One Swipe Away From Food Insecurity: A Review of CalFresh at UCSD

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Background

- CalFresh is a governmental food assistance program
- Provides up to $291/month to eligible students
- Eligibility recently expanded to students who meet income and residency requirements + major in programs such as public health that have universal capstone or internships that provide work experience (known as LPIE)
- Study undertaken to assess awareness, application and enrollment rates, obstacles to CalFresh enrollment among public health students, and estimate effect of LPIE on eligibility

Methods

- Multipurpose Qualtrics survey distributed to UCSD public health undergraduates
- Response rate = 75% (366/486)
- EpiInfo 7.2.6 used to analyze data
- Demographic data used to estimate eligible students with and without LPIE

Results

- 92% of students had heard of CalFresh, 46% applied, and 21% were accepted and enrolled (acceptance rate = 47%)
- Of those not applying to CalFresh, 41% are unaware of their eligibility and 21% thought the application process was too difficult
- Students who received application assistance were 1.5 times more likely to be currently receiving CalFresh benefits (p<0.002), but only 51% had received such assistance
- 41% reported that CalFresh paid for all of their groceries
- LPIE designation of the major increases the estimated eligible students from 21% to 40%

Conclusion

- While many students are aware and applying for CalFresh, the acceptance rate is low with only 1 in 5 students currently enrolled
- Major enrollment barriers include students' unawareness of their eligibility and lack of use of application assistance programs
- LPIE designation of majors greatly increases the number of eligible students
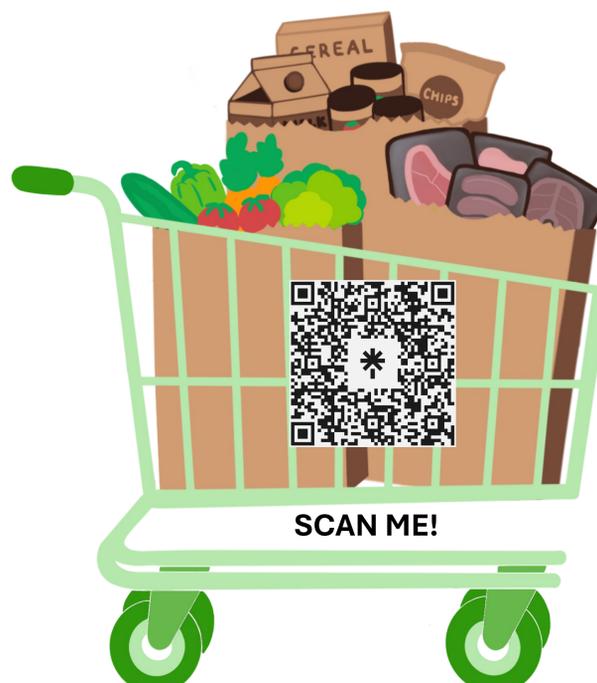
To Increase CalFresh Enrollment:

Develop campaign to increase knowledge of eligibility criteria

Seek LPIE designation for eligible Undergrad programs

Encourage the use of application support through the Hub

SCAN ME!

Figure 1

CalFresh application and enrollment rates (N=366)

Those who heard of CalFresh

46% applied

21% currently enrolled
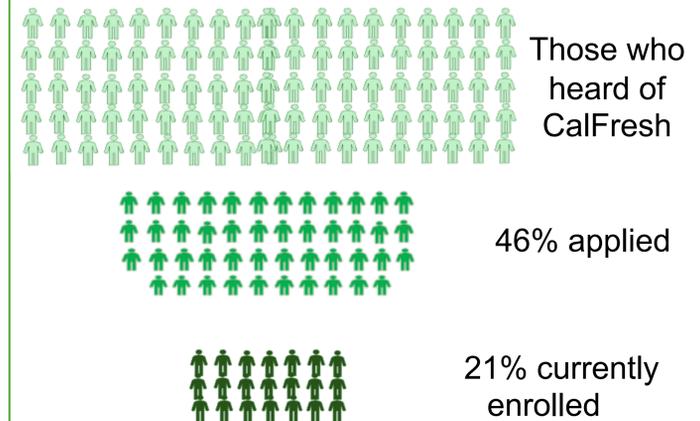
Figure 2

Sources of CalFresh application assistance (N=169)

- No, I did not receive assistance — 49%
- Yes, from friends/family — 26%
- Yes, from the San Diego County's CalFresh Staff — 15%
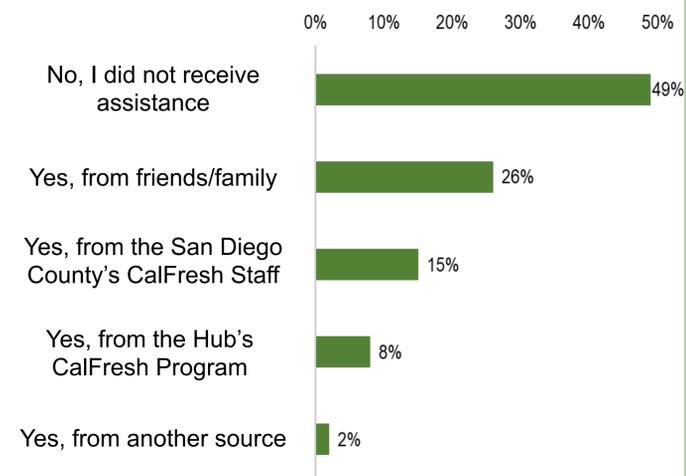- Yes, from the Hub's CalFresh Program — 8%
- Yes, from another source — 2%

Figure 3

Reasons why students did not apply for CalFresh (N=141)

- Didn't think was eligible — 41%
- Application was difficult — 21%
- Didn't need CalFresh benefits — 13%
- Unaware of the program — 11%
- Would feel guilty/embarrassed — 10%
- Other — 4%