

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

5/15/2020

Background:

California uses an electronic benefit transfer (EBT) system to issue benefits to recipients. This policy has been updated to include temporary measures put in place due to COVID-19 for in-person EBT card replacement.

Purpose:

This section describes EBT card policies, customer service information and benefit availability.

Policy:

Issuance and Replacement:

EBT cards are issued in office or by mail during the initial intake interview and upon request. Due to COVID-19 and the need for social distancing, in-person EBT card replacements will be restricted to **no more than 2 times per month**. Customer identification must be provided and verified before card issuance. Customers can still request EBT cards in-person as needed by calling EBT Customer Service, listed below. The EBT account and EBT card must be activated for the customer to have access to their benefits.

Primary Cardholder

The 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 member or excluded member who is not a minor.

For CalWORKs, the primary cardholder is the parent or caretaker relative case payee.

Alternate Cardholder/Authorized Representative

The head of household can designate a member of the household as an alternate cardholder or authorized representative (AR) by completing the appropriate Designated Alternate Card Holder/Authorized Representative form. The alternate cardholder/AR will have access to the household's benefits, and any benefits spent by the alternate cardholder/AR will not be replaced.

For CalWORKs, the alternate cardholder may be another adult member of the Assistance Unit (AU) or a designated person outside of the Assistance Unit.

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 at https://www.ebt.ca.gov/caebtclient/reciprologin_client.jsp. 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 is: TTY: 1-800-735-2929.

The following EBT information can be accessed via the toll-free phone number or website:

- Change or deactivate a personal identification number (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

Merchants/Retailers Customer Service:

Merchants can call the following numbers for assistance. These numbers are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week:

- 1-866-328-4212 (Manual Voucher Authorization)- to receive authorization for voucher transactions when the EBT system is down.

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- 1-866-328-4212 (Retailer General Information) - to call with questions about participation in the EBT program
- 1-866-328-4212 (Retailer Hotline) - to call for assistance with state provided EBT point-of-sale (POS) equipment

Benefit Availability:

Monthly benefits are available in the EBT account on a staggered basis based on the last number of the case. Availability does not change due to weekends or holidays.

CW/GR/CAPI

Last Digit of Case Number	Benefit Issuance Date
1, 2, or 3	1 st day of the month
4, 5, 6, or 7	2 nd day of the month
8, 9, or 0	3 rd day of the month

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Last Digit of Case Number	Benefit Issuance Date
1	1 st of each month
2	2 nd of each month
3	3 rd of each month
4	4 th of each month
5	5 th of each month
6	6 th of each month
7	7 th of each month
8	8 th of each month
9	9 th of each month
0	10 th of each month

Cash Benefit Restrictions and Fees

Certain types of businesses are prohibited from processing EBT cash transactions, and recipients are prevented from accessing their cash benefits at: Adult entertainment locations, gambling locations, spa/massage parlors, cannabis retailers, smoke retailers, tattoo piercing sites, bail bonds, and cruise ships.

A surcharge fee is a service fee that some stores and banks charge EBT customers each time **cash** benefits are withdrawn from a POS machine or ATM. Refer to the listing of California surcharge-free ATM networks: http://www.ebtproject.ca.gov/Library/Cash_Access.pdf

A transaction fee is an additional fee that may be charged for **cash** withdrawals at an ATM. EBT 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.

Note: A surcharge fee will not be charged for a CalFresh POS transaction (Title 7 CFR 274.7(c)).

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Unused EBT Benefits:

Benefits will remain in the recipient's EBT account for up to 365 days; however, account status and benefit availability may be affected by account inactivity.

Inactive Status

When a household does not use its benefits for 135 days, the account becomes inactive. Recipients will be notified that their account has had no activity for over 135 days. Customers must use the benefits before 180 days or the account will go dormant.

Dormant Status

When a household does not use its benefits for 180 days, the account becomes dormant. Benefits are not accessible while the account is dormant, and customers will need to contact the County to have their EBT account re-activated.

Recipients will be notified that their account has had no activity for over 180 days and benefits have been suspended. Refer to EBT Processing Guide on how to re-activate EBT accounts.

Expunged Status

When a household does not use its benefits for 365 consecutive days, the benefits become expunged and are removed from the EBT account. Expunged CalFresh benefits cannot be restored. Expunged CalWORKs benefits are to be reissued within 30 days of the customer contact or reapplication, following the current NSDI process.

Excessive Card Replacement:

A warning letter will be sent to any EBT cardholder who has requested at least four card replacements in a 6 month period. The warning letter is designed to inform the customer that the household's EBT card replacement rate suggests that they may be having trouble with their card(s) or that this indicates 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.

Suspected Retailer Fraud

When you receive information on, or suspect CalFresh trafficking/fraudulent activity on the part of a retailer, notify the Welfare Fraud Hotline at 800-421-2252.

Electronic Theft (Skimming) for Cash Aid Programs (CW/GR/CAP)

Electronic theft occurs when a recipient or authorized representative has physical possession of his/her EBT card and benefits are stolen electronically from the EBT cash account. Recipients may be eligible to receive replacement cash benefits if the following requirements are met **within 90 days** of the electronic theft:

- Completion of the EBT 2259 Report of Electronic Theft of Cash Aid;
- Filing of a cash dispute claim with the EBT Customer Service Helpline; and
- Filing of a police report, unless good cause exists.

Procedures:

Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) Processing Guide
CalWORKs Processing Guide 44-300.B2 Electronic Theft (Skimming) Procedures

Program Impacts:

CalWORKs, CalFresh, General Relief, Cash Assistance Program for Immigrants

References:

ACIN I-39-18

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ACL 13-67
ACL 15-39
EBT Client Website

Sunset Date:

This policy will be reviewed for continuance by 3/31/2023.

Approval for Release:

Attn, 4-30-20

RICK WANNE, Director
Eligibility Operations