



California
Community
Colleges



California Community Colleges Basic Needs Center Toolkit

APRIL 2025

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2025 Toolkit Updates

The California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office (Chancellor's Office) released the first version of the *Basic Needs Center Toolkit* in June 2022, following the passage of AB 123—state legislation which established funding for each California community college to establish a Basic Needs Center, or enhance an existing one. Since the passage of the bill, colleges have made great strides to increase basic needs services for students across the system. As of 2024, all California community colleges are now offering basic needs services, informative websites to provide information to students regarding available services, and dedicated campus staff.

The April 2025 toolkit update includes new information about recently passed legislation to further increase availability of basic needs services for community college students, such as through improved access to public benefits and increased support for parenting students. The update also includes new information pertaining to the Chancellor's Office's *Vision 2030* strategic plan. *Vision 2030* builds upon the foundation of the Chancellor's Office's previous *Vision for Success* and provides updated goals for colleges to ensure students experience equity in success, equity in access, and equity in support. Through *Vision 2030*, colleges are called on to maximize campus basic needs supports, financial aid, and access to public benefits for low-income and underserved students to help ensure students' well-being and achieve Governor Newsom's goal of 70% of working-aged Californians attaining a postsecondary degree or certificate by 2030.

Acronyms Commonly Used in this Toolkit

ARPA: American Rescue Plan Act

BIPOC: Black, Indigenous, and People of Color

CADAA: California Dream Act Application

CAFYES: Cooperating Agencies Foster Youth Educational Support (renamed NextUp)

CalEITC: California Earned Income Tax Credit

CalWORKs: California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids

CARE: Cooperative Agencies Resources for Education

CARE/FERA: California Alternate Rate for Energy/Family Electric Rate Assistance

CES: Coordinated Entry System

CoC: Continuum of Care

CSU: California State University

CTC: Child Tax Credit

CDSS: California Department of Social Services

DEI: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

DHCS: California Department of Health Care Services

DSPS: Disabled Students Programs and Services

EBT: Electronic Benefits Transfer

EITC: Earned Income Tax Credit

EOPS: Extended Opportunity Programs and Services

FAFSA: Free Application for Federal Student Aid

FERPA: Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act

HHIP: College Homeless and Housing Insecure Pilot Program

JBAY: John Burton Advocates for Youth

JFF: Jobs for the Future

LIHEAP: Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program

OER: Open Educational Resources

SAI: Student Aid Index

SNAP: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (referred to as “CalFresh” in California)

TANF: Temporary Aid for Needy Families

UC: University of California

WIC: Women, Infants and Children Special Supplemental Nutritional Program

YCTC: Young Child Tax Credit

Part I. Introduction

On behalf of the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office (Chancellor's Office), we are excited to welcome you to the California Community Colleges Basic Needs Center Toolkit.

This section provides a brief overview of the research and frameworks that inform this toolkit, as well as an introduction to the purpose and structure of the toolkit.

Please note: Information and hyperlinks are correct and active at time of writing. Resources, programs, and websites may change.

I.A. Background

College and university leadership, staff, and faculty have increasingly recognized the urgency of student basic needs. "Basic needs" include a student's essential requirements for health and well-being that must be met in order for them to succeed in college. When students cannot meet their basic needs, it is often (although not always) because they are experiencing short- or long-term financial instability.

Examples of basic needs include, but are not limited to:

- Sufficient food
- Adequate and stable housing
- Appropriate physical, mental, and/or behavioral health care
- Ability to pay essential bills
- Transportation to school and employment
- Safe spaces in which to sleep, relax, and study
- Access to showers and other hygiene necessities
- Ability to provide these needs for their children or others for whom they are the primary caregiver



Students who cannot meet their basic needs often cope with these challenges by dropping classes, working more hours, or skipping semesters, all of which puts them at risk for dropping out or not transferring (Dubick et al., 2016; Sackett et al., 2016; Chaplot et al., 2015).

Much of the research on basic needs among college students has focused on hunger and homelessness, and researchers have found that rates of food and housing insecurity are much higher than previously believed—especially in two-year institutions.¹ Food and housing insecurity can create a cognitive, physical, and financial burden that interferes with students' ability to learn, to achieve a high GPA, or even to remain in college and to learn (Pattón-Lopez et al., 2014; Maroto et al., 2014).

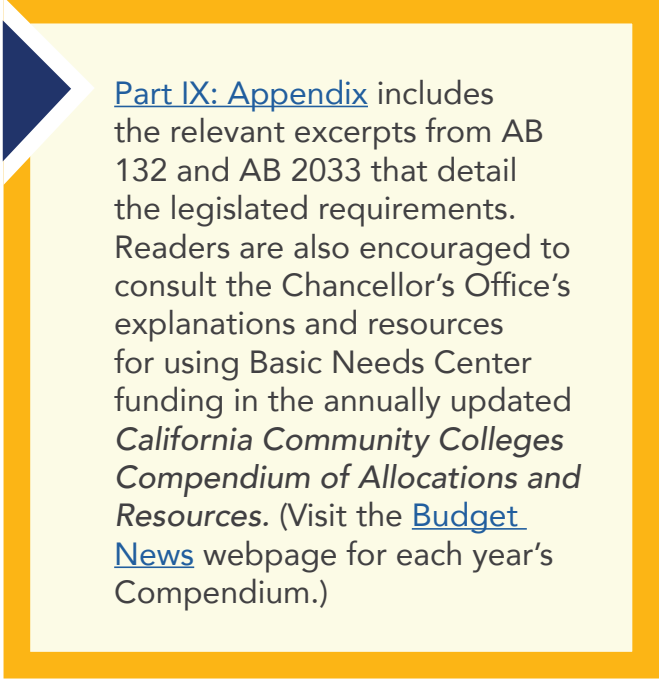
I.B. Basic Needs Legislation and Funding

In 2021-2022, [Assembly Bill AB 132 \(Postsecondary Education Trailer Bill\)](#) legislated a requirement that each California community college establish a one-stop basic needs center and a basic needs coordinator to act as a broker to link students to on- and off-campus resources. More recently, AB 2033 (Public postsecondary education: electronic benefits transfer cards: basic needs services and resources) was passed into law and expanded certain requirements of colleges around becoming CalFresh and EBT (Electronic Benefits Transfer) retailers. (Please see [Food Security Services](#) for information regarding new requirements.)

The colleges are supported in these efforts with approximately \$45 million in annual, ongoing funding to address food and housing insecurity.

Colleges are encouraged to adopt a holistic view of basic needs, and consider how these funds can complement and enhance other resources. By braiding categorical funds, equity funds, mental health funds, basic needs one-time and ongoing funds, and other funding streams, colleges can create a truly integrated, student-centered support ecosystem.

In addition, it is critical that colleges not only fund campus supports, but also assist students in maximizing the financial aid and federal and state benefits that are available to them. The [Maximizing Students' Access to Federal and State Benefits](#) and [Financial Aid and Taxes](#) sections explore this further.



[Part IX: Appendix](#) includes the relevant excerpts from AB 132 and AB 2033 that detail the legislated requirements. Readers are also encouraged to consult the Chancellor's Office's explanations and resources for using Basic Needs Center funding in the annually updated *California Community Colleges Compendium of Allocations and Resources*. (Visit the [Budget News](#) webpage for each year's Compendium.)

¹“Homelessness” here means that a person does not have a stable place to live. It can include students who self-identify as homeless as well as students who have lived under conditions that have elsewhere been defined as homeless (e.g., temporarily living with a relative or friend out of economic necessity, couch surfing, living temporarily at a hotel or motel without a home to return to).

I.C. Overview of the Toolkit

The primary purpose of the toolkit is to assist California community college leaders, staff, and administrators with planning, implementing, and improving their basic needs centers and services. The focus of the toolkit is to provide colleges with practical action steps, innovative practices, and research-supported strategies.

The toolkit can be read sequentially from start to finish, but it is primarily intended as a reference guide for staff to refer to when specific sections are needed. It will be updated over time as new innovative and effective practices emerge.

Many of the strategies that are recommended in this toolkit come from the work of independent researchers or organizations who focus on basic needs security issues (e.g., The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice; John Burton Advocates for Youth; SchoolHouse Connection; Swipe Out Hunger). Data sources are cited throughout this toolkit and are listed in full in the [References](#) section.



This toolkit can be used by a wide range of individuals and groups in the campus community, including:

- College leaders and decision-makers
- Basic needs task forces
- Basic needs coordinators
- Student support services leadership, staff, and administrators
- College counselors, health services staff, and mental health providers
- Staff who support relevant student programs (e.g., NextUp, EOPS, CalWORKs, MESA)
- Financial aid staff
- Food pantry organizers and staff
- Residential life staff
- Leaders and staff engaged in equity work

- Student-run associations and organizations addressing basic needs
- Librarians
- Staff members who work with community-based organizations
- All campus leaders, staff, faculty, and administrators who are invested in promoting student success and equity by addressing barriers to meeting basic needs

Please note that although this toolkit includes many recommendations, it **does not endorse any one program, model, vendor, or product**. Each college and its surrounding community is unique. Strategies that are effective at a large, urban campus in Southern California may not work as well at a small, rural campus in Northern California, and vice versa. Colleges are encouraged to use their own local data—including listening to direct input from their students—to determine what services and supports to offer.

Part II. Toolkit Guiding Framework

Basic needs insecurity directly impacts a student's ability to succeed in college. Basic needs services are part of the non-academic supports that contribute to the third pillar of the colleges' Guided Pathways, *Help students stay on their path* (Chancellor's Office, 2017). This toolkit is rooted in understanding and acknowledgement that helping students maximize the resources available to them is an essential strategy for promoting their educational achievement.

This section identifies three core components that provide a framework for the toolkit.

Guided Pathways Third Pillar: **Help Students Stay on their Path**

Embed academic and non-academic supports throughout students' programs to promote student learning and persistence.

II.A. Student-Centered Support Ecosystem to Support Basic Needs

Although many colleges offer a wide variety of supports related to basic needs and financial security, barriers may still exist that inhibit students' ability to access services, such as limited awareness among students and staff; burdensome application processes; and varied eligibility requirements across programs.



The Chancellor's Office's *Vision 2030* acknowledges "the critical importance of supporting the whole student, delivering support to them where they are and when they need it" and "remov[ing] student burdens related to accessing support":

"Equity in support necessitates a paradigm shift from the prevailing approach that predominantly relies on waiting for students to apply for services to a proactive approach that brings support directly to those in need. This shift acknowledges the inherent inequalities present in the existing structures, where students from marginalized communities must shoulder additional and

compounding financial, administrative and psychological burdens to access services and support." (California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, 2023, pp. 9-10)

In the context of this toolkit, student-centered design means looking across campus—and within the community—at the myriad services and resources available to support student basic needs, and bringing them together in a way that is approachable, understandable, and easily accessible for students.

II.B. Social Determinants of Educational Success

The **social determinants of educational success** is an upstream approach to cultivate an environment in which fewer students are experiencing basic needs insecurities to begin with, rather than only addressing a student's basic needs when it reaches a crisis point (Ruan-O'Shaughnessy & O'Brien, 2021). Presented by David O'Brien, Vice Chancellor of Government Relations, and Rebecca Ruan-O'Shaughnessy, Vice Chancellor of Educational Services and Support, at the October 2021 meeting of the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges, the social determinants of educational success framework represents a transformation of student services.

The social determinants concept emerged from public health. It “describes systemic barriers affecting communities and demonstrates the role that macro-level factors such as policies, resources, governance, and institutions play in affecting individual and community-level outcomes” (Jobs for the Future, 2022).

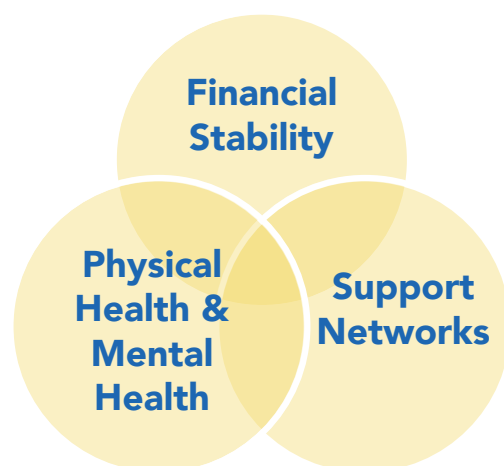


The Chancellor's Office's adoption of this framework focuses on three core social determinants of educational success, including Financial Stability, Support Networks, and Physical and Mental Health. These three overlapping spheres represent a wide range of services and resources that can support students in meeting their basic needs and pursuing their educational goals. They are built on student-centered redesign principles of clarifying problems (what are the barriers?), maximizing resources (what is available? What more is available?), and shifting structures (how can we change the system to facilitate students' access to these resources?).

Social Determinants of Educational Success

- Clarify Problems
- Maximize Resources
- Shift Structures

Graphic adapted from Ruan-O'Shaughnessy & O'Brien, 2021, and Jobs for the Future, 2022



In this toolkit, Part V (Support Networks), Part VI (Physical Health & Mental Health), and Part VII (Financial Stability) offer an in-depth exploration of resources and services that address the social determinants of educational success.

It is important to note that many California community colleges are already working on innovative models to center students' needs in this way, and some colleges have advanced systems in place; not all services are fragmented or challenging to access. The social determinants of educational success framework is intended to **support, amplify, and expand** these efforts throughout the system, so that students at **all** California community colleges are better served.

II.C. Basic Needs and Equity

A social determinants model requires deep reflection on the social, cultural, and environmental factors that shape how individuals come to (and are impacted by) systems.

Racism, bias, and other forms of discrimination impact the resources that students have, the opportunities that are open to them, and how they perceive systems and services. Students who are formerly or currently in foster care, are returning citizens,² have served in the military, and/or are parenting experience higher rates of food and housing insecurity than average (Baker-Smith, 2020).

Other students, including those who are first-generation immigrants, parenting students, who are LGBTQ, or who have a disability or chronic health condition—to name just a few examples—may have greater or different needs than students who do not have these identities or backgrounds.

Helping students who are experiencing food, housing, childcare, and financial insecurity to stay and succeed in college **is** social justice work. It is crucial that colleges recognize the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in their basic needs efforts. DEI should

² A returning citizen is an individual who has previously been incarcerated.

be integrated at every step: how student needs are assessed, who is present in basic needs committees, what is considered in hiring of a basic needs coordinator, where outreach materials are distributed and posted, which community partners and student organizations are engaged, what foods are offered at the food pantry, and so on.

These are just a few, illustrative examples. The DEI concerns at your campus will be shaped by the unique populations, needs, and resources at your campus. **Making DEI central to the work will help ensure that basic needs services reach the student populations who would benefit the most from them and who have been historically under-resourced.**



Part III. Establishing a Basic Needs Center – AB 132 Requirements

This section introduces a number of key considerations that could contribute to the establishment of a one-stop basic needs center that meets student needs effectively and collaboratively.

The graphic below, reprinted from [One-Stop Center Models: A Guide to Centralizing Students' Basic Needs Supports](#) (Price & Umaña, 2021) under Creative Commons License, illustrates the one-stop center model. This is only one example of the kinds of services and supports that a one-stop basic needs center may provide, not an exhaustive list. Colleges should determine what is needed and what works for their students based on their local data.

[Part IX: Appendix](#) includes the relevant excerpts from AB 132 that detail these requirements. Readers are also encouraged to consult the Chancellor's Office's explanations and resources using Basic Needs Center funding in the annually updated California Community Colleges Compendium of Allocations and Resources. (Visit the [Budget News](#) webpage for each year's Compendium.)



Image 1: Price & Umaña, 2021

It is important to note that although some colleges are able to house their basic needs services at a single physical location, this is not what defines a “one-stop” center. Rather, what makes one-stop models effective is that they allow students to access a constellation of resources and services through a single, well-known point of entry.

Consider where services are currently delivered, and whether and where they should be co-located. Which services or staff can be centralized in a physical hub? Which will need to be distributed and delivered by partners at different on- or off-campus locations? How can we make it easier for students to access services outside of the hub (e.g., warm hand-off)?

III.A. One-Stop Service Models

Over the last decade, a number of models have emerged with a focus on creating more holistic, centralized, streamlined student basic needs services. These models share a commitment to destigmatizing poverty, a strong needs assessment component, and creative strategies for breaking down silos and engaging both on- and off-campus partners.



Below are brief descriptions of some of these major one-stop service models, with links to learn more. This toolkit does not advocate for a single model; these are provided for informational purposes only.

No Excuses Poverty Initiative Model

Amarillo College in Texas has been frequently recognized for its innovative and effective basic needs center. Amarillo's Advocacy and Resource Center (ARC) is a central social services on campus that is part of the college's "No Excuses Poverty Initiative." The No Excuses initiative is intended to cultivate a campus-wide culture of caring, holding the college accountable for supporting students. The ARC provides a social services case management program that facilitates access to public benefits, counseling, coaching, a food and hygiene pantry, and clothing closet. The ARC is a field practicum for social work students at the local university, and is also supported by a counseling center and a legal aid clinic that provide free services on campus. The ARC is a visible, comfortable, well-lit suite of offices where all visitors are promptly greeted.

