

**County of San Diego, Health and Human Services Agency (HHS)**  
**Eligibility Policy and Procedures Guide**

**Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) System for CalFresh, CalWORKs,  
General Relief, and Cash Assistance Program for Immigrants**

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**Revision Date:**

12/01/2022

**Background:**

The Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) system is used in California for the delivery, redemption, and reconciliation of issued public assistance benefits, such as CalFresh, CalWORKs, and other cash aid benefits.

**Purpose:**

The purpose of this section is to describe EBT card policies, customer service information and benefit availability. This section has been updated to reflect the new CalFresh benefit expungement timeframe reduction from 365 days (one year) to 274 days (nine months) effective September 2022.

**Policy:**

Due to COVID-19 and the need for social distancing, **EBT cards will only be replaced at Family Resource Centers (FRCs) no more than two times per month.** EBT cards are issued in office or by mail during the initial intake interview and upon request. The following is a description of the individuals that can request and use an EBT card:

<b>Term</b>	<b>Description</b>
Primary Cardholder	Is the individual who will be issued an EBT card and Personal Identification Number (PIN) to access the monthly benefits. The primary cardholder can be any household (HH) member or excluded member who is not a minor for all programs. <b>Note:</b> For CalWORKs, the primary cardholder is the parent or caretaker relative case payee.
Alternate Cardholder/Authorized Representative (AR)	The head of HH can designate a member of the HH as an alternate cardholder or AR by completing the appropriate Designated Alternate Card Holder/Authorized Representative form (TEMP 2201). The alternate cardholder/AR will have access to the HH's benefits, and any benefits spent by the alternate cardholder/AR will not be replaced. <b>Note:</b> For CalWORKs, the alternate cardholder may be another adult member of the Assistance Unit (AU) or a designated person outside of the AU.

1. **Benefit Availability:**

Monthly benefits are available in the EBT account on a staggered basis based on the last number of the case. Cash and CalFresh benefits may be deposited on different days. Availability does not change due to weekends or holidays. The following table shows the benefit issuance date for cash and CalFresh benefits:

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CalFresh		Cash Program (CalWORKs, General Relief and Cash Assistance Program for Immigrants [CAPI])	
Last Digit of Case Number	Benefit Issuance Date	Last Digit of Case Number	Benefit Issuance Date
1	1 <sup>st</sup> of each month	1, 2, or 3	1 <sup>st</sup> day of the month
2	2 <sup>nd</sup> of each month	4, 5, 6, or 7	2 <sup>nd</sup> day of the month
3	3 <sup>rd</sup> of each month	8, 9, or 0	3 <sup>rd</sup> day of the month
4	4 <sup>th</sup> of each month		
5	5 <sup>th</sup> of each month		
6	6 <sup>th</sup> of each month		
7	7 <sup>th</sup> of each month		
8	8 <sup>th</sup> of each month		
9	9 <sup>th</sup> of each month		
0	10 <sup>th</sup> of each month		

**2. Unused EBT Benefits:**

Cash benefits will remain in the customer’s EBT account for up to 365 days, CalFresh will remain for 274 days. Account status and benefit availability may be affected by account inactivity. The following table describes the different inactivity status for an EBT card:

Type of Status	Description
Inactive	Occurs when a customer does not use their benefits for 135 days. Customers will be notified that their account has had no activity for over 135 days.
Dormant	Occurs when a customer does not use their benefits for 180 days. Benefits are not accessible while the account is dormant, and customers will need to contact the county to have their EBT account re-activated. Customers will be notified that their account has had no activity for over 180 days and benefits are now dormant. Refer to EBT Processing Guide on how to re-activate EBT accounts.
Expunged	<b>Cash benefits:</b> Occurs when a customer does not use their benefits for 365 consecutive days, the benefits become expunged and are removed from the EBT account. Expunged CalWORKs benefits are to be reissued within 30 days of the customer contact or reapplication, following the current Non-System Determined Issuance (NSDI) process.
	<b>CalFresh benefits:</b> Occurs when a customer does not use their benefits

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	for 274 consecutive days. The benefits are removed from the EBT account for both open and closed cases.
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For CalFresh benefits, an expungement notification is required to be provided at a minimum of 30 days prior to the expungement of the first benefit allotment. Sending the Notice of Action (NOA) EBT Account (EBT 1232) when the customer's account goes into dormant status, meets the new required 30-day minimum expungement notification timeframe.

**3. Deceased HH Benefits Expungement:**

Benefits must be expunged when all members of the HH are deceased; however, an expungement notice is not required for these HH's. If the EBT cardholder passes away and there are children in the home, the benefits remain on the account and the case will remain active. The HH will be required to choose a new head of HH or have the county choose one for them. A new card will be issued to the new head of HH.

**4. Excessive Card Replacement:**

A warning letter will be sent to any EBT cardholder who has requested at least four card replacements in a six-month period. The warning letter is designed to inform the customer that the HH's EBT card replacement rate suggests that they may be having trouble with their card(s) or potential misuse. The letter will include information regarding the proper use of the EBT card and the penalties for trafficking. Refer to EBT Processing Guide.

**5. EBT Customer Service:**

Customers can access information about their EBT account by calling the California EBT Customer Service number at 1-877-328-9677 or visiting the California EBT Client website. The toll-free phone number and website are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The Telecommunications Relay Service for Hearing/Speech Impaired (TTY) is 1-800-735-2929. The following EBT information can be accessed via the toll-free phone number or website:

- Change or deactivate a PIN.
- Report lost or stolen EBT card.
- Check benefit balance.
- View account and card information.
- View transaction history detail and order a copy of two months transaction history detail.

**6. Merchants/Retailers Customer Service:**

Merchants can call the 1-866-328-4212 number for assistance with the following:

- Receive authorization for voucher transactions when the EBT system is down.
- Participation in the EBT program.
- Assistance with state provided EBT point-of-sale (POS) equipment.

**7. Cash Benefit Restrictions and Suspected Retailer Fraud:**

Customers are prevented from accessing their cash benefits at adult entertainment locations, gambling locations, spa/massage parlors, cannabis/smoke retailers, tattoo piercing sites, bail bonds, and cruise ships. If information is received or there is suspicious CalFresh trafficking/fraudulent activity on the part of the retailer, the Welfare Fraud Hotline must be notified at 1-800-421-2252.

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**8. Fees:**

Some stores and banks have a surcharge and transaction fees for customers each time cash benefits are withdrawn from a POS machine or Automated Teller Machine (ATM). Customers may make four cash withdrawals each month at an ATM or POS without a transaction fee; a transaction fee will be charged for each additional cash withdrawal at an ATM. A fee will also be charged for balance inquiries made at an ATM. Refer to the listing of California surcharge-free ATM networks in the EBT Project website.

**Note:** A surcharge fee will not be charged for a CalFresh POS transaction.

Procedure:

Electronic Benefit Transfer Processing Guide.

Program Impact/s:

CalWORKs, CalFresh, General Relief, CAPI.

References:

All County Information Notice (ACIN) I-39-18.

All County Letter (ACL) 13-67, 15-39 and 22-62.

EBT Customer Website.

Sunset Date:

This policy will be reviewed for continuance by 12/31/2025.

Approval for Release:

 , 12-19-22

Rick Wanne, Director  
Self-Sufficiency Services