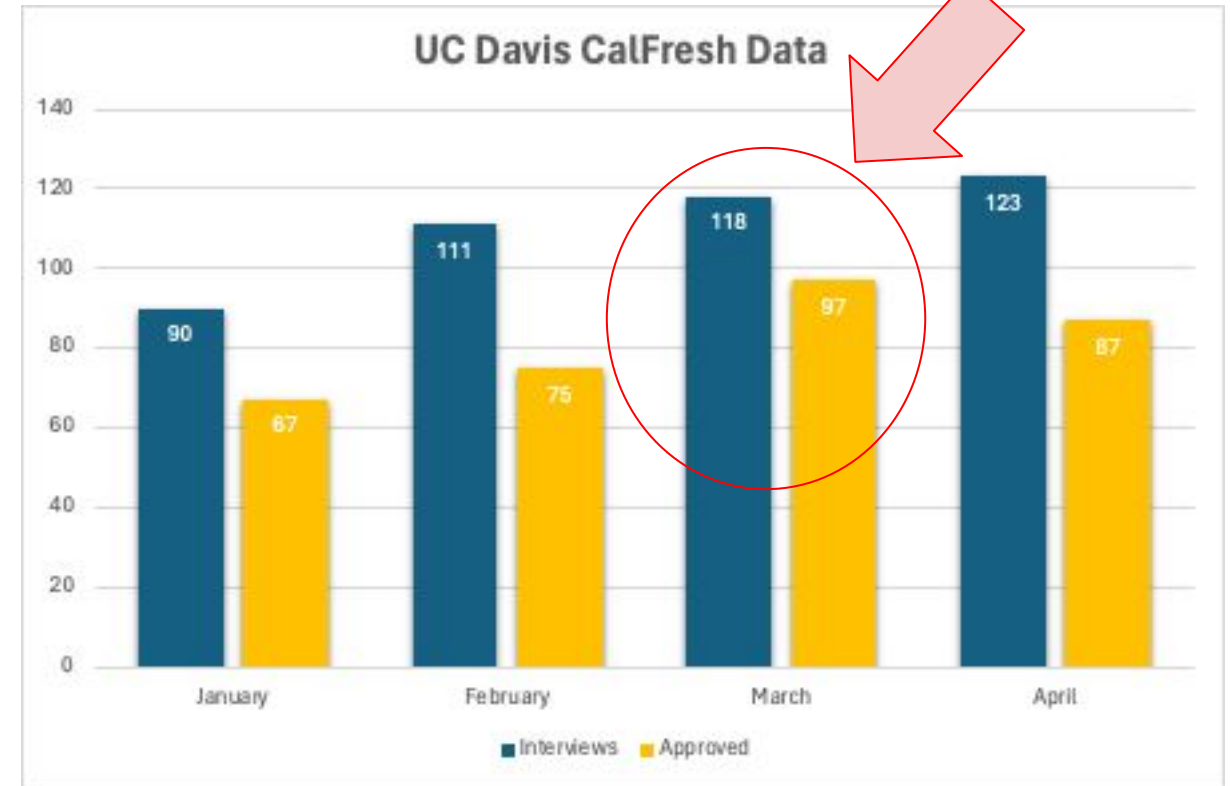**TO ASSIST ME WITH THE APPLICATION PROCESS FOR CALFRESH BENEFITS**

THIS FORM WAS COMPLETED IN ITS ENTIRETY AND WAS READ BY ME (OR READ TO ME) PRIOR TO SIGNING.

SIGNATURE OF APPLICANT

UC Davis CalFresh Data

- Yolo County shares UCD CalFresh data under the following:
  - Students must have an ROI on file
  - Students must have scheduled their interview through our office
- This allows us to:
  - Track Approval Rates
  - Send SAR-7/recertification reminders

83% Approval Rate, 10% increase from March 2023

UC Davis CalFresh Data

Month	Interviews	Approved
January	90	67
February	111	75
March	118	97
April	123	87

■ Interviews ■ Approved

UC Davis CalFresh Data

Advantages

- Allows us to track peak seasons & prepare
- Enables us to collaborate effectively with the county during high application seasons
- Tracking data for years to see development and improvements

Improvements

- Limited to students applying through our intake process
- Sacramento County students are not included in the data

Contact Information

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Questions?

Please take a moment to give us feedback!

Fill out our 1-minute, anonymous survey.

NAW.RS