



CalFresh and Medi-Cal Changes:

What to Know and Where to Get Help

Some CalFresh and Medi-Cal rules changed in 2026. More changes are coming in 2027. These changes may affect your benefits or what you need to do to keep them. 2-1-1 Orange County (211OC) is here to help you find information and support.

To help maintain your benefits: Keep your address and phone number up to date with the county. Open your mail and respond to letters on time. Send any requested documents. Renew your benefits on time.

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What Is Changing?

- **CalFresh:** Since June 1, 2026, some adults must work, volunteer, attend job training, or go to school to keep their CalFresh benefits.
- **Medi-Cal:** Starting January 1, 2027, some adults must work, volunteer, attend job training, or go to school to get or keep Medi-Cal.
- **Medi-Cal renewals:** Starting March 1, 2027, some adults will need to renew Medi-Cal every 6 months instead of once a year.
- **Immigration:** Some changes depend on immigration status. These may affect benefits or how people get Medi-Cal care. See [More Help Near You](#) section for more information.

Learn more about the changes and important dates:

- [County of Orange Social Services Agency: Medi-Cal and CalFresh Changes](#)
- [CalOptima Health: Medi-Cal Changes](#)
- [California Department of Health Care Services: Medi-Cal Changes](#)

Do I Need to Work to Keep My Benefits?

Some adults must meet work requirements to keep their CalFresh or Medi-Cal benefits. These rules apply to certain people in two groups:

- **CalFresh:** Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD), which includes certain adults who can work and do not have young children in their household.
- **Medi-Cal:** New Adult Group, which includes certain adults who qualify for Medi-Cal through the Affordable Care Act expansion.

If these rules apply to you, you may need to work, volunteer, attend job training, or go to school. You can combine approved activities to meet the required hours.



	CalFresh (ABAWD)	Medi-Cal (New Adult Group)
Starts	June 1, 2026	January 1, 2027
Ages	18–64	19–64
How to meet the requirement	Work, volunteer, or attend job training for an average of 20 hours a week or earn at least \$217.50 a week from work or attend school at least half-time.	Work, volunteer, or attend job training for at least 80 hours a month or earn at least \$580 a month from work or attend school at least half-time.

Not everyone has to meet these work requirements. You may be exempt based on your age, health, family situation, or other reasons.

Medi-Cal: Who Is Exempt?

The Medi-Cal work requirements do not apply to people who:

- Are under age 19.
- Are age 65 or older.
- Are pregnant or within one year after pregnancy.
- Are parents or caregivers of children under age 14.
- Have a disability.
- Have a serious physical or mental health condition or substance use problem.
- Were released from jail or prison in the past 90 days.
- Have Medicare Part A or Part B.
- Are American Indian or Alaska Native.
- Are under age 26 and were in foster care on their 18th birthday.

CalFresh: Who Is Exempt?

You may be exempt from the CalFresh work requirements if you:



- Are under age 18 or age 65 or older.
- Are a parent or responsible for a child under age 14.
- Are excused from the general CalFresh work requirements.
- Cannot work at least 20 hours a week or 80 hours a month because of a physical or mental health condition.
- Cannot work because of drug or alcohol addiction, domestic violence, or chronic homelessness tied to a physical or mental health condition.
- Are pregnant.
- Identify as an Indian, Urban Indian, or California Indian under the Indian Health Care Improvement Act (IHCA).
- Attend an Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) training program at least half-time.
- Live in an area where the ABAWD work requirement is waived.

Other exemptions may apply. The county will decide if you qualify. [See the full list of exemptions \(County of Orange\).](#)



Get Work-Ready: Jobs, Volunteering, and School

Need help finding a job, volunteer opportunities, or classes? These resources can help you find activities that may count toward your CalFresh or Medi-Cal work requirements.

Jobs and Job Training Get free help finding a job or learning new job skills. • Job centers near you • OC Workforce Solutions • Anaheim Workforce Connection • Santa Ana WORK Center	Volunteering Find places to volunteer or help your community. • Volunteer opportunities near you • CalFresh Volunteer Form (CF 888) Tip: For CalFresh, ask your volunteer supervisor to sign the CF 888 form to show your volunteer hours.	Training and School Find classes or programs to build your skills. • Community colleges • Adult basic education • Continuing education
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Tip: Keep proof of your work, volunteer, or school hours. Save pay stubs, signed volunteer forms, and class schedules. The county may ask you to provide them.



More Help Near You

Some CalFresh and Medi-Cal changes depend on immigration status. Each person in your family is reviewed separately. Your child may still qualify for benefits, even if you do not.

- **Fee-for-service Medi-Cal:** Starting January 1, 2027, some Medi-Cal members will move from their health plan to fee-for-service Medi-Cal. This changes how they get care, not whether they can keep Medi-Cal. Members can see any doctor or clinic that accepts fee-for-service Medi-Cal, and Medi-Cal will still pay for covered care. Some services, including Enhanced Care Management and Community Supports, will no longer be available.
- **What you can do now:** Ask your doctor if they accept fee-for-service Medi-Cal. If not, you may need to find a new doctor. You will also need to use your Medi-Cal Benefits Identification Card (BIC) instead of your health plan card. See the resources below or learn more about this change from the Department of Healthcare Services (DHCS).
- **Immigration legal assistance:** Get support with questions about your immigration case and benefits. Explore the resources below.
- **Public charge:** A new federal rule about public charge took effect on September 18, 2026. If you have questions about how this may affect your immigration case or benefits, talk to an immigration legal professional.

Immigration Help Get help with immigration questions. • Immigration help near you • Immigration Legal Services • Public charge help	Health and Dental Care Find a doctor, clinic, or dentist. • Health care near you • Dental care near you • Find a fee-for-service doctor or service • CalOptima Health: Medi-Cal Changes	Food Find free food for you and your family. • Food near you
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Need help finding a fee-for-service doctor? Call the Medi-Cal Helpline at (800) 541-5555, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.



How to Keep Your Benefits

- Keep your address and phone number up to date with the county.
- Open mail from the county and respond to letters on time.
- Send any documents the county asks for.
- Renew your benefits on time.

You can update your information, upload documents, and renew your benefits online through [BenefitsCal](#).

Questions? We Can Help.

Need help finding local resources or support? 2-1-1 Orange County (211OC) is here to help. Our services are free and confidential.

- **Call 2-1-1** or (888) 600-4357. Assistance is available 24/7 and in multiple languages.
- **Text your ZIP code to 898-211.** Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- **Search [211OC.org](#)** for the online resource directory.

Questions about your case? Call the County of Orange Social Services Agency at (800) 281-9799.