Unique elements of their approach include a college-wide commitment to removing poverty barriers and a central physical location for services.

Learn more and view photos:

- [Amarillo College's "No Excuses" Poverty Initiative: A Strategy Guide](#)
- [Supporting Community College Completion with a Culture of Caring: A Case Study of Amarillo College](#)

Working Students Success Network (WSSN)

WSSN is a former initiative of [Achieving the Dream](#) to comprehensively centralize and streamline students' access to support. The goal of WSSN was to help people with low

income reach financial sustainability by achieving a postsecondary credential.

Unique elements include delivering support through multiple, low-touch and high-touch modalities; integrating and sequencing services; and customizing services to meet individual needs.

- Achieving the Dream created a Guidebook for building similar programs: [Integrated Student Support Services in Action: A Guide to Implementing the Workings Student Success Network Approach](#)
- Achieving the Dream also offers coaching for colleges to adopt [Holistic Student Supports](#)

SparkPoint

[SparkPoint](#), a model developed by [United Way Bay Area](#), is one model for centralizing basic needs-related services. SparkPoint centers at postsecondary institutions act as a centralized hub, working with students to support their basic needs, employment, and finances so they can focus on their studies. Services such as financial coaching, benefits screening, food pantry access, tax preparation, credit counseling, referrals to housing supports, legal consultations, career coaching, and more are provided at no cost to students seeking to improve their financial situation. SparkPoint uses a collective impact framework to bring together on- and off-campus services in the region and provides strengths-based, holistic, one-on-one coaching to help students achieve long-term outcomes.

At the time of writing, SparkPoint services are offered at least ten community colleges in the Bay Area.

Unique elements include financial coaching, a focus on long-term goals, and a regional collective impact model.

United Way Bay Area (UWBA) released a toolkit for those interested in detailed guidance and to assess whether a SparkPoint is right for your campus. For more information, visit [The SparkPoint Toolkit: United Way Bay Area's Guide to Replicating SparkPoint for Student at Postsecondary Institutions](#).

Benefits Hubs

Benefits Hubs are driven and funded by a partnership between several Seattle, WA, colleges and United Way of King County. United Way covers most of the direct costs, including embedding staff at each campus. The college offers matched funding for emergency grant aid and a "Benefits Hub Site Champion" at each campus. The Benefits Hubs focus on helping students navigate financial challenges through "Everyday Financial Tools" (e.g., state benefits, utility discounts, tax prep, financial coaching) and one-on-one coaching.

One **unique element** is the financial partnership between the college and United Way; in contrast, most basic needs centers are funded primarily or entirely by the college.



III.B. High- and Low-Touch Services

Regardless of whether you adopt an existing model or design your own model, your college will need to determine what services are already offered, what new or expanded services will be offered, and how services will be delivered.

One way to think about service delivery is to differentiate between “**low-touch**” and “**high-touch**” services. Achieving the Dream defines these services this way (Lenhart et al., 2018):

Low-Touch Service	High-Touch Service
• Core services that are designed to reach a broad range of students via group settings, such as orientation or student-success classes, or through technology or other approaches • Provide information and, in some cases, skill building for students	• One-on-one interactions that provide a specific service or set of services to a targeted number of students whom the college has identified as needing more intensive support • Often accompanied by short- and long-term goal setting with the student

High-touch services are more resource intensive, and many colleges offer a mix of high-touch and low-touch supports. Identifying where high-touch services are most appropriate can help colleges allocate their resources. Questions for group reflection and planning include:

- Which services can be delivered to a group (e.g., food pantry events; workshops for tax preparation, financial aid, or immigration rights; childcare services)?
- Which services should be delivered one-on-one (e.g., initial basic needs consultation, public benefits screening)?
- How will you structure high-touch services (e.g., set number of coaching sessions, specified path for screening and accessing benefits, protocol for follow-up)?
- How will you ensure that students who stand to benefit most from high-touch services are accessing them?

- How will you use data to track the effectiveness of your low-touch and high-touch services? How will you use data to identify gaps or problems with these services? Review the [Collecting, Reporting, and Using Basic Needs Data](#) section to learn more.

III.C. Hiring a Basic Needs Coordinator

Prior to the passage of AB 132, and the establishment of Education Code 66023.5, most California community colleges did not have a dedicated funding stream for a basic needs coordinator, and basic needs services may have been part of multiple staff members' roles (e.g., Homeless Youth Liaison). Under AB 132, hiring dedicated staff is a major requirement:

"No later than July 1, 2022, establish the position of the Basic Needs Coordinator, and designate a staff person as the Basic Needs Coordinator to serve as the single point of contact for students experiencing basic needs insecurity related to basic needs services and resources. The coordinator shall act as a broker in identifying, supporting, and linking students to on- and off-campus housing, food, mental health, and other basic needs services and resources. To ensure the effectiveness and impact of this position, the coordinator shall be a dedicated position solely focused on addressing the basic needs of students and meet qualifications such as experience providing services to high-need and diverse populations. The coordinator shall oversee and coordinate with other staff tasked with addressing students' basic needs, shall inform students of all on- and off-campus basic needs services and resources and how to access them, and shall develop on- and off-campus partnerships to provide basic needs services and resources to their students."

See [Part IX: Appendix B](#) for the full requirements.

Below are guiding questions to help craft a job description for this role. Please note that **specific employment practices and policies are part of the districts' local authority**, and that recruitment materials should be aligned with district guidance.

As examples, here are real job descriptions:

- [Southwestern Community College District Basic Needs Coordinator](#)
- [Santa Rosa Junior College Basic Needs](#)
- [Desert Community College District, Manager, Basic Needs Center](#)
- [Barstow Community College Basic Needs Coordinator](#)



Responsibilities: One important role that the basic needs coordinator serves is to help ensure that the legislated responsibilities are not distributed to existing staff who are already at capacity. Consider the AB 132 requirements as well as the specific needs and offerings of your college. For example, are there existing services in place (such as a food pantry) that should be redistributed to this new role? What new services and activities will they be responsible for?

- Is this person taking leadership of an existing basic needs center, or will they contribute to the design and vision for a new basic needs center?
- To what degree will this role have oversight of the basic needs center budget?
- What compliance and confidentiality activities will this role be responsible for? What data collection, management, and reporting activities will they need to conduct?
- Will this person oversee the campus food pantry or pantries?
- Will this role provide trainings to faculty, staff, and administrators?
- Will this role be expected to plan, market, and conduct events?
- To whom does this role report? Who are their key collaborators? Whom do they oversee?
- Will this role oversee interns?
- How will this role support diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts on campus?
- Will this role be responsible for partnering with other campus departments? Which? What about off-campus partners (e.g., social services, local homeless services providers)?

Qualifications: In addition to the following qualifications, knowledge, skills, and abilities, it is important for Basic Needs Center staff to reflect the culture, race, language, and community that the center will serve. For example, if your institution has a large Spanish-speaking student population, having staff who speak Spanish may allow students to feel comfortable coming to the center and build relationships with staff. Students and community members of color may also want to see themselves represented among center staff. What experiences, including lived experiences, does the person bring?

- Is a bachelor's or master's degree required? What fields would be appropriate (e.g., social work, psychology, sociology, education)?

- Should this role have a required number of years' experience in higher education settings? Will an alternative option be provided for individuals with experience in other relevant settings?
- What competencies should this role bring? Which are required or preferred? Examples include:

Knowledge	Skill	Ability
• Understanding of and commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion • Knowledge of program development and program management activities and processes • Knowledge of effective case management and referral practices and techniques for behavioral health concerns • Knowledge of state and federal benefits, FAFSA requirements, and steps for eligibility/enrollment • Knowledge of local community resources, services, and partners • Knowledge of relevant laws and regulations (e.g., FERPA)	• Skill in providing warm, sensitive, and trauma-informed support to students • Skill in gaining buy-in from on-campus and off-campus partners • Skill in problem-solving, decision-making, and conflict resolution • Skill in providing leadership, guidance, and oversight to staff and interns	• Ability to communicate clearly about the basic needs center to administrators, community partners, and other decision-makers • Ability to plan, budget, and manage resources • Ability to track and report on resource use and activities • Ability to work with transition-age young adults and non-traditional age college students • Ability to work with specific student populations (e.g., young adults formerly in foster care, English language learners, LGBTQ students, student parents)

III.D. Creating an Intake Process

One of the requirements introduced by AB 132 is that, no later than February 1, 2022, colleges “streamline the application and intake process for on-campus basic needs services and resources.” Your college may need to develop a new process or may already have a simple, one-stop request form in place that students can access through your website. This section provides suggestions for elements to include or enhance.



Note that many of these questions can be sensitive, especially questions related to demographics or identity. Carefully consider: will asking this question help us support this student? Does this question provide essential data for supporting our students?

The intake process is an integral component of your data collection and reporting process. Please see the [Collecting, Reporting, and Using Basic Needs Data](#) section for more detail.

Request Form – Design and Messaging

The request form is one component of student-centered redesign. It is intended to be easy to find, easy to use, and comprehensive: it should provide one-stop access to myriad services and resources. For example, the [College of the Redwoods](#) form and the [Contra Costa College](#) form connect students to a wide variety of basic needs, health and wellness, and hardship resources. Basic needs staff should coordinate with other student support services and programs to ensure that the process for requesting basic needs support is as streamlined and non-duplicative as possible for students.

Make sure the button or link to request support is large and easy to find. Include the link on multiple pages related to basic needs (e.g., food pantry), financial aid, and student support services, as well as on any social media pages.

Work with your IT department to ensure that the form and buttons linking to it are accessible for students with disabilities (e.g., those who use screen readers) and on mobile and desktop.

Include a brief but warm and non-stigmatizing message of support; let students know that they are not alone, and that these resources are there to support them.

Clearly state how the student’s information will be used. For example, “We will use the information you share to help you access resources and benefits. We won’t share your information with other students, and we won’t share it with other departments or agencies unless you give us permission.”

Include consent language needed for data sharing to maximize access to other services and public benefits. For example, include language to allow students to consent to providing their information to other campus departments or social service agencies to support them getting connected to other resources they may be eligible for, such as financial aid, CalFresh, and/or Medi-Cal.

Include statements and questions in both English and, if possible, any other commonly spoken languages among your student population, such as Spanish. For example, the [Lake Tahoe Community College](#) form is in both English and Spanish, and also asks students for their pronouns.

Tell students what to expect after they complete the form. Is the next step that they will receive a phone call to schedule a follow-up? How soon can they expect a response (e.g., within 24 hours)?

Request Form and Intake Process - Questions

The request form or follow-up consultation will include questions for better understanding the student’s needs and their eligibility for various supports. Below are examples of the kinds of questions that colleges are asking. Note that these questions are examples only, and should be customized for your campus.

As much as possible, find ways to access and share information so that **students do not have to answer the same questions multiple times**. What questionnaires, records, or enrollment list does the college already have, so students do not have to repeat themselves if they have already given this information before? Having to repeatedly request supports and disclose personal or financial information can add unnecessary burden on students.

- Basics: name, student ID number, phone number, email address
- Demographics, e.g.: race and ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender identity
- Whether the student is a Veteran or service member
- Whether the student is currently or formerly in foster care
- Whether the student is pregnant, parenting, or a child's guardian
 - Note: this can be a sensitive question; here is a recommended approach:
"There are some special benefits to help people who are pregnant, breastfeeding, or parents."
 1. Would you like to learn more about those? [Provide link to campus's student parent webpage containing the information.]
 2. Do you have a child or children under 18 years of age who you provide more than half of the financial support for?
 3. How many children do you have and what are their ages?"
- Whether the student has completed the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or for the California Dream Act Application (CADAA)
- The student's needs, including supports that the basic needs center offers and those offered by its partners (e.g., housing, food, transportation, technology, healthcare, childcare)
- Whether the student is currently experiencing homelessness
 - Note: many students do not identify as homeless. Make sure that students understand that homelessness means not having a "fixed, regular, and adequate" nighttime living arrangement—not just sleeping outside or at a homeless shelter. It also includes couch-surfing and staying with other people because of loss of housing or economic hardship; staying in motels, hotels, or campgrounds; sleeping in a car, public place, or abandoned building; staying in a shelter or transitional housing; and other arrangements.
- Whether the student is currently receiving or would like to enroll in public benefits, such as CalFresh, Medi-Cal, or CalWORKS, WIC
- Whether the student needs access to health or mental health services
- Whether the student participates in relevant campus programs and services, such as these:
 - EOPS/CARE
 - CalWORKs
 - Disabled Student Programs and Services
 - Military or Veterans Resource Center Services
 - CAFYES/NextUp: Foster Youth Support Programs
 - TRIO Student Support Services

- Family Resource Center or other family-serving programs
- Cal Grant for Students with Dependent Children
- Head Start
- Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS)

III.E. Basic Needs Website

A welcoming, informative, and easy-to-understand basic needs online resource hub is key for ensuring that students, faculty, and staff are able to find and access support for themselves and others. One of the requirements of AB 132 is that colleges “develop and regularly update a student basic needs tab that is clearly visible and easily accessible from a drop-down menu on the home page of the internet website of the campus.”

The EAB *Implementation Toolkit* identifies five key elements of an online resource hub (EAB, 2018):

- ✓ “Intuitive URL
(e.g., basicneeds.berkeley.edu)
- ✓ Easy to navigate between resources
- ✓ Marketed across campus to students, faculty, and staff
- ✓ Clearly outlines required next steps to access resources
- ✓ Regularly updated to keep information current and content fresh”

Remember that a clean design—with easy ways to follow up for more information—is better than inundating students with a lot of text. **Ask students to review!** One easy way to engage students in planning and designing your basic needs services is to ask for their input on outreach and messaging. Ask student workers, volunteers, and/or leaders to review your website for ease of use, relevance, and appeal.

Additional important components include:

- ✓ Easy to request help: make the request form link, button, or contact information clearly visible
- ✓ Tone: warmth, humor, understanding, empathy, belonging (“you are not alone”)
- ✓ Inclusiveness: images of students represent a breadth of identities and backgrounds; there are clear links to student equity

Colleges are encouraged to refer to the following two resources, which offer more detailed guidance and tools:

- [Addressing College Students’ Basic Needs: Food and Housing Insecurity on Campus. Implementation Toolkit.](#) EAB Student Affairs Forum, 2018.
- [Beyond the Food Pantry: Guide to building an Effective College Student Basic Needs Webpage.](#) Thompson, D., & Umaña, P. The Hope Center, 2021.

- ✓ Group resources by the types of basic needs they meet, e.g., food, housing. Highlight resources that are available for emergency support (e.g., motel vouchers) (Thompson & Umaña, 2021).
- ✓ Social media: if you have active social media accounts for your basic needs hub, make it easy to find links to these accounts from your webpage.

Consider what resources should be included on your basic needs online resource hub. Think beyond the resources that are offered directly by your basic needs center. You may consider including links and information related to the following. Many of these resources and services are discussed elsewhere in this toolkit:

FINANCES Emergency grants FAFSA and CADAA filing help Financial aid Financial counseling and wellness Tax preparation	FOOD Campus food pantry, farmer's market, and/or food lockers CalFresh enrollment help WIC enrollment help Local food pantries Grocery gift cards
HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS Housing referrals Housing application support Transitional or emergency housing Hotel/motel vouchers Utility assistance (e.g., LIHEAP, FERA) Access to lockers for storing personal items	PREGNANCY AND PARENTING Link to student parent webpage, if not here Family resource centers Childcare on campus Childcare referrals in community Help accessing child tax credits Benefits: CalWORKs, WIC, Medi-Cal CARE (EOPS) Diaper banks
PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH Health center Health resources (e.g., free cold medicine) Family PACT Medi-Cal enrollment help Local clinics Mental health referrals Substance use treatment referrals Peer support groups Health and wellness vending machines on campus	HYGIENE AND LIVING Where and when to access campus showers Laundry facilities Toiletries Cleaning supplies Clothing closets Health and wellness vending machines on campus
TRANSPORTATION Reduced cost or free transit passes Reduced cost or free parking passes Gas gift cards Shuttles	SUPPLIES AND TECHNOLOGY Textbook vouchers Textbook lending Technology lending program Laptop grants
LEGAL SERVICES Legal aid Domestic violence services Free legal services for undocumented students	RESOURCES FOR STUDENT POPULATIONS Students formerly or currently in foster care Returning citizens Veterans and service members LGBTQ+ students Student parents
RESOURCES FOR UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS Undocumented students group Help filing CADAA Legal aid for immigration Information about health insurance	

The following screenshots are provided as illustrative examples of basic needs hubs at California community colleges. They are provided for informational purposes only; all website content and graphics are owned by their respective colleges.

Examples of College Basic Needs Hubs



Image 2: The Sierra College [Basic Needs and Support Services](#) page features an easy-to-navigate list of resources, a prominent button to request an appointment, and frequently asked questions (FAQs). It also showcases how many students have been served by the basic needs center and how many food pantry visits there have been, which helps to destigmatize these resources.



Image 3: The webpage for [Renegade Nexus](#), which is Bakersfield College's basic needs center, features inviting photos of the grocery store-style food pantry and large images linking to additional resources.



Image 4: Long Beach City College's [Basic Needs](#) webpage features large graphics for navigating to resources for students with children (on-campus or off-campus), a laptop grant request form, transportation resources, the food pantry, housing resources, and a basic needs request form.



Image 5: The [Basic Needs Center](#) at Santa Barbara City College has both a page on the college's website (with clear instructions about how to access basic needs services) and a separate, colorful, destigmatizing blog page.

Part IV. Establishing a Basic Needs Center – Key Considerations

This section describes some of the essential cultural and infrastructural changes that are necessary to build a college-wide commitment to addressing basic needs.

Challenges around basic needs insecurity can impact students in many different ways, and **all** staff and departments have a role to play in supporting students' equitable access to educational success. The shifts described in this section help ensure that action around basic needs is integrated throughout campus services, rather than treated as the responsibility of only a single staff member.



IV.A. Establishing Basic Needs as an Institutional Priority

One of the key aspects of the basic needs coordinator role is to “develop on- and off-campus partnerships to provide basic needs services and resources” to students. Opportunities for partnership are discussed throughout this toolkit, where applicable. This section introduces important internal and external partnerships that could strengthen the provision of basic needs center services.

Developing a basic needs strategic plan can help ensure that services are prioritized to meet the evolving needs of students. A clear, well-structured plan assists centers with identifying program successes and challenges, establishing and maintaining progress toward program goals, and allocating resources effectively. A strategic plan can also be developed in collaboration with other departments and key collaborators on campus, and can include goals related to collaboration and partnership. For an example, see [Irvine Valley College 2023-2026 Basic Needs Plan](#), which includes information about student

demographics (all students and basic needs service recipients); program history, activities, and accomplishments; goals and objectives; evaluation strategies; and funding allocations.

In [Equity in the Time of Need: Best Practices and Recommendations for California's College Basic Needs Centers](#) (November 2022), JBAY describes how several California community colleges used data to drive the prioritization of student basic needs in campus strategic plans, among other best practices. Colleges are encouraged to refer to the case studies in this report.

Leadership

Buy-in from campus leadership is essential. Bringing data that shows there is need and interest for basic needs services on campus can help generate buy-in. A needs assessment is an important tool for this.

Another way to get buy-in from college leaders is to share testimonials from real students (or to have the students share their own stories) about their needs and how having these needs met contributes to or would contribute to their academic success. Note that it is important to ensure that students feel comfortable sharing their stories, and that these students are authentically engaged, not tokenized.

Prepare a set of brief talking points that leadership (e.g., student services dean) can have on hand for meetings with other leaders and partners. Link basic needs to the college's goals (e.g., retention) and key frameworks (e.g., social determinants of educational success).

Work with your college's basic needs task force. The task force can provide input and support, especially with getting buy-in from administration, and they can also help ensure that the basic needs center services are aligned with other activities and initiatives on campus. For a brief and practical discussion of who should be on the task force and what they should do, see The Hope Center's [How to Form a Basic Needs Task Force](#).

Financial Aid and Administrative Services

Partner with the financial aid, admissions, and records departments to identify students who may be at increased risk for basic needs insecurity, including Pell Grant recipients, young adults currently or formerly in foster care, students who have experience with the justice system, Veterans, student parents, and students experiencing homelessness (John Burton Advocates for Youth, 2020b).



Work with financial aid to identify information that should be cross-posted at your campus offices and opportunities for cross-training staff. See JBAY's [Promising Partnerships: Supporting College Student Success Through Collaboration Between Basic Needs and Financial Aid Offices](#) for recommended practices. Financial aid partnerships are discussed in much more detail in the [Financial Aid and Taxes](#) and [Financial Resources for Parenting Students](#) sections.

Partner with the admissions office to ensure high school students understand the resources that are available to them. Encourage admissions to highlight information about basic needs services on all admissions marketing materials (John Burton Advocates for Youth, 20206).

Have basic needs staff present during admitted students' days or new student orientations (John Burton Advocates for Youth, 20206).

Student Support Services

Work with programs that can provide CalFresh work exemptions (e.g., Career Technical Education programs, work study) to apply for status as a Local Program to Increase Employability (LPIE) and on outreach strategies to ensure that students are aware of this opportunity.

Collaborate with equity staff to learn more about the unmet needs, concerns, resources, and interests of diverse student groups on campus.

Discuss with programs that serve specific student populations how the basic needs center can be more inclusive and supportive (e.g., Veterans services, DSPS, parenting students' programs). Provide outreach materials to these programs; present about the basic needs center at student events or group meetings.

Partner with student services on campus for outreach and tabling opportunities (EOPS/CARE, Veteran's Programs, Foster youth, DSPS, Student Equity, etc.).

Work with health center staff on campus to understand signs of basic needs insecurity and homelessness and to refer students for support. For example, Saddleback College reached out to students who reported fainting and having low blood sugar levels and learned that many were homeless (Schoolhouse Connection, 2021a).



Students and Student Ambassadors

The Chancellor's Office's previous Vision for Success and current Vision 2030 emphasize the importance of student-centered approaches to address challenges and design solutions.

"One of the surest ways to fulfill this commitment is to bring students to the table and authentically

engage them to shape programs and set guidelines for decisions. With a representative group of students as co-designers, reform efforts are much more likely to work for everyone. Moreover, once students are invested in a reform initiative, they can play a critical role in advocating for it. ...

“When engaging with students, it is important to reach out to students from a diverse range of backgrounds, experiences, and life circumstances—not just those who are financially able to participate or those in campus leadership roles. Students may also need time and training to engage in complex planning processes.” (Foundation for California Community Colleges, 2021, pp. 17-18)

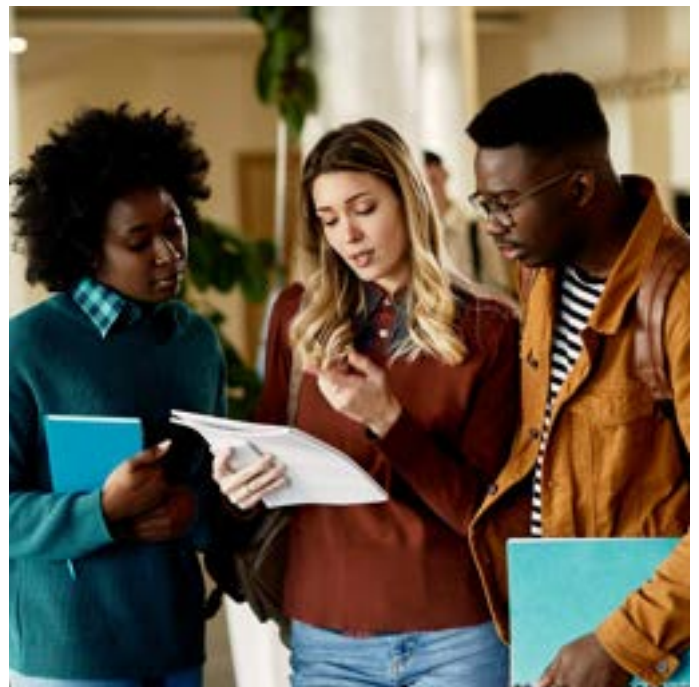
Continually engage students in all aspects of developing and implementing the basic needs center: campus needs assessments, resource mapping, center planning, service design, outreach, service delivery and evaluation, etc.

Partner with student organizations for events, outreach, and volunteers, including student government, student ambassadors, cultural clubs, athletic teams, etc. For example:

- Student organizations could take turns “adopting-a-month” for the food pantry, hosting a food drive or collection when it is their month.
- Athletic events can be another donation drive opportunity.
- Student government can pass a resolution in support of addressing student hunger and homelessness, can serve on a basic needs task force, and can provide valuable input.
- Student civic leadership or volunteer groups on campus can supply volunteers.

Student volunteers are important, but student workers provide a different level of support for basic needs center sustainability. Also, student workers who have lived experience of basic needs insecurity can draw on their experience to share insights with staff and to provide authentically welcoming and relationships with their peers (John Burton Advocates for Youth, 2020b).

Advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion is one area where students can provide unique support. Student cultural organizations and programs can serve as trusted brokers to their members, help design messaging that is customized to that audience, and share insights about what resources are needed, codesign and deliver events, and offer other valuable supports.



There are a number of student groups that support racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse student populations that have historically been educationally disadvantaged or at greater risk for basic needs challenges. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Black Student Unions (BSUs)
- Pride Alliances and Queer Student Unions
- [Umoja](#)
- [Puente Project](#)
- Asian American student organizations
- Dreamers Club and other organizations for students with undocumented status
- Clubs for students with disabilities
- [Mathematics, Engineering, Science Achievement \(MESA\)](#) program
- First-Generation and Low-Income Partnership (FLIP) club
- Groups for students who are returning citizens (who have formerly experienced incarceration)
- Student Veterans organizations
- Clubs for student parents

Colleges are strongly encouraged to use a **peer-to-peer outreach program** or model as one strategy to engage students in services. Peer outreach is an effective way to help students not only learn about resources that are available, but feel more comfortable accessing them. In addition, peer outreach programs benefit the student leaders who are involved in them.

Colleges can develop their own outreach programs or adopt preexisting peer-based models. Existing models may have an associated cost in exchange for training, support, and program structure.

The [California Community Colleges Student Ambassador Program](#) operated by FoundationCCC is one preexisting model that colleges can adopt. FoundationCCC has been operating the Student Ambassador Program since 2017. This program trains student leaders on CCC campuses around basic need resources, effective peer-to-peer outreach strategies, and provides professional development opportunities throughout the ambassadorship. Through this program, students also receive a stipend for their valuable contributions in peer-to-peer outreach. To learn more about the Student Ambassador Program, please visit the program website to complete an interest form.



Programs for Current and Former Foster Youth

Students who were formerly or are currently in foster care experiencing higher risk of homelessness and higher rates of basic needs insecurity than average. There are also several campus programs (Guardian Scholars, [NextUp](#)) designed to support them, as well as unique opportunities ([Chafee Grants](#)). Students with foster care experience are also often eligible for a CalFresh work exemption and for Medi-Cal up to age 26.

Basic needs center staff are encouraged to form strong partnerships with programs serving current and former foster youth, and to learn about their unique programs and supports. [JBAY](#) has a wide array of learning materials on supporting these students. Swipe Out Hunger also has a Supporting [Foster Youth Guide](#) that is specific to food pantries and hunger programs.

Faculty

Partner with faculty to provide extra credit to students who engage in basic needs-related work (John Burton Advocates for Youth, 2020b).

Encourage faculty to include a basic needs statement in their syllabi and/or welcome letters. See the section on [Welcoming and Trauma-Informed Services and Outreach](#) for more.

Participate in department meetings to help faculty understand the extent of student basic needs insecurity, what resources are available, and how they can support in a sensitive way.

Engage faculty as allies in the work, for example as grant writers; to solicit student volunteers; to distribute surveys; and to integrate basic needs work into curricula (e.g., writing assignments on basic needs insecurity, nutrition handouts and materials that can be shared at the food pantry).

Faculty who are engaged in work related to food science and nutrition, social work, psychology, sociology, poverty, equity, etc. may have additional suggestions.

IV.B. Maximizing Students' Access to Public Benefits and Local Resources

Basic needs centers have an important role to play in providing one-stop access not only to supports offered by the college, but by linking students to external supports. Many California community college students are eligible for local and county resources, federal programs, and/or state benefits that can reduce the burden of their basic needs expenses.

BenefitsCal.com

BenefitsCal.com is a central portal that launched in September 2021 to help Californians apply for and manage their federal and state benefits. It is designed to be a user-friendly, one-stop shop to apply for CalFresh, CalWORKs, Medi-Cal, and other programs. In addition to the streamlined application, it features information about benefits programs and a chat based screening tool. The website can be accessed in 21 languages and dialects. All California counties have transitioned to using BenefitsCal.com as a one-stop-shop.

Later sections in this toolkit (especially the section on [Connecting Students to CalFresh](#)) include information about how to help students apply for specific benefits. You can also help students by:

- Posting and sharing information about BenefitsCal.com, so they know where they can apply for multiple supports at once.
- Familiarizing yourself with the BenefitsCal.com screening tool and application form, so you can speak knowledgeably about it to students.
- Registering as a Community Based Organization (CBO) in order to assist students with applying for benefits directly.

Overview of Federal and State Benefits

Specific federal and state benefits are discussed elsewhere in this toolkit, under their relevant topics (e.g., Food Security Services). To avoid repetition, this section directs readers to where they can find more detailed information in this toolkit.

Nutrition Benefits

CalFresh: monthly benefits for Californians with low income, specifically for purchasing food (including seeds and food-producing plants). Funds are distributed via Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card.

Learn more in this section of the toolkit: [Food Security Services](#).

Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program: supplemental nutrition benefit program for Californians with low income who are pregnant, who have recently experienced pregnancy loss, or who are parents or guardians of infants or young children.

Learn more in this section of the toolkit: [Food Security Services](#).

Cash Benefits

CalWORKS is a public benefit service that provides cash aid and services to eligible families in all 58 counties. CalWORKs is the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program for parents of children under age 18 in California, and it is operated by county welfare departments.

Learn more in this section of the toolkit: [Support for Parenting Students](#).

Medical Benefits

Medi-Cal is California's version of Medicaid, an insurance program that provides free or low-

cost health services (including dental care, maternity care, emergency services, behavioral health treatment, etc.).

Learn more in this section of the toolkit: [Physical & Mental Health Services](#).

Encouraging Students to Apply for Federal and State Benefits

Creating and fostering a campus culture that encourages students to access the variety of public benefits which they are likely eligible to receive is an important variable that will impact whether or not students seek these resources. Below are strategies that other colleges have used effectively to encourage students to apply for benefits—and to generate buy-in among faculty and staff.

Identify specific groups for outreach: e.g., independent students with a Student Aid Index (SAI) (previously known as an Expected Family Contribution) of \$0-1,500 who answered “no” to whether they received public benefits on the FAFSA.

Several of the following strategies are drawn from [Benefits Access for College Completion: Lessons Learned from a Community College Initiative to Help Low-Income Students](#), which describes learnings from the Benefits Access for College Completion (BACC) initiative. Readers are encouraged to read the full report.

Promote BenefitsCal.com widely as a one-stop-shop for applying for federal and state benefits.

Flag students’ records: several colleges in the BACC initiative placed a flag, or positive service indicator, on the records of students who met their identified outreach criteria.

- Students can see these flags when they log in to enroll or register, and the flag is removed once the student completes a pre-screen survey.
- Alternatively, or in addition, the flag can be used to alert relevant staff (financial aid, counselors) to recommend the student access the basic needs center or complete a screening tool.



Faculty and staff may feel like it’s “not their place” to share information about the basic needs center or public benefits, out of concern that they may offend students. During presentations to faculty and staff, communicate the message that basic needs services contribute to student success, and **it is the responsibility of everyone who comes into contact with students to support their success.**

Promote the [Public Benefit Finder for California Students](#) (California Competes) for students to easily find benefits that they may be eligible for, including tax credits, federal and state benefits, financial aid benefits, etc.

Encourage faculty and staff to share information with all students, and not publicly single-out specific students whom they think might be experiencing financial insecurity.

Some students may feel that benefits are not for them, such as if they are used to working full-time or if their family had a strong culture of not accessing benefits. Describe benefits as **temporary assistance that are intended to help people, like them**, who temporarily have lower incomes—while they are pursuing a degree or parenting, for example.

Connecting Students to Local Resources

One of the most important roles that the basic needs coordinator can fulfill is connecting students to local resources, including **county, city, and community-based** services. Below are examples of key potential partners and how they may be engaged.

For liability reasons, it is **not** recommended that colleges refer students to individual medical, mental health, or legal professionals. If you are sharing referrals on your website to clinics, community mental health agencies, and other such providers, state that it is for informational purposes only and that the college does not make claims or guarantees about the services.



Colleges are encouraged to access 2-1-1 (<https://www.211ca.org/>) to learn about the various basic needs resources and providers that are available in their community—housing referrals, mental health resources, utility assistance, job training, and much else.



Mt. SAC developed a Basic Needs Resources Center Ally Training for their faculty and staff, and presented a blueprint version of the training at the California Higher Education Basic Needs Alliance (CHEBNA). Rigo Estrada, MSW, Director, Basic Needs Resources, and Lorena Cardozo, MS, Student Services Program Specialist, developed the ally training to provide staff and faculty with information to raise awareness and better support students facing basic needs insecurities. The blueprint version addresses basic needs terminology and data, understanding trauma and resilience, behavior cues, and more. Visit <https://www.cccstudentmentalhealth.org/resource/basic-needs-resource-center-ally-training-blueprint/> to view the blueprint training and learn more.

Community Partner	Sample Supports	Learn More in this Toolkit Section
County social services	Provide guidance to campus staff about rules and regulations Help students enroll and remain in public benefits programs	Parenting' Students Tax Credits and Benefits Housing Support Services Connecting Students to CalFresh Connecting Students to Medi-Cal/ Covered California
Continuum of Care (CoC)	Helping students experiencing homelessness get into housing	Housing Support Services
County affordable housing agency	Help students with low housing security get on waitlists or into affordable housing	
Transitional housing or emergency shelters	Provide emergency housing Verify a student's homeless status (see Financial Aid and Taxes section)	
Utility provider	Connect student to LIHEAP or FERA discounts Provide free weatherization services	
Local nonprofits focused on homelessness and housing	Can serve as a housing referral source May be interested in long-term solutions	
Local childcare resource and referral agency	Help students identify an affordable local childcare provider	Financial Resources for Parenting Students
Transportation authority	Partner to provide free or reduced cost transit passes	Transportation
Regional food bank	Serve as partner for your food pantry	Food Security Services
Local food pantries	Another place where students can access food resources	
Grocery stores and restaurants	May donate or provide discounted gift cards	
Local WIC (Women, Infants & Children nutrition program) office	Enroll students in WIC Provide WIC nutrition education	

Community Partner	Sample Supports	Learn More in this Toolkit Section
Clothing closets	Supply students with free (or sometimes low-cost) clothing	Hygiene and Living
Laundromats	May participate in Laundry Love, which offers free laundry services to people experiencing homelessness	
Health centers/clinics	Provide low- or no-cost healthcare Provide Medi-Cal enrollment support	Physical and Mental Health Services
Mental health providers	Provide low- or no-cost healthcare	
City or county library	Computer lab space Technology lending programs (e.g., laptop checkouts)	Digital Equity Services
Legal aid	Host “office hour” events on campus Serve as a referral source for specific issues, such as immigration	
Tax provider	Tax preparation workshops	
Domestic violence center	Counseling, legal guidance	

County Liaisons. Relationships with **county staff** can be tremendously useful for understanding and helping students navigate benefits enrollment and county services.

With the passage of [AB 1326](#), each county human services agency is required to designate at least one staff person to serve as a point of contact and liaison for public higher education institutions in the county. The purpose of this county liaison position is explicitly to help bridge the gap between the number of students who are eligible for social services programs (including CalFresh, CalWORKs, and Medi-Cal) and the number of students who actually enroll.

Below are useful resources to support coordination between the basic needs center and the county liaison.

- The Council for Career Education created a Campus-County Partnership Toolkit (October 2024) that describes why these partnerships are important and suggests strategies to use these partnerships to drive outcomes. The Toolkit encourages colleges to start small by focusing on a single task to build the campus-county relationship, and outlines a more robust, four-step action plan (Define goals and personnel; Conduct activities to improve outreach and streamline application; Structure the process for sharing information; Monitor and share progress).

- CSU Chico's CalFresh Outreach website houses AB 1326 resources on their [Templates & Resources](#) page, including links to best practices webinar, lists of county and campus contacts, and a guidance letter summarizing the legislation and staff responsibilities.

IV.C. Collecting, Reporting, and Using Basic Needs Data

Data collection and reporting is a necessary component to understanding which students are using services offered by basic needs centers and how well these services are supporting students' well-being and academic progress. Per AB 132 (Postsecondary Education Trailer Bill), colleges are required to collect and report data regarding basic needs center operations and services (see [Appendix B](#) for full requirements).

The Chancellor's Office is requiring colleges to provide both programmatic and student-level data associated with basic needs centers to meet state reporting requirements. There are also opportunities for colleges to collect additional data to inform service and program improvements. It is important for colleges to engage multiple interest-holders throughout the process described below of designing research questions, collecting and analyzing data, reporting the results, and using data for decision-making. This could include the college's basic needs task force, the college's research board, or other faculty, staff, and leaders. It should meaningfully include student input, and results should be shared back to the student population, as a best practice (Wolff-Eisenberg & Dahl, 2022).



Data Collection and Reporting

For student-level data reporting, colleges should use the Chancellor's Office Management Information System (MIS) Basic Needs data element within the Special Populations file (SG23). This data element is used to indicate services and/or supports students receive through the Basic Needs Center at the college. Colleges should report all services and supports participating students receive, including food, housing, transportation, mental health, child care, physical health and hygiene, and technology support. Colleges should flag a student as having received a basic need service if either they received a direct service from the basic needs center OR the basic needs center made a referral to an on/off campus service or resource. (The college is not obligated to determine if the student actually accessed the service to which they were referred.) In addition, colleges should report any direct aid provided to students using basic needs funds within the Student Financial Aid file (SF21, GT).

College staff should refer to the [MIS Data Element Dictionary](#) for full technical definitions. Program, institutional research, and IT offices should coordinate to integrate basic needs center student data collection with the college's overall student information system.

In addition, colleges will also be required to report program-level data, including types of services offered and how state funds are being used. Program-level reporting will occur through NOVA. The Chancellor's Office will review and update data reporting requirements as necessary and communicate changes to the field.

Beyond the data collected for required reporting, colleges and districts may decide to collect additional data to further understand the impact of basic needs services. The Chancellor's Office encourages colleges to participate in the #RealCollegeCalifornia survey to better understand persistence of basic needs insecurity and the student populations most impacted on their campus. This annual survey is administered by the [CEO Affordability, Food & Housing Access Taskforce](#) and in partnership with The RP Group. Colleges can apply to join the [Real College California Coalition](#), which includes participation in the survey.

Colleges may also choose to conduct their own supplemental quantitative data collection and/or qualitative data collection such as surveys, focus groups, and interviews. Qualitative data collection can help deepen the understanding of students' needs and experiences. Periodically, the Chancellor's Office also conducts qualitative studies focused on students' access to services and their outcomes.



Here are examples of excellent resources that colleges can use to develop or modify additional data collection instruments:

- [Turning Basic Needs Assessments into Action](#) (2022), The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice
- [Pantry Basics Toolkit: A Guide to Build and Strengthen Your Campus Pantry](#) by Swipe Out Hunger
- [Guide to Assessing Basic Needs Insecurity in Higher Education](#) (2019), The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice
- [Researching Basic Needs in Higher Education: Qualitative and Quantitative Instruments to Explore a Holistic Understanding of Food and Housing Insecurity](#) (2017), California State University (CSU) Basic Needs Initiative

The Chancellor's Office uses the data reported by colleges and districts to conduct system-wide research on programs and students' progress. The Chancellor's Office uses data analysis and research to inform policies and regulations, funding, and guidance and support for colleges. The agency also encourages individual colleges and districts to conduct their own analyses to understand trends and inform decision-making locally.

College program staff should work with their institutional research office in order to design an appropriate program evaluation and tools for communicating results, such as written reports and data dashboards.

Data Analysis and Program Evaluation Methods

Designing appropriate research questions and evaluation methods is a critical component to using data for the implementation of basic needs centers. Research questions should aim to investigate students' access to services, the impacts of services on students' well-being, and the impacts of services on students' academic outcomes, and to identify potential equity gaps.

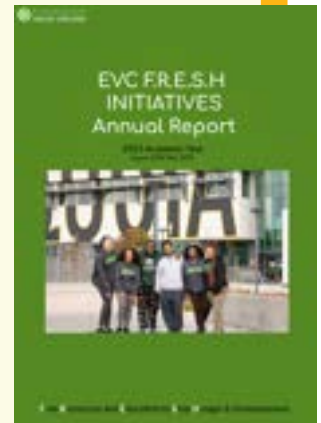
Examples of research questions include:

- Is this college basic needs center achieving its core functions and required activities? Beyond required activities and functions, what other services are offered by the basic needs center?
- How are basic needs center services integrated with other college support services and programs (e.g., Financial Aid, EOPS, DSPS, NextUp)?
- Are basic needs center services having an impact on the basic needs security and academic outcomes of participating students?
- Which students on campus are accessing basic needs center services and what are the differences in outcomes by different student groups, according to their demographic backgrounds and academic goals? What equity gaps exist and need to be addressed?

When designing a program evaluation, it is important to consider a comparison group, also known as a control group, for the data analysis. A comparison group should represent students who are most similar to students who access the basic needs center. For example, data on students who receive basic needs services can be compared to data for students who would likely benefit from these services, but are not participating. Defining students who would likely benefit from basic needs services may be based on metrics such as their income, financial aid receipt, and/or participation in other supportive services programs. Using this type of comparison group allows researchers to best assess the impact of receiving basic needs services, when all other student characteristics are similar.

Researchers and program staff can use different statistical methods to analyze program impacts and equity gaps. Comparing descriptive statistics and using methods such as disproportionate impact calculations are often used as a starting point for evaluation. Other common methodological approaches for educational program evaluation include propensity score matching and difference-in-difference regression analysis. The latter two methods allow researchers to estimate the program impacts, while controlling for confounding variables, such as students' socioeconomic and demographic characteristics.

The [Evergreen Valley College \(EVC\) F.R.E.S.H. \(Food, Resources, and Education to Stop Hunger & Homelessness\) Initiative](#) annually develops a colorful, easy-to-read report that displays summary information about that year's internal and external partnerships; number of students and community members served; demographic information of those served; and academic outcomes for all FRESH Market users, as well as for FRESH Market users of specific races and ethnicities. Each data point compares FRESH users to EVC students as a whole. These data inform recommendations within the report for future program improvement.



View the [2022-2023 report](#) as an example.

Leveraging Data and Program Evaluation for Decision-Making

Data collection and analysis is central to understanding the effects of the implementation of basic needs centers and continual improvement of services. Collecting and understanding data can help colleges make informed decisions on areas such as program capacity and staffing levels, effective service models, and student outreach methods. The following are examples of how colleges can leverage data to support decision-making, including real examples.

- **Program capacity:** After collecting data on how many students are receiving services from the basic needs center, College A identifies that twice as many students are requesting housing support services compared to transportation support services. As a result, the college reviews their staffing capacity for these two areas to ensure resources are distributed appropriately. College A develops additional research questions to investigate the reasons why more students are seeking housing support and what other services they can provide to meet students' needs.
- **Effective service models:** College B analyzes data for students who access the on-campus food pantry. The data shows that parenting students are more likely to access the food pantry during evenings and weekends. Currently the food pantry is only open one evening per week and one weekend per month. In order to make food pantry services more accessible to student parents, College B decides to expand food pantry hours during evenings and weekends.
- **Resource allocation and partnership formation:** Comprehensively mapping what services and resources are already available on campus or in the community can help college basic needs centers better understand what resources they should provide, when they should refer, and with whom they should partner. For example, Lake Tahoe Community College conducted a needs and service landscape analysis that resulted in a visual campus ecosystem of support, which helped to guide their partnership

decisions around community housing (see [Equity in the Time of Need: Best Practices and Recommendations for California's College Basic Needs Centers](#), pp. 20-21, for details and ecosystem image).

- **Student outreach:** Humboldt State University conducted an evaluation of its Oh SNAP! food security program that involved interviews with Oh SNAP! staff, focus groups with students who use Oh SNAP! services, and interviews with student users and non-users. The evaluation surfaced several important challenges (e.g., the food pantry was not centrally located; CalFresh eligibility messaging was mixed) and important recommendations. These identified strategies included developing outreach about Oh SNAP! services and broadly disseminating information to students through orientation, campus publications, and online and on-site postings (Crutchfield & Maguire, 2019).



Beyond measuring and informing basic needs service delivery, findings from data analysis and program evaluation can also be used to inform college's overall strategies for students' academic success and Guided Pathways efforts. This type of analysis and planning requires using short-, medium-, and long-term metrics for student outcomes. The Chancellor's Office *Vision 2030* and Guided Pathways key performance indicators identify specific metrics for student success, such as term-to-term persistence and degree completion. System, district, and college implementation and improvement plans should incorporate both how well basic needs center services are improving students' basic needs security and to what extent services are impacting students' academic success. The following is an example of using basic needs center data to inform student success and equity strategies:

- **Student Success and Equity:** College District D wants to evaluate whether students who receive basic needs services are more likely to persist from Fall to Spring Term.

The basic needs center and Institutional Research staff design an evaluation and find that students who receive basic needs services are twice as likely to persist, compared to students who do not receive services. However, their evaluation also reveals that male and part-time students who receive services do not experience improvements in persistence. As a result, the basic needs center team decides to work with the Guided Pathways Success team to further examine these equity gaps and develop strategies to improve services for these student groups. In addition, they decide to conduct a follow-up evaluation in one year to measure the impact of their changes.

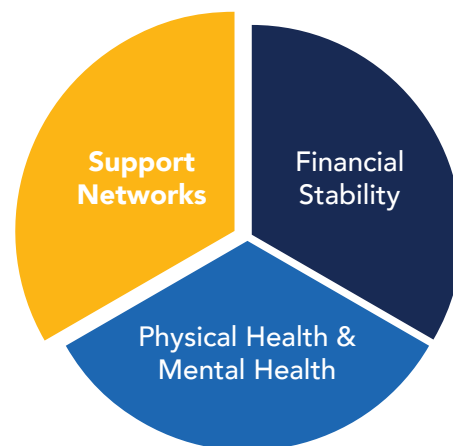
Evaluating basic needs services, setting goals and objectives, and making program improvements is an iterative process. One tool that colleges may find useful is the [Basic Needs Services Implementation Rubric](#) developed by Education Northwest, which was informed in part by survey data from 17 California community colleges. Colleges can use the rubric to assess their stage of implementation across a wide variety of basic needs services indicators and set goals for full implementation.

Data Collection and Program Improvement Cycle



Image 6: Three-part graphic illustrates that data collection and program improvement is a continual, iterative cycle.

Part V: Strategies to Address the Social Determinants of Educational Success: Support Networks



In its report based on strategy sessions with Chancellor's Office leadership, *Advancing Students' Financial Stability: A Framework for the California Community Colleges*, Jobs for the Future (JFF) defines the "Support Networks" determinant as "Consider[ing] communities in the student's life that contribute to overall well-being and a sense of belonging, including connections to campus staff, faculty, administrators, peer groups, coworkers, supervisors, mentors, and family."

This section describes the essential role that basic needs centers can serve in fostering students' support networks and their feelings of belonging in the college community.

V.A. Welcoming and Trauma-Informed Services and Outreach

When basic needs services, such as emergency housing referrals, are available on campus, there are common reasons why some students don't use them. One major factor is how the student feels about approaching the service (Crutchfield & Maguire, 2018). Students are often reluctant or embarrassed to seek basic needs support, or blame themselves, and they are likely to avoid using that support if the attitude of staff or volunteers is unfriendly or dismissive. Students are also less likely to engage with services if the website is difficult to navigate.

Six Principles of a Trauma-Informed Approach

1. Safety
2. Trustworthiness and Transparency
3. Peer Support
4. Collaboration and Mutuality
5. Empowerment, Voice and Choice
6. Cultural, Historical, and Gender Issues

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014

It is paramount that basic needs centers (and their websites or outreach) adopt a **trauma-informed approach**, provide a warm and inviting atmosphere, and make students feel that the services are there to support them (Crutchfield & Maguire, 2018). Watch [Applying Trauma Informed Principles to Food Security and Basic Needs](#), a February 2022 webinar from John Burton Advocates for Youth (JBAY), to learn more about integrating a trauma-informed approach at your center.

In addition to being trauma-informed, a consistent and explicit commitment to **unconditional belonging** fosters an environment that is inclusive. For example, the [Basic Needs Center at University of California, Berkeley](#), has the explicit goal of "fostering belonging and justice." One strategy for doing so is ensuring that basic needs staff and volunteers are reflective of the racial, ethnic,

linguistic, and cultural populations of the student communities they serve. See the [Hiring a Basic Needs Coordinator](#) section to learn more.

Recognize as well that many students are experiencing additional fear or anxiety in this political and cultural climate, whether for themselves, their loved ones, or the broader community. Intentional, explicit messaging that the basic needs center welcomes and supports all students can help ensure that students who would benefit from basic needs these services will access them—including Dreamers and students with undocumented status, LGBTQIA2S+ students, and students with disabilities.

Syllabus Statements

One of the requirements of AB 132 is encouraging faculty to share information about basic needs services in their syllabi. Provide a short, informative, and nonjudgmental statement for faculty to use that emphasizes that the basic needs center is welcoming and inclusive. Include brief, specific information about what supports are available and how students can access them (i.e., contact information, web address). To further address stigma, provide a version in Spanish as well.



MiraCosta Community College CARE (Campus Assessment, Resources and Education) [created a flyer](#) to share with faculty that has basic information about why a syllabus statement is important and three options that faculty can use.

El Camino College created a flyer with Sample [Syllabus Statements to Support Student Success](#). These statements address basic needs resources; student resources for Veterans, students with disabilities, and students who are undocumented; and other topics.

Additional examples include:

Adapted from [MiraCosta Basic Needs Syllabus flyer](#)

"It can be difficult to be present and maintain focus if you have challenges meeting basic needs such as a place to live, access to food, consistent transportation, and more. These challenges may impact your personal and academic success and we are here to help. Our [basic needs center, program, or team] provides assistance with locating resources on- and off-campus to meet those basic needs. I urge you to speak with me so that I may submit a CARE referral on your behalf. You may also visit [website] or contact [email] for further support, resources, or information. For additional available resources, please review the CARE Resource Guide for Basic Needs linked on their website."

Adapted from [University of Colorado, Boulder, Women & Gender Studies](#)

"I believe that in order to learn, students need to have their basic needs met: food to eat and a safe place to live. If you're having trouble with either, the campus has some

resources for you. Visit [name of campus basic needs center], open [days of the week and times], to get support with accessing these resources. You can also go to [food pantry name] on [days of the week and times] for groceries and snacks. [Add websites or contact information for other campus supports as needed, e.g., mental health referrals, student emergency aid, housing referrals]. Please don't hesitate to also approach me if you have trouble negotiating these resources."

Adapted from [Cal Poly Center for Teaching, Learning & Technology \(CTLT\), Syllabus Statements: Basic Needs Support](#)

"If you face challenges securing food, housing or other basic needs, you are not alone, and [college name] can help during this time of crisis. We invite you to learn about the many resources available to support you at [basic needs website]; by visiting [basic needs center] at [location] on [days of the week and times]; or by contacting [contact information for a specific person]. If I can help you in any way to access these resources, or if you have any questions about student care resources, please contact me so that I can assist you. I am committed to ensuring that all students have the resources they need to be able to participate in this course."

Outreach Strategies – All Students

Make sure information about the basic needs center and its website are disseminated widely!

Social media: create basic needs center accounts so your students can find you on Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, Snapchat, etc. (see images below).

Also, create sample posts and images about basic needs center resources and events, and ask your partners to share them. Engage student groups (e.g., student government) and other social media accounts that are popular among students.

Learning Management System: Prominently feature a link to your basic needs website on your college's learning management system (e.g., Canvas/Instructure). Create a "course" on your college's learning management system with information about basic needs resources and services (see image below).

Tabling and Events: Partner with other programs (e.g. EOPS/CARE, Veteran's Programs, CAFYES/Next Up, DSPS, equity, etc.) for outreach, tabling opportunities, and opportunities to present to students.

Create flyers and referral cards to share with counselors, faculty, and staff.

Provide classroom, orientation, and department meeting presentations regarding available services.

Engage student as advocates, peer ambassadors, or basic needs liaisons. Many colleges have found that peer outreach is essential for getting the word out about services. Find more ideas on this topic under Student Ambassadors.

Announce events throughout campus, in the student library, cafeteria, gym, Student Union, Financial Aid Office, Admissions and Records, etc.

Sample Social Media Posts



Image 7: Sample Facebook post from [Santa Rosa Junior College Student Resource Center](#)



Image 8: Sample Instagram post from [MiraCosta CARE](#) (Campus Assessment, Resources and Education) Team

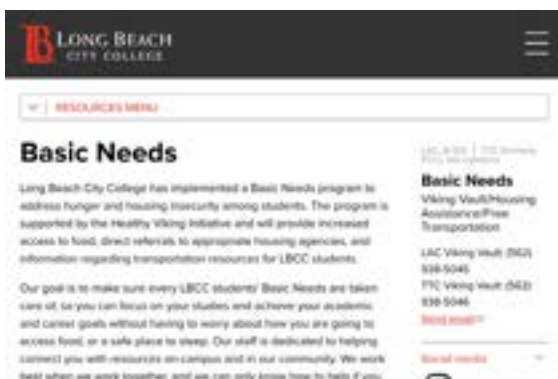


Image 9: [Long Beach City College page](#) on Canvas/Instructure for its Basic Needs "course." Student can access course modules on all the services and resources that LBCC offers to support basic needs.

“Nudging” Campaigns

“Nudging” campaigns are one tactic that basic needs programs and researchers have used to improve usage rates. Nudging essentially involves sending short, simple reminders to encourage students to engage in specific behaviors, often via text message (sometimes email).

Colleges can nudge students based on need, generating a list based on their demographic data and enrollment in programmatic services (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2021). Alternatively, colleges can send nudges to all students in a particular program, all students who have signed up for alerts from the basic needs center, or all students.



For example, nudges can be used for reminders to (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2021; Miles et al., 2020):

- File the FAFSA
- Learn about CalFresh or complete CalFresh screening
- Visit the food pantry
- Complete a survey
- Ask for help through the basic needs request form

Below are a few tips and effective strategies that researchers have identified.

Personalize: greet the student by their first name.

Less is more—keep the content short and clear. For texts, use no more than a few sentences.

Send messages around key milestones and dates (e.g., FAFSA deadline, start of new semester). Focus on one milestone at a time, and consider time of year. For example, send messages about utilities discounts during the winter, and the food pantry before finals week.

Provide an opt-out. Be strategic; send no more than 2-5 messages per month

Provide clear and actionable next steps (e.g., “Click here to see if you’re eligible for CalFresh,” “Click here to make an appointment,” “Visit the food pantry on Saturday”). Have someone available to respond to messages quickly, if questions arise. It can be useful to prepare brief responses in advance.

Be brief but clear about eligibility, emphasizing inclusivity and unconditional belonging wherever possible. E.g., “ALL students are welcome,” “To see if you’re eligible, click here.”

Outreach and Welcoming – Parenting Students

Parenting students experience higher rates of basic needs insecurity than non-parenting students overall, with single parents and parents of young children experiencing higher rates of insecurity than their counterparts who are married or parenting older children, respectively. Student parents’ basic needs challenges are also strongly related to equity barriers. Black, Hispanic or Latino, and Asian parenting students experience high rates of basic needs insecurity, with Black fathers in particular not receiving adequate attention or support (Kienzl et al., 2022; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2020).

When designing services, colleges should consider the unique demographic characteristics of parenting students (California Competes, 2024):

- The majority of California’s undergraduate student parents are students of color (72%), and almost half are Latinx (47%).
- California’s undergraduate student parents are nearly twice as likely to be women than men (15% vs. 8%). California’s undergraduate student parents are more likely to be women across all races and ethnicities.
- California’s undergraduate student parents are, on average, older than nonparenting students (average age 34 vs. 21).
- California’s undergraduate student parents are more likely to be first-generation college students (61% vs 50% of nonparenting students).
- California’s undergraduate student parents are more likely to work full-time (47% vs 18% of nonparenting students) and to receive Pell grants, a proxy for low-income status (46% vs. 37% of nonparenting students).
- California’s undergraduate student parents are more likely to receive public benefits (39% vs. 29% of nonparenting students).



Here are a few key resources that readers are encouraged to access. These resources are referenced throughout this section.

- Generation Hope. (Sept 2020). [2020/2021 Higher Ed Toolkit for Supporting Student Parents](#).
- Generation Hope. (Nov 2021). [Higher Education and Student Parent Supports: Barriers, Challenges, and Opportunities](#).
- [Aspen Postsecondary Success for Parents Initiative](#), including their [2Gen Toolbox](#).
- SchoolHouse Connection. (Updated Aug 2021). [Helping Homeless Youth Succeed in College: Strategies for Parenting Students. Tips for Helping Homeless Youth Succeed in College](#).
- California Competes. (2024). California [Student Parent Almanac](#).
- [Prioritizing Parenting Students](#). Swipe Out Hunger.

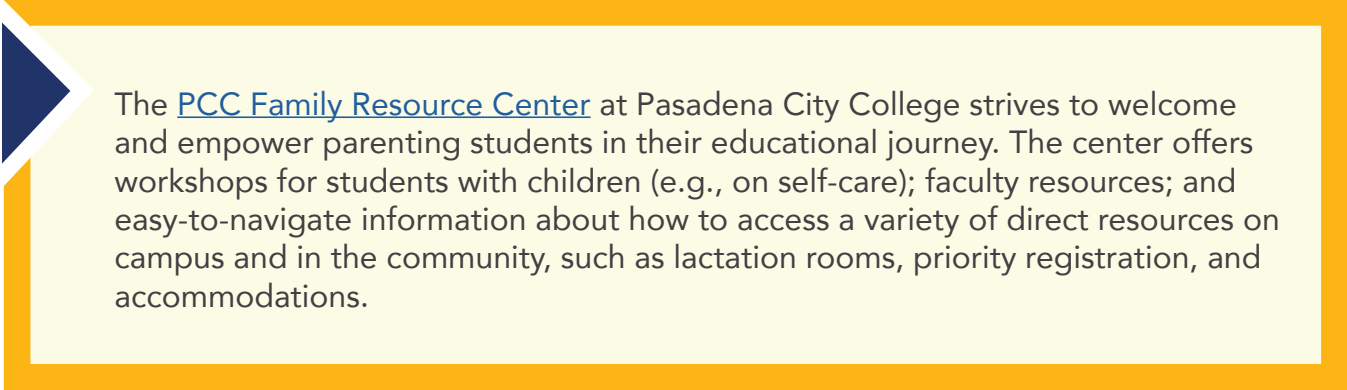
California community colleges are now required to have a webpage for student parents that identifies the resources, services, and financial aid and tax credit opportunities that are available to them (see the [Financial Resources for Parenting Students](#) section for details about what the webpage must include). [Appendix D](#) lists useful resources for developing the student parent webpage and resources to include on the webpage. The [Public Benefit Finder from California Competes](#) is especially useful because it provides simple, student-friendly descriptions of aid programs.

These resources can also be printed, posted, shared on social media, and otherwise provided to student parents. It is a good idea to post information about the student parent webpage at your basic needs center, financial aid office, and other sites around campus, too.

Sample strategies to welcome and engage parenting students on campus include:

- Include warm and welcoming language and imagery (e.g., photos from child-friendly campus events) on the student parent webpage. Include images of students with children on other basic needs resource pages as well.
- Outreach materials for the basic needs center (social media posts, flyers, posters, etc.) should include images of parenting students.
- Build recognition and unconditional belonging of parenting students into campus programs and supports, with special attention to Black fathers (Kienzl et al., 2021).
- When advertising events, include information about whether the event would be appropriate for children (including ages). Normalize the presence of children on campus through events that are designed for them, such as trick-or-treating (SchoolHouse Connection, 2021b). Consider all basic needs center events, such as CalFresh screening and financial counseling events, through this lens—are children welcome? *Can they be made welcome?*

- Include diapers, baby wipes, formula, and other baby and children supplies in food pantries and food drives. Have maternity clothing and/or baby/children's clothing in clothing banks, if available, or host child clothing exchanges (SchoolHouse Connection, 2021b). For example, [Woodland Community College](#) offers diapers in the food pantry and also allows students to sign up for a monthly delivery of diapers from the diaper bank.
- Work with dining services to advocate for free or discounted meals for children (SchoolHouse Connection, 2021b).
- If the basic needs center or its partners on campus provide free snacks for visitors (e.g., granola bars, apples), also keep healthy toddler and kid-friendly snacks stocked (e.g., squeezable fruit packs).
- Support the availability of multiple study lounges, play areas, and family-friendly spaces on campus, including at the basic needs center, campus child development center, off-campus family resource center, etc. Have kid-friendly toys, books, and technology on hand at your basic needs center and/or food pantry, and encourage the campus library to do so as well.
- Allow students to shop by family size or apply for extra meal swipes.
- Encourage faculty to include a basic needs statement in their syllabus that is inclusive of parenting students and caregivers. Cal Poly's Center for Teaching, Learning, and Technology has a [good example](#) with detailed parent-friendly information, and Generation Hope has a [good example you can use](#). Faculty can also send a welcome email to students at the start of the term that includes information about how to access supports on campus, and again is inclusive of parents and caregivers (see [Generation Hope's example](#)).

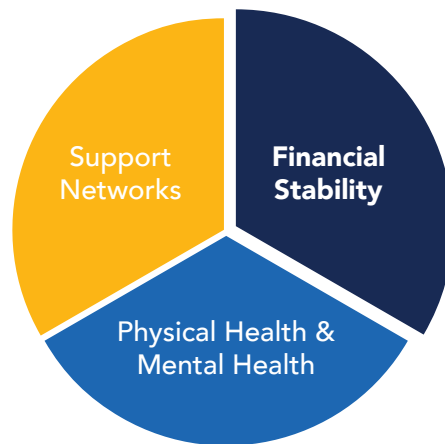


The [PCC Family Resource Center](#) at Pasadena City College strives to welcome and empower parenting students in their educational journey. The center offers workshops for students with children (e.g., on self-care); faculty resources; and easy-to-navigate information about how to access a variety of direct resources on campus and in the community, such as lactation rooms, priority registration, and accommodations.

Part VI: Strategies to Address the Social Determinants of Educational Success – Financial Stability

Financial instability is a root cause for many forms of basic needs insecurity. When a student is able to pay their rent and cover unexpected expenses like medical bills, for example, they are more likely to have the resources—money, time, attention—to persist or succeed in college.

This section discusses resources to help students lower and meet their overall cost of attendance, including tuition, textbooks, technology essentials, and other school-related expenses. In addition, it includes resources to support students experiencing financial emergencies and to help students afford stable, permanent housing.



VI.A. Financial Aid and Taxes

Students may need support completing financial aid applications, are not always aware of the financial resources that are available to them, or they may have misconceptions about them. This section explains ways that the basic needs center can help students maximize their access to financial aid and tax credits or refunds.

Partner with Financial Aid

Financial aid is a critical partner in basic needs work. The basic needs center must:

“Coordinate with counterparts in financial aid to ensure cohesion in plans to support students: In addition to offering aid and assistance, it’s the job of higher ed institutions to ensure that those responsible for doling out resources remove any barriers to access for students. [...] Student affairs and financial aid offices should be partnering to develop systems that provide clarity for students who are already juggling course loads, work schedules, and other obligations. These teams already exist to offer support but must be encouraged to improve upon internal processes to better serve students.” (Edquity, 2021)

Financial aid administrators can verify a student’s status as homeless for the purpose of receiving AB 801 benefits (e.g., priority registration) and independent status on the FAFSA. This topic is discussed in greater detail under the [Housing Support Services](#) section of this toolkit.

Opportunities for partnering with Financial Aid include:

“Partner with financial aid to identify students who identify as independent. While it is important to be mindful of and comply with privacy and federal Higher Education Act (HEA) laws, higher education personnel can work with the financial aid office to obtain aggregate data of students who indicated homelessness on the FAFSA, and send them information on support programs or resources” (SchoolHouse Connection, 2021a).

Talk to students about financial aid opportunities that they may not realize they are eligible for, such as using their childcare expenses as part of their cost of attendance to increase their financial aid.

Strengthen coordination and provide cross-training to ensure that students access all the benefits for which they are eligible. For example, some colleges have systems in place in which the financial aid office runs rosters of students who are likely to be eligible for CalFresh and proactively reaches out to them with information and basic needs center support. See [Promising Partnerships: Supporting College Student Success Through Collaboration Between Basic Needs and Financial Aid Offices](#) (JBAY), pp. 16-18, for more details.

Students may not be aware that if they are eligible for a Cal Grant and they have a dependent child, they may be eligible for an additional Students with Dependent Children (SWD) Grant of up to \$4,000-6,000. Work with Financial Aid to determine what information students need to know about this grant, and provide information (e.g., flyers, website info) through the basic needs center to parenting students and expectant parents. Visit the [California Student Aid Commission](#) website to learn more.

Identify a designated liaison, trained in both offices’ practices, to work collaboratively with the basic needs center and financial aid office. Liaisons can help cross-promote programs, ensure cohesion across forms, and help ensure students access all the benefits available. See [Promising Partnerships: Supporting College Student Success Through Collaboration Between Basic Needs and Financial Aid Offices](#) (JBAY), p. 14, for more details.

Satisfactory Academic Progress

A [recent study](#) from John Burton Advocates for Youth found that 24% of community college students do not make satisfactory academic progress (SAP) during their first two terms and are at risk of losing financial aid. The loss of financial aid is a significant driver of basic needs insecurity on many college campuses. By supporting students to regain access to financial aid, basic needs insecurity may be alleviated.

Basic needs center staff can support students with resources they need to regain good standing in their academic progress. When necessary, basic needs staff can also help students appeal the loss of financial aid both by understanding and explaining appeals policies to students and supporting students to navigate these processes, including providing support with obtaining necessary documentation. When navigating SAP policies and appeals, basic needs staff should partner with financial aid staff on campus to ensure common understanding of both the policies and the students’ circumstances, ultimately focusing on the best outcome possible for the student to maximize resources.

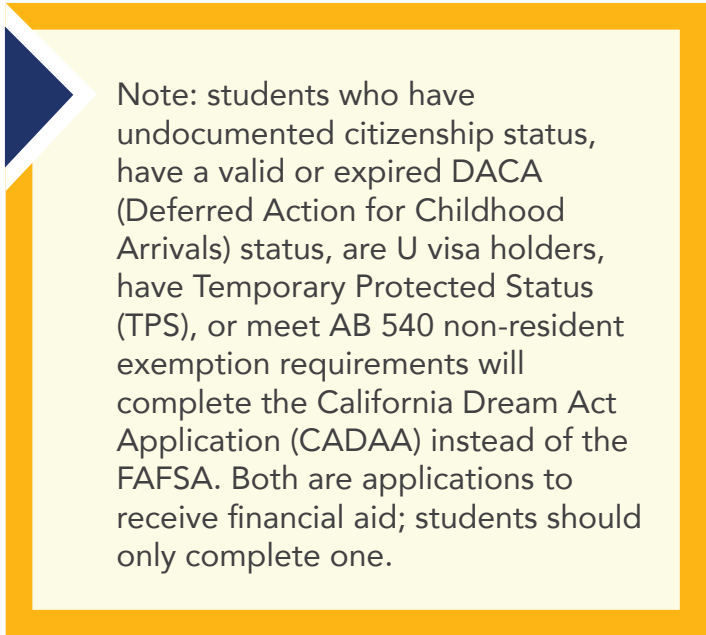
Encourage Students to Apply for Financial Aid

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is required for many types of federal aid, including grants and work study. The FAFSA is used to calculate the student's Student Aid Index (SAI)—formerly known as Expected Family Contribution (EFC) which may also be used to identify low-income students and support outreach for access to other public benefits, such as CalFresh. For undocumented/dreamer students who are not eligible for federal financial aid, completing the California Dream Act Application (CADAA) can provide access to state aid programs.

Students may also apply for the California Community College Promise Grant (CCPG, formerly known as the Board of Governors fee waiver) to have their tuition and fees waived. While CCPG is beneficial to students, basic needs and financial aid staff should still encourage students to complete the FAFSA/CADAA to maximize financial aid options.

Many students need support completing the FAFSA/CADAA. Common barriers and misconceptions regarding completing financial aid applications include they think they are not eligible for aid, they are concerned about student loans, they do not know how to complete the FAFSA, they do not have someone in their family to help them, they are unsure how to complete parents' information, etc.

Beginning with the 2024-2025 financial aid award year, the "FAFSA Simplification Act" established changes to streamline the application process (The Institute for College Access & Success, 2021):



Note: students who have undocumented citizenship status, have a valid or expired DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) status, are U visa holders, have Temporary Protected Status (TPS), or meet AB 540 non-resident exemption requirements will complete the California Dream Act Application (CADAA) instead of the FAFSA. Both are applications to receive financial aid; students should only complete one.

- The number of questions is reduced from 108 to a maximum of 36
- Students are able to see if they are eligible for a Pell Grant before they apply
- The federal aid need calculation has been simplified, and is now known as the Student Aid Index (SAI)
- Students formerly in foster care or who are experiencing homelessness do not need to have their status reverified every year

Below are several additional strategies that colleges can use to encourage students to file the FAFSA each year. Basic needs center staff are strongly encouraged to partner with the financial aid office on outreach and training opportunities.

Actively promote the [I Can Go To College website](#), even for current students. This California Community Colleges website has student-friendly information about applying for financial aid, specific grants and scholarships, and other resources and benefits.

Partner with the financial aid office to deliver workshops for current and incoming students on completing the FAFSA. Be sure to prepare students in advance for the documents they will need to bring. Colleges may also partner with the California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) to host a Cash for College workshop.

Schedule drop-in FAFSA support events. A recent survey found that high school seniors with low income and seniors who are first-generation immigrants are much more likely than other students to say that (1) completing the FAFSA is difficult and (2) they are completing the FAFSA alone or with minimal help (Schraeder, 2021).

Students who are currently or formerly in foster care are more likely to experience basic needs insecurity than students without foster care involvement. JBAY and California College Pathways recently updated (November 2024) their [Financial Aid Guide for California Foster Youth](#) to share with students.

Provide computer lab space for completing the FAFSA, coupled with support available—encourage students to feel that they can ask for help.

Promote awareness and address misconceptions about FAFSA on social media. Colleges can find [Campaign Assets](#) to promote FAFSA college enrollment at the I Can Go To College website, including posters and social media. EAB also has a [series of factsheets and sample social media posts](#) you can use.

Share information with students who are experiencing homelessness about how to be verified as an “unaccompanied homeless youth” for the purposes of financial aid. [SchoolHouse Connection has tools](#) that can help both students and staff. Examples include:

- [Tips for Preparing for an Independent Financial Aid Interview](#) – tip sheet for students experiencing homelessness
- [Unaccompanied Homeless Youth Determination: A Guide from SchoolHouse Connection](#) – flow chart that can be printed and posted, as well as a brief overview



Appeals and Adjustments

It is also important to be aware that sometimes, a student’s FAFSA may not accurately reflect their full circumstances. For example, a student who is an unaccompanied homeless young adult may not have received independent student status on their FAFSA, or they may experience new or worsening challenges that have changed since they filed the FAFSA. This can result in a higher SAI. Students can appeal their financial aid decision through their financial aid office. Students may also experience circumstances (e.g. increased rent, high childcare costs) that require an adjustment to their cost of attendance and financial aid package.

Some colleges have made the appeals and adjustments process more public to help ensure students are aware of it; for example, Los Angeles City College has a [Professional Judgment Appeal Questionnaire](#) on the financial aid website.

However, in many cases, students may not be aware that an appeal is an option. Basic needs center staff can help them understand when an appeal might be appropriate. Students can use [SwiftStudent](#) to write a financial aid appeal letter for free.

Tax Credits

Not all students are required to file taxes, if their annual income is below a certain threshold. However, there are many tax credits and refunds that students with low or moderate income may be eligible for. The money received through these credits and refunds do not impact students' eligibility for public benefits, either. They are a good reason to encourage students to file taxes!

Students whose households earn below a certain threshold are eligible to file their federal and state taxes for free through [MyFreeTaxes](#), which is operated by the nonprofit United Way. MyFreeTaxes can connect students to local in-person assistance through Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) and other programs. Alternatively, students whose householder earn below a certain threshold can file their federal taxes for free with one of the preparers at [Free File Alliance](#).

Below are a few of the credits and refunds for which students with low or moderate income may be eligible.



To learn more, visit the JBAY website for [Tax Filing & Tax Credits: Informational Resources](#). JBAY has guides, virtual and printed tools, recorded webinars, and more to educate staff and support students directly.

Another great resource to share with students is [CalEITC4Me](#), which provides information on all of these benefit programs and more.

Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)

Students may be eligible for EITC if they are parents, are age 19 or older, or are 18 or older but are formerly or currently in foster care. They cannot be claimed as a dependent on someone else's tax return. Students need to have earned income during the year below a certain threshold, and the income limit depends on how many children they have.

EITC can lower the student's tax liability, and it is also a "refundable" tax credit: if the EITC amount is larger than the student's tax liability, they will receive the difference as a cash refund.

Students can check if they qualify and view the [income tables at the IRS website](#).

California EITC (CalEITC)

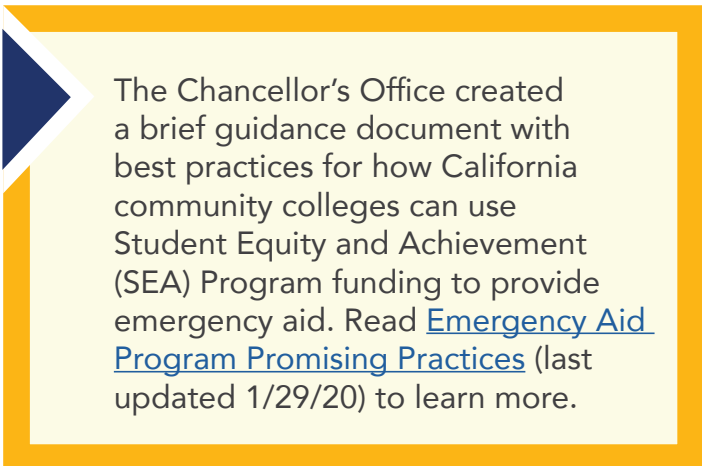
Students may be eligible for CalEITC if they are parents or are at least age 18, and they are low-income (income threshold may change annually). The amount that students are eligible for depends on how many children they have. Students are eligible if they have a Social Security Number or if they have an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN), including students who are undocumented. CalEITC is also a refundable tax credit. Students can learn more at [CalEITC4Me](#).

Tax Credits for Parenting Students

Some programs are specifically intended for students who are guardians or caregivers of children. See [Parenting Students' Tax Credits](#) and Benefits to learn more.

VI.B. Emergency Aid

Emergency grants—also known as microgrants—can provide students experiencing an emergency with small amounts of financial support that can make a big difference. Low-income students are especially vulnerable to emergencies, such as car trouble, unexpected medical expenses, and, unfortunately, many personal and familial crises. These grants, which often range from \$300-1,000 (amounts can vary), can provide students with the support needed to stay on the pathway to meet their academic goals. Colleges can use a variety of funding to provide emergency aid, including Basic Needs Centers funds, Student Equity and Achievement funds, and categorical program funds. Emergency aid does not impact students' financial aid (see "Train staff and educate students about emergency aid not impacting financial aid," below).



The Chancellor's Office created a brief guidance document with best practices for how California community colleges can use Student Equity and Achievement (SEA) Program funding to provide emergency aid. Read [Emergency Aid Program Promising Practices](#) (last updated 1/29/20) to learn more.

A growing body of evidence suggests that emergency aid programs are effective tools in supporting students stay enrolled (Geckeler, 2008). Additionally, although the programs do come at a cost, studies suggest that this cost is returned by retaining students who would otherwise leave the system (Pratt, 2016). The list below includes suggested strategies for developing a campus emergency aid program.

Examples of college emergency grant programs:

- [Los Rios Colleges Foundation - Student Emergency Fund Grants \(multiple campuses\)](#)
- [Laney College Emergency Grant Program](#)
- [Santa Barbara City College Student Emergency Fund](#)

Train staff and educate students about emergency aid not impacting financial aid. In 2024, following the FAFSA Simplification Act of 2020, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) overhauled the FAFSA. One of the changes was renaming “estimated financial assistance” (EFA) to “other financial assistance” (OFA).

Emergency aid is not considered part of OFA. ED’s FAFSA Simplification Questions and Answers page clarifies this further (guidance issued August 4, 2023):

“OFA-A5: Emergency financial assistance includes any payment of grant or loan aid to a student for unexpected expenses that are included in one of the components of COA [cost of attendance], as defined under HEA Sec. 472. For example, payments can support any unexpected expense for food; housing; course materials or equipment; or transportation (e.g., between campus and home for a death or family emergency). Institutions determine whether an unexpected expense is associated with a COA component” (emphasis added).

During the ED webinar “The FAA’s [Financial Aid Administrator’s] Role in FAFSA Simplification,” ED stated that “[Y]ou may exclude emergency financial assistance provided to the student for unexpected expenses that are a component of the student’s cost of attendance. The emergency does not have to be a federal or state declared emergency or disaster. Your school determines what is meant by an emergency for a specific student situation.”

Additionally, Dana Kelly (National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators, NASFAA) notes that “[t]he amount must be reasonable, as defined by the school; [y]ou cannot simply call a grant or scholarship emergency assistance in order to avoid treating it as OFA; [and f]ederal emergency assistance usually comes specifically designated as such” (NASFAA, 2023).

Minimize paperwork and other requirements. Requiring extensive paperwork can function as a barrier. Avoid asking for financial documentation (including the FASFA), and do not ask students to “prove” their need. Academic requirements such as a credit enrollment minimum can be used to prevent fraudulent attempts to exploit the program (Goldrick-Rab & Cady, 2017). Note, however, that colleges should document the request: “Prior to providing emergency financial assistance to a student, an institution should document the student’s request for assistance, including the unexpected expense that prompted the request. The institution should retain such documentation in the student’s file for the normal record retention period” ([FAFSA Simplification Questions and Answers](#)).

Balance effective criteria with efficiency. While your campus will need to develop a criteria to evaluate applicants and determine award amounts, the program will also need to be able to make decisions quickly. Many students with high levels of need are unlikely to be able to wait an extended period. Your campus will have to develop a system that balances need with a fair review process (Geckeler, 2008).

[Edquity](#) is a new technology/app company that provides a platform and an evidence-based evaluation program to receive, review, and disseminate funds for student aid applications. Edquity estimates that it takes approximately 5-6 weeks to set up the program with a campus. Compton College in California is one of the colleges that have utilized Edquity; [read about their partnership here](#).

Leverage other basic needs resources. In addition to providing students with monetary support, students should receive information about other basic needs resources on campus and in the community. This is one reason why a one-stop center is so important (Weissman & Schmidt, 2020).

Ask for faculty support in generating awareness. Because of the frequency with which they interact with students, faculty can play a unique role in generating awareness. Ask faculty to include information about emergency support on their syllabus (Goldrick-Rab & Cady, 2017). *For more information about how faculty can support, read about the Faculty-Student Emergency Aid Program, below.*

Advertise widely. While many colleges that have developed an emergency aid program often anticipate high levels of demand that cause them to adjust their advertising strategies, in reality these programs often receive far fewer applicants than anticipated. Advertising should not be limited due to concerns over meeting demand (Geckeler, 2008; Goldrick-Rab & Cady, 2017).

Faculty-Student Emergency Aid Program

Because they interact with students so regularly, faculty can play an important role in supporting emergency aid efforts. Various forms of faculty-run emergency aid have emerged in recent years, including the [FAST Fund \(Faculty and Students Together\)](#). Run by Believe in Students, the FAST Fund provides financial and administrative support, including help acquiring 501(c)(3) nonprofit status, which is necessary for receiving funds.

VI.C. Housing Support Services

Housing insecurity and homelessness can take many forms—from struggling to pay utility bills, to “couch surfing,” to sleeping in a homeless shelter, to living in one’s car, and many variations in between. In recent years, community colleges have developed many innovative and effective avenues of support.



Engaging Unhoused Students

In addition to students who seek out basic needs support, there are many ways to proactively identify and engage students with basic needs insecurity. For more strategies, see [Helping Homeless Youth Succeed in College: Strategies for Identifying Homeless College Students](#) (SchoolHouse Connection; updated August 2024).

Cultivate a caring and trauma-informed environment in which students feel comfortable sharing that they may be experiencing homelessness. Create opportunities for them to do so confidentially: virtual or in-person one-on-one meetings, basic needs request form, email contact, etc.

Discuss homelessness in a non-stigmatizing way. Discuss homelessness regularly as something that affects college students, that is not something to be ashamed of, and that is not a personal failing. The section on [Connecting Students to CalFresh](#) provides additional detail.

Provide trainings and workshops (potentially in partnership with the Homeless Youth Liaison) to faculty and staff about recognizing signs of possible homelessness and sensitively referring or approaching students.

Students can self-disclose when they apply for admission to a California community college through the application portal, [CCC Apply](#). This is intended to help them access available resources and supports. Students also have the opportunity to disclose homeless status on the FAFSA; this is another source of information colleges can use to identify students experiencing homelessness.

Proactively talk with students about living situations that may be treated as “homeless” for the purposes of AB 801 benefits or FAFSA independent student status. Many students who are experiencing forms of homelessness (such as temporarily living with family or friends because they have lost their housing) may not self-identify as homeless.

Work with health center staff on campus to understand signs of basic needs insecurity and homelessness and to refer students for support. For example, Saddleback College reached out to students who reported fainting and having low blood sugar levels and learned that many were homeless (Schoolhouse Connection, 2021a).



Coordinate with Homeless Youth Liaison

Under AB 801, every campus is required to have a Homeless Youth Liaison. A primary role of the Homeless Youth Liaison is verifying student homelessness for the purposes of financial aid, so the Homeless Youth Liaison is often in the financial aid office.

Students who are verified as homeless under AB 801 are eligible for a number of benefits, including priority registration, a California College Promise Grant, and potentially participation in EOPS. Financial aid administrators and the college's Homeless Youth Liaison are qualified to verify homeless status for the purposes of AB 801 benefits. Although basic needs center staff cannot verify a student's homelessness status for the purpose of AB 801 benefits, they are encouraged to learn about verification criteria so that they can communicate knowledgeably with students.



Learn more about this staff role, its requirements, and how it can contribute to a trauma-informed system of student support: [Breaking Down Barriers: Guidelines for California Community College Homeless Liaisons](#). Partnership strategies and opportunities include:

Basic needs center staff can refer students to the Homeless Youth Liaison and help explain their circumstances, with the student's permission. Basic needs staff and the Liaison should work together on a referral process that streamlines access to services and creates a warm hand-off process for students (John Burton Advocates for Youth, 2020b).

They can collaborate to ensure they are providing consistent, **trauma-informed messaging and support** to students.

They should coordinate to ensure that they are **maximizing the services that students can receive**. If the Homeless Youth Liaison understands all the supports that the student can access through the basic needs center, they will be better equipped to refer them.

They can share learnings about the **challenges and unmet needs** they are seeing in order to improve systems for students.

Documenting Homeless Status

Students who qualify as homeless can receive independent FAFSA status, which exempts them from providing parental income information. Homelessness is defined as "Lacking fixed, regular and adequate housing." This can include "couch-surfing," staying temporarily in a hotel or motel, living in a shelter, living in a vehicle, or staying someplace not normally

meant for human habitation (such as a park, abandoned building, etc.). Students must also be “unaccompanied,” which means that they are not living with a parent or guardian. Students can also qualify if they pay for their own living expenses and their housing may cease to be “fixed, regular and adequate,” such as if they are being evicted and have nowhere else to go.

Students may need support with verifying their status as homeless, and basic needs center staff can provide such assistance. If a student can obtain verification from their high school or school district homeless liaison or a Housing and Urban Development (HUD) or Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) funded shelter, no additional documentation is necessary. The SchoolHouse Connection website includes a [sample homeless determination form](#) that these entities can use as well as a [guide](#) to help students determine if they meet the definition of homelessness.



If the student cannot obtain documentation from one of these sources, the Financial Aid Administrator or the campus 801 Liaison can determine whether the student meets the definition of homeless or at risk of being homeless. SchoolHouse Connection has prepared a [set of tips](#) that can be offered to a student to prepare for the interview with the financial aid office. Note that financial aid rules allow the financial aid office to verify status based on a documented interview with the student in cases where other documentation is not available.

Be aware that the CADAA does not offer an option for a student to select that they will be verified by their financial aid administrator. Students completing the CADAA should speak to their financial aid office about how to complete the CADAA as an independent student if they do not have a determination from a high school liaison or shelter.

Free Items for Students with Verified Homeless Status

When a Homeless Youth Liaison or financial aid administrator has verified a student’s homeless status, they gain access to certain benefits (e.g., priority registration) and may be able to file FAFSA without providing their parents’ tax information. In addition, other services are available to them.

California State Identification

Students who are experiencing homelessness (as defined under the McKinney-Vento Act) can receive a free California state identification card. In order to receive their ID for no fee, students will need form “Order Request Reduced Fee or No Fee Identification Card Program (DL 932)” signed by a “qualified verifier of homelessness status.” “Educational liaisons” are permitted to sign the form, such as Homeless Youth Liaisons. Once the form is signed, the student can visit the local DMV office and complete the full application. Visit [Housing California: Get My CA Photo ID](#) for more information (not student-specific).

Birth Certificate

Students who were born in California and who are currently experiencing homelessness can request a free copy of their birth certificate. The request has to be made to the county where the student was born. Students will need to have a homeless services provider, which can include your college’s Homeless Youth Liaison, sign their [Affidavit of Homeless Status for Fee Exempt Certified Copy of Birth Certificate](#). They will then need to submit the affidavit and a birth certificate request form to their local county recorder’s office. Look up your county’s office that handles vital records in advance so you can share this information with students. Visit [SchoolHouse Connection: How to Obtain a Free Birth Certificate or ID in California: Instructions and the Law](#).

Post Office (P.O.) Box

Students experiencing homelessness—including couch surfing or otherwise lacking a fixed/permanent place of living—can request a no-cost P.O. Box at their local Post Office so that they can receive mail. The student will need to have identification, or be known to the window clerk or Postmaster, or provide a verifiable point of contact (e.g., shelter, social services office, place of employment). A student will need to complete [PS Form 1093](#) and submit it to their post office. Learn more at the [USPS website](#).



If the student’s application for a no-cost P.O. Box is denied, they can receive mail by having it sent to “[General Delivery](#).” The post office will hold their mail (no more than 30 days), and the student will need to bring valid identification in order to pick up their held mail. General Delivery mail should be addressed this way:

STUDENT’S NAME
GENERAL DELIVERY
CITY, STATE ZIP

In 2024, a bill was introduced (the Mail Accessibility and Inclusion for Low Income Families Act, or MAIL Act) to provide free post office boxes to people who are unhoused or experiencing housing instability. As of the time of writing, the bill is still pending in Congress.

Emergency Housing Grants or Vouchers

Many colleges provide an opportunity for students to request emergency housing (e.g., 7-14 days in residence hall, motel vouchers). For example, although it is not the primary purpose of their grant, Riverside City College is using a portion of its College Homeless and Housing Insecure Pilot Program (HHIP) funding to provide motel vouchers on a limited basis. (HHIP is discussed in more detail below). Other colleges may provide referrals to local community providers that provide emergency vouchers.

Learn more about best practices for implementing an emergency grant program in the [Emergency Grants and Faculty-Run Aid](#) section of this toolkit.

Continuums of Care

Each local community has a Continuum of Care entity that disseminates funding to nonprofit providers and local governments to operate permanent supportive housing, rapid rehousing programs, and transitional housing programs, and to provide supportive services to homeless households. As a condition of receiving funding, communities must establish a **Coordinated Entry System (CES)**. The goal of a coordinated entry system is to enable people experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness to access the crisis response system in a streamlined way, so they can be evaluated for the range of available services through a single point of entry and then connected to the most appropriate service. Households with the most severe needs are typically prioritized for services over those with less pronounced needs when the availability of services is limited.

JBAY maintains a [roster of CoCs in California](#), including contact information, details about whether there are youth-specific access points, and information about the community's CES.

The state of California has significantly increased its investment in addressing homelessness in recent years through the Homeless Emergency Aid Program (HEAP) and Homeless Housing, Assistance and Prevention (HHAP) Program. State budgets in recent years have authorized over \$4.45 billion to the State's 44 CoCs, 13 largest cities, and 58 counties for a variety of services for people experiencing homelessness or at imminent risk of homelessness. Funds can be used for rental subsidies, support services, and capital improvements. These programs include a set-aside for homeless youth.

In [Connecting the Dots: How Colleges Can Collaborate with Homelessness Response Systems to Address Student Needs](#) (April 2022), JBAY spotlights several California community colleges that have collaborated with their local CoCs. Strategies identified in the report include:

- Attend and represent the college at CoC board and relevant committee meetings.
- Present student basic needs data to help the CoC determine funding priorities, especially related to spending state funding for transition-aged youth.
- Leverage CoC participation to connect with local housing providers.



Community college basic needs funding included a mandate that “each Basic Needs Center must coordinate with their local homelessness response system to refer students to community resources available to address homelessness.” Cultivating relationships with the local homeless services system can take time and may not lead to immediate results. It is, however, worth pursuing, as the investment in developing relationships can pay off over the long term.

JBAY released a publication detailing opportunities for such partnerships: [Connecting the Dots: How Colleges Can Collaborate with Homelessness Response Systems to Address Student Needs](#). The following are three strategies excerpted from the JBAY publication, along with lists of colleges that have used these strategies. Please see the JBAY publication for more detail and information about the colleges’ efforts.

1. Participate in the local Continuum of Care.

Several colleges have successfully made connections to their local CoC coordinating body and gotten involved in conversations to set priorities for local funding, bringing the lens of college student homelessness to discussions where this perspective had previously been absent. In addition to making one-on-one connections with CoC staff, college representatives can attend CoC board and relevant committee meetings. Participation in these meetings can help college staff understand how these systems function and develop relationships with potential partners. College staff who attend should feel empowered to raise the issue of college student homelessness as appropriate in these conversations to begin the process of developing greater awareness around this issue. Examples of colleges that have created such connections include Cabrillo College, Fresno City College, Imperial Valley College, Long Beach City College, Napa Valley College and San Diego City College.

2. Establish relationships with housing providers.

In some cases, colleges have leveraged existing funding available through a housing provider partner and in other cases colleges have partnered with a housing provider to obtain funding with the express purpose of serving homeless college students. This has only become possible in recent years due to the availability of large state investments of new funding. New dollars are expected to continue to roll out from the State to CoCs, counties, and large cities in the coming years, and so opportunities to replicate this model are likely in the near-term. In addition, the \$100 million in one-time funding being made available over three years could be used to develop partnerships with housing providers.

Examples of colleges who have developed such partnerships include Cosumnes River College, San Joaquin Delta College, and Southwestern College.

3. Consider becoming a Coordinated Entry site or co-locate Coordinated Entry providers on campus.

All HUD-funded housing and most state-funded programs must utilize their community's CES to identify eligible individuals and families. By making the college a CES access point, students are more likely to gain access to these services and staff can be trained to better understand the nuances of student homelessness.

Bringing CES to campus does not necessarily mean that the college itself must become a separate access point. Providers from existing CES access points can instead come to campus on specified days to conduct intakes with students identified by the basic needs services programs as in need of housing support. Southwestern College and San Diego City College are examples of colleges who have done this.

Housing Resources for Students Formerly in Foster Care



This section is excerpted from [Breaking Down Barriers: Guidelines for California Community College Homeless Liaisons](#).

Transitional Housing Placement Programs (THP-Plus, THP-NMD)

THP-NMD provides supportive housing to youth ages 18-21 who are in extended foster care (non-minor dependents). Access the [THP-NMD provider directory](#) from JBAY. THP-Plus provides up to 24 months of supportive housing to former foster youth, ages 18-24.

Independent Living Program (ILP)

ILP offers training and services to assist current and former foster youth to achieve self-sufficiency and independence. ILP providers can assist by linking foster youth to resources such as housing or education. Access the [ILP provider directory](#) from JBAY.

Other Housing Referrals

Colleges can also refer students to other local and community-based housing resources. Colleges are encouraged to develop relationships with local housing providers; this can be helpful in part in overcoming bias against renting to college students and people with housing vouchers.

Collaborate with your local county or city housing authority to learn about housing programs and specific programs or access points for youth.



Use your county **2-1-1 program website** (or <https://www.211ca.org/>) to search for local emergency and long-term affordable housing resources. 2-1-1 is a great tool for coordinators, staff, and students to learn about local resources across a wide array of basic needs areas.

Develop relationships with local homeless shelters and transitional housing programs, especially those that are designed to serve youth and young adults.

Reach out to local nonprofits and community-based organizations that have housing affordability and/or homelessness as part of their mission. Collaborate to identify long-term partnership opportunities as well as short-term strategies for helping students access housing now. Local churches and faith-based organizations, such as Catholic Charities, also commonly have routes to help people experiencing homelessness access temporary housing.

Many counties maintain a **public list or map of affordable and subsidized housing units**. Try searching “[your county name] affordable housing” or searching at Affordablehousingonline.com. Identify which have units that are open to independent adults (many are restricted to seniors or families).

Some colleges and nonprofits have developed programs that house college students with alumni or older adults in the community who can provide temporary housing or homesharing. One example of this practice is [HomeShare OC](#). In some cases, students access these programs through their college, and in others, they access them through their local CES (example: Washington’s [Youth Host Home](#) program).

Support Students in Accessing Permanent Housing



The following strategies are based primarily on [There’s No Place Like Home! Helping Students on their Path to Permanent Housing](#), a presentation by Laura Foster and Ashley Rarick of the Bill Wilson Center (access the slides at the [webpage for the California Community Colleges Basic Needs Summit 2018](#)).

Help ensure that student is in a good frame of mind before talking about housing. Check to see if they have eaten today, and offer a snack.

Help the student with creating a budget so that they have a better sense of what they can afford. As part of this process, help them screen and apply for benefits for which they may be eligible.

Discuss the student's priorities, differentiating between things that are important to have (e.g., proximity to bus line or childcare) and those that would just be nice to have (e.g., dishwasher).

Provide sample questions and/or coach the student on how to call in response to a rental ad. Sample questions include:

- Is it a year lease or month to month?
- When is the unit available?
- Is parking included?
- What utilities are included in the rental price?
- If it is a shared unit: Who else lives in the house/apartment?
- Are children allowed? Are pets allowed?

Support the student in creating a renter resume. You can find many renter resume templates online that you can share with students. Key elements include:

- Student's current contact information
- Their stated objective: a couple of sentences about what they are looking for
- A few sentences about the student's background: current student at X college, etc.
- Rental history: address, length of stay, point of contact
- Employment
- Names and contact information of 2-3 people who can serve as references

A rental portfolio or binder can help a student stand out. Provide a checklist and samples of items for the student to make copies of and bring when they view a rental. Items include:

- Renter resume
- Paycheck stubs
- Letters of reference. If students have never had a rental before, sample references include a family friend who let the student stay with them for some time; a former foster parent (e.g., in a Supervised Independent Living Placement); or a current or former boss.
- Credit report. Students can get a free copy of their credit report each year from AnnualCreditReport.com.

Students may be used to looking for rentals on websites like Craigslist, and they may not be aware of affordable housing options or where to find them. Talk to them about affordable housing options, and share referrals with them or help them search online. Try searching “[your county name] affordable housing” or searching at [Affordablehousingonline.com](https://www.affordablehousingonline.com). If there are no immediate opportunities available, help them get on waitlists.



Rapid Rehousing Program/HHIP

In 2020, fourteen California community colleges were awarded grants of up to \$700,000 each through the Chancellor’s Office’s College Homeless and Housing Insecure Pilot Program (HHIP). The program has since expanded with ongoing funding and twenty-seven participating colleges, with awarded funding based on student need as defined by overall enrollment and Pell Grant recipients data. A central tenet of this funding is the requirement to partner with community-based organizations. Learn more about the original awardees: [California Community Colleges Homeless and Housing Insecurity Pilot Program: 2023 Report](#).

Rapid rehousing projects typically assist in two key ways: **housing-related financial assistance** (application fees, rental subsidies, moving cost assistance, etc.) and **housing stabilization services** (case management, employment support, referrals, etc.) (John Burton Advocates for Youth, 2020a).

College-Focused Rapid Rehousing is a housing model that combines rapid rehousing strategies (e.g., rental subsidies, “Housing First” approach) with strategies that make sense for students in higher education. In [College-Focused Rapid Rehousing: An Evidence-Based Intervention to Support Housing & Educational Retention](#), JBAY and Jovenes define the core elements of this kind of program:

- “Provide rental subsidies and supportive services to homeless students so they can live on their own and continue their education.
- Establish partnerships between housing providers, coordinated entry access points, and college campuses to make the college campus the primary center of services delivery.
- Provide navigation services on campus to conduct outreach and assessment, and connect youth with housing and services.
- Provide traditional & academic case management to students to ensure they are able to remain in housing and in college and to assist them in transitioning to independence by the end of the rental subsidy.”

Affordable Student Housing Program

In 2021, the Higher Education Student Housing and Capacity Expansion Grant Program was established in the California Budget and codified in the Education Code (Sections 17200-17204). This program, called the [Affordable Student Housing program](#) in the California community colleges, supports planning and construction of affordable student housing across the three public higher education systems. Two rounds of funding have supported construction projects at 15 California community colleges, and four intersegmental projects between California community colleges and CSU or UC campuses, for an estimated increase of 5,210 beds for California community college students with low income (College Finance and Facilities Planning Division, 2024). An additional 70 community colleges received planning grants for future projects. Read spotlights on the programs at Cabrillo College, Fresno City College, Napa Valley College, San Diego City College, and San Mateo County Community College District: [Student Housing Spotlights: Call for Affordable Housing for Student Parents and Families](#).

With the 2023 California Budget, funding for this program was shifted from the State General Fund to lease-revenue bond funding. As part of the 2024 budget, Senate Bill 155 established a Statewide Lease Revenue Bond financing framework to support the projects. As the colleges continue to plan and implement their projects, the Chancellor's Office works with State and community college leaders to implement the financing framework and provide information about the funding transition.

Innovative Projects

Many California community colleges are implementing creative approaches to student housing insecurity and homelessness that illustrate a long-term commitment to address these challenges.

[“The Village at Cerritos College](#) is California’s first community college housing project exclusively for homeless students. In partnership with Jovenes, Inc. [...] Cerritos College’s new development will provide safe and secure housing and support services to students who face housing insecurity.”

Imperial Valley College has gained national recognition for its 26 new tiny homes for students experiencing homelessness. [Learn more about the project, including challenges and lessons learned: Lotus Living Tiny Homes: El Centro, Imperial County](#).

Through the [College Success Initiative](#), Jovenes has worked with four community colleges in the Los Angeles area to develop case management and subsidy programs that help students experiencing homelessness (East LA College, Cerritos College, Rio Hondo College, and Long Beach City College). The program includes Peer Navigators who provide outreach, assessment, and support. Jovenes also leases apartment spaces as temporary housing, and operates a host home program.

Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD) partners with Los Angeles Room and Board to provide housing, meals, and support services to community college students experiencing homelessness or housing in security. LA Room and Board operate three

facilities, Excelsior House, Opportunity House, and Dunamis House, offering nearly 200 bed spaces for students in need. The eligibility requirements for the program include continuous enrollment, completion of the FASFA, maintaining of a satisfactory GPA, employment or active job seeking, and the ability to contribute \$250 to \$300 per month. Current information on the program and application details can be found at [LA Room and Board](#).

The HHIP at Barstow Community College in California formed a partnership with the New Hope Village affordable housing organization provides subsidized rents and employment assistance to students. State funding to the college helps provide subsidies for the furnished apartment complex.

Safe Parking Program

“Safe parking programs” allow people experiencing homelessness to sleep overnight in their vehicle in designated parking lots, without risk of citation. These programs often also provide somewhere to use the bathroom and onsite security staff.

Safe parking programs began in California and have since expanded to many other communities, predominately on the West Coast. In California, there have been several bills introduced to mandate safe parking programs at public higher education institutions. AB 302 (2019) would have allowed California community college students to sleep in their cars in community college parking lots; AB 1818 (2024) would have established pilot programs for overnight student parking; and AB 90 (Public postsecondary education: overnight student parking), introduced in early 2025, would require California community college and CSU districts to establish overnight parking programs, with the participation of basic needs coordinators. Although none of these bills have been made into law at the time of writing, this has not stopped local communities and colleges from continuing to explore, plan, and establish safe parking programs.



In 2021, Long Beach City College launched a pilot Safe Parking Program for enrolled students with the Safe Parking LA program. “If we can help to keep our students safe so they can better focus on their student responsibilities, this program is absolutely worth pursuing,” said Long Beach Community College District (LBCCD) Interim Superintendent-President Dr. Mike Muñoz (Long Beach City College, 2021).

A safe parking program can be relatively inexpensive, but it is still a complex task involving multiple campus stakeholders. Below are a few guiding questions for considering a safe parking program:

- Does your local county, city, or community have a safe parking program that you can partner or collaborate with? Or a local UC, CSU, or private college?
- Are there city or county ordinances in place that allow or restrict sleeping in cars on private lots? Are there permits the college will need to acquire?
- Whose buy-in will you need? With which campus departments will you need to partner?
- How will you integrate student voice in the planning and decision-making process?
- Which lot or garage will you use? Consider: current use, proximity to bathrooms and showers, security features, perceived safety.
- Will your college need to make modifications to its insurance coverage? Will students be required to complete a liability waiver in order to sleep overnight in the lot? (Consult with your campus risk management office.)
- Will the lot/garage be available 24 hours a day, or will students have to leave in the morning and return in the evening? How will parking lot staff track abandoned vehicles?
- Where will students be able to use the bathroom?
- Where/how close will students have access to campus showers?
- Are there already security staff at the parking lot or garage? If so, what additional training will they need, and who will provide it? Or will you need additional funding to expand staffing?
- Will students have to complete an application or intake process for the safe parking program? Or can it be integrated with another intake process that is already in place?
- Will the intake process include a criminal or sex offender background check?
- What rules will students have to follow? If they break the rule(s), will they still be able to participate or reapply? (E.g., students who are asked to exit the program due to alcohol or drug use on campus may be able to reapply, and would only be banned after multiple infractions, weapon use, or violence [Weare et al., 2021]).
- Will the intake process require possession of a valid driver's license and/or vehicle registration? Consider who might be excluded if a current driver license is required (e.g., people who have lost their license due to DUIs.)
- Will other individuals (e.g., staff, faculty) be eligible, or only students?
- Will students' partners, children, pets, and/or support animals be able to sleep with them?
- What supports or processes will be put in place to help students who use the safe parking program get connected to more stable or permanent housing?
- How will safe parking program data be tracked? Consider: number of students who express interest or complete an application, number of cars using the lot nightly, student surveys.

- How will you promote awareness of the program? If spaces are limited, will you set up a waitlist? How will you maintain the waitlist, and what supports can you offer in the meantime? See [Long Beach City College's flyer for their safe parking program](#) as an example



Funds for Utilities

Being able to afford utility bills is an essential component of housing security. There are programs available that can help students in low-income households pay their energy bills.

Students often don't know about these programs. Share information about them at multiple places and times (e.g., basic needs center, learning management system, orientation events). Be sure to provide students with the specific website or contact information of their local provider, as well as information about income eligibility (which can change annually).

LIHEAP. The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program is a federally funded program that offers one-time payments for heating and cooling bills, payments for energy bills in an emergency, and in-home weatherization services. Households can apply once per year. LIHEAP is operated through community organizations and energy service providers in each county. Students will typically have to provide copies of their most recent utility bill(s), shut-off notices (if applicable), income statements (e.g., paystubs), and picture ID. However, different LIHEAP providers offer different services; for example, some do not offer emergency support.

[View income eligibility.](#) | [Find providers in your county.](#) | Learn more about the [application process](#).

CARE/FERA. The California Alternate Rates for Energy Program (CARE) and Family Electric Rate Assistance Program (FERA) are discount programs for gas and electric bills. CARE and FERA can save students approximately 18-30% on their monthly gas and electric bills. Students can sign up for CARE or FERA through their utility provider. **CARE** is open to households that meet an income eligibility requirement or that are enrolled in certain public assistance programs (e.g., Medi-Cal). **FERA** is open to households of at least three individuals who meet income eligibility requirements.

View [income eligibility and links to your local utilities program](#).

VI.D. Digital Equity Services

Access to a computer and reliable internet is more essential than ever as classes and student supports move online. In [Recovery with Equity: A Roadmap for Higher Education After the Pandemic](#), the California Governor’s Council for Post-Secondary Education provides several recommendations for the state, its higher education systems, and its colleges to institutionalize internet access as a basic need. These include:

- Explore partnerships with California’s internet service and technology providers to offer low- to no-cost technology access to all students with demonstrated needs.
- Explore partnerships with local and county agencies and providers, such as libraries, to expand WiFi and technology access in unserved and underserved geographic areas.

To support the growing shift toward online learning, some colleges offer programs to provide free new or refurbished laptops, or grants toward purchasing laptops. These include, for example, [San Diego Community College District](#), [Feather River College](#), [DeAnza College](#), and [Long Beach City College](#). Partnering with nonprofits that focus on digital equity, working with organizations that fund basic need services for college students, and pursuing grants or foundation funding are strategies to access additional technology funds.

Free and Reduced Cost Internet and Computers

Several providers offer internet for \$10-20 per month for low-income households that meet certain criteria, such as being eligible for CalFresh, Medicaid, or Head Start. In addition, students may be able to buy refurbished and lower-cost computers through programs such as Microsoft’s Affordable Computer Initiative.

CollegeBuys

[CollegeBuys](#) offers discounts of up to 85% on a wide range of educational products for California Community College students, including laptops, tablets, software, wireless internet, and more. Encourage students to visit the CollegeBuys website to shop for their internet and computer needs. Faculty and staff of California community colleges are also eligible for these discounts.

EveryoneOn

[EveryoneOn](#) is a nonprofit that connects people to affordable internet service and computers, and delivers digital skills trainings. Students can visit the website and click “Find Low-Cost Offers” to search for programs that are available in their zip code, based on their eligibility criteria. Visit EveryoneOn’s [Outreach and Enrollment Strategies](#) webpage for flyers and suggested outreach strategies.

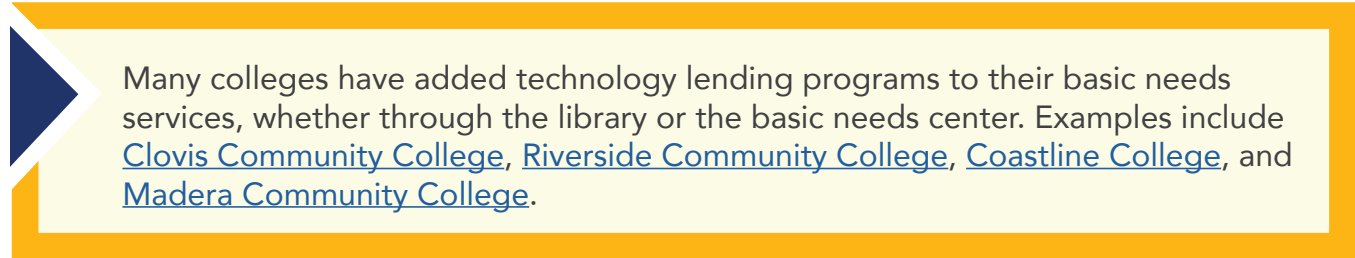
Computers for Classrooms

[Computers for Classrooms](#) is a nonprofit located in Chico, CA, that sells low-cost computers to individuals who qualify, including college students. To purchase, participants need to meet at least one of the qualification criteria, which includes being a college student on financial aid.

Laptop Lending Program

Laptop lending programs support student success by providing them with short-term access to full laptops, netbooks, and/or tablets. These services play an important role in supporting digital equity and removing barriers that might otherwise impede academic success.

In order to maximize resources and meet the differing needs of the student population, these lending programs should aim to include not only full-sized laptops, but also netbooks and tablets. Although they are more limited, netbooks tend to be a more affordable option, and thus can help increase the reach of the program. In addition to the device itself, the lending library should also offer relevant school-related components, such as VGA cables (for connecting to a projector) and a keyboard and screen cover (for tablets) (Buzzard and Teetor, 2011).



Many colleges have added technology lending programs to their basic needs services, whether through the library or the basic needs center. Examples include [Clovis Community College](#), [Riverside Community College](#), [Coastline College](#), and [Madera Community College](#).

Establish Collaborations

Basic needs centers can work with the campus library and IT department to establish laptop lending programs. While library services are likely to oversee the actual lending services, the IT department will play an important role in establishing protocols and processes related to access and maintenance (Becker 2014). For example, reimaging is the process by which a computer's hard drive, operating system, and software is set to a specified, backed-up state. Laptops can be reimaged between rentals, which ensures that students always receive a computer in the same state. While setting up the initial reimaging process can require the IT department, reimaging itself is relatively straightforward, and even staff who are not "tech savvy" can easily learn the process.

Determine Lending Periods

The rental period is likely to vary based on the device type and the total supply available. Netbooks, for example, are more affordable and thus are likely to be available longer. Some campuses have found that students view 72 hours as an important threshold, as it allows them to have access for the full weekend period (Wang et al, 2014; Buzzard and Teetor, 2011). Many colleges that offer laptop lending programs offer them on a semester-long basis.

Develop Anti-Theft Measures and User Agreements

In addition to ensuring that security settings are applied to the devices themselves, the lending library will also have to develop systems for keeping devices and components safe from theft. This includes precautions for devices that are stored on campus (i.e., not checked out) as well as devices that have been checked out. Laptops and other devices should be secured in a lockable cabinet that also supports charging. There are a number of options available, including those sold by [American Locker](#).

The lending library should establish a contract that stipulates student responsibility for returning the device and components in the same condition as when they were checked out. Photos should be taken at the time of check out, and any pre-existing damages should be noted.

VI.E. Textbooks

Textbook costs have risen. Here are a few strategies to support.



Textbook Vouchers

Many colleges have a textbook or supplies voucher programs that are available for at least some students. Sometimes students are asked to submit a need-based application; in other cases, students may be eligible for textbook vouchers because of their participation in a specific program (e.g., EOPS) or based on their FAFSA information. For example:

- The Student Equity program at Coastline College has a [book voucher program](#) that is based on student need and number of units in which the student is enrolled; students are required to donate the book(s) to the lending program at the end of the term.
- At Sierra College, all Pell grant-eligible students are awarded [fall and spring book vouchers](#) they can use to buy textbooks or supplies at the campus bookstore. These vouchers are issued through the student's financial aid; students must complete the FAFSA or CADAA.
- Through [Santa Monica College Promise program](#), new full-time students who just graduated from a California high school are eligible for free enrollment, paid fees, and textbook vouchers. Students are required to complete the FAFSA or CADAA.
- EOPS often funds textbook vouchers. One example is [West Los Angeles College](#), which created a [helpful video](#) to walk students through the book voucher process.

Textbook Lending Programs

Textbook lending is a popular strategy that can be led by many different departments on campus, or even student groups, whether working with the on-campus library or in a separate location. Here are strategies that other colleges have used to establish, expand, and promote their lending library services:



Work with the financial aid office, who can identify students at highest need. If the financial aid office will contact the students directly, the students' privacy is maintained (Grinnell College, 2018).

Develop and distribute flyers, social media posts, and emails requesting that students donate their textbooks at the end of the semester. Consider holding a prize drawing for all students who donate their textbook by a specific date. The campus bookstore or a local business may be willing to donate gift cards to the raffle. Encourage faculty to share the donation request with their students, particularly if they plan to use the same textbook again.

In addition to accepting donations, you will want to identify which textbooks to purchase. Many programs allow students to submit a request in advance of the semester. Another, proactive strategy is to identify which are required or heavily registered courses for students, and purchasing multiple copies of their textbooks (Chang & Garrison, 2011).

Consider the rental period. Some programs allow students to check out the books for a specific period of time (e.g., 1-2 weeks). This can be helpful for classes that ask students to purchase many books, such as English classes. However, usually, it is easier for the program and better for the student to check books out to them for the entire term (Grinnell, 2018).

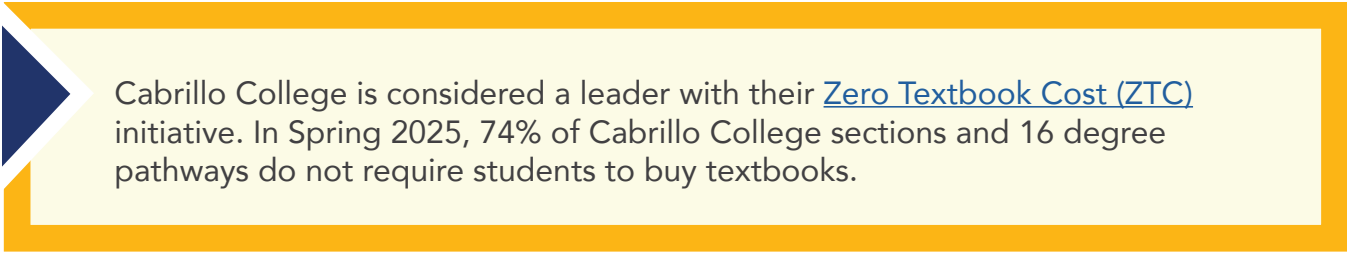
If the program is not conducted through the campus library, you will want to **set up a program for tracking and managing resources.** There are many free and open-source library management programs available online.

Consider what will be done with outdated textbooks that haven't been checked out for multiple semesters. Will they be donated to the campus library? Offered to faculty? Shared on a "free" table?

Open Educational Resources (OER)

OER refers to teaching, learning, and research materials that have either been released under license to freely use, adapt, and share or that are under the public domain. Examples include textbooks, course materials, full courses, modules, videos, tests, software, etc.

Colleges can encourage faculty to use OER materials rather than requiring that students purchase textbooks. Some colleges encourage the use of OER materials by allowing students to search for these courses when registering (example: [Coastline College](#)).



Cabrillo College is considered a leader with their [Zero Textbook Cost \(ZTC\)](#) initiative. In Spring 2025, 74% of Cabrillo College sections and 16 degree pathways do not require students to buy textbooks.

Here are just a few places where faculty and librarians can find OER resources, particularly textbooks:

- The [OER Starter Kit](#) has been created to provide instructors with an introduction to the use and creation of open educational resources (OER).
- [Open Education: Find OER \(by discipline\)](#), from Virginia Tech: this is an introductory guide to OER, with lists of resources organized by discipline. Sample subjects include early childhood education, various sciences, business, health and medicine, and veterinary medicine.
- [Open Educational Resources: OER by Subject](#), from University of New Hampshire. Similar to the resource from Virginia Tech. Sample subjects include nursing, agriculture, health sciences, business and economics.
- [OpenStax](#) is dedicated to publishing “high-quality, peer-reviewed, openly licensed college textbooks that are free online and low cost in print.” They also offer LMS integration and course support materials (e.g., assessments, activities).
- [Open Textbook Library, from the University of Minnesota](#), is a comprehensive library of OER textbooks across many subjects.

VI.F. Transportation

In 2018, more than 60% of California community colleges reported offering emergency funding for transportation (gas cards, bus passes, etc.) (Chancellor’s Office, 2018). Transportation supports such as bus passes are often provided via partnerships with the city or the regional transportation provider, and funded by grants or student fees. Other transportation supports—such as reducing parking fees or gift cards to pay for gas—may require only on-campus partnerships and more limited funding.

Reducing the expenses that students have to pay in order to get to school, their jobs, their childcare, etc. can ease a significant burden. When [Rio Hondo College](#) provided students with deeply discounted transit fares through U-Pass (Universal College Student Transit Pass), those students had higher retention rates, higher credit completion rates and accumulation, and higher credential attainment.



Nearly all of the following examples and strategies are drawn from the Community College League of California’s 2021 report, [Affordability, Food, and Housing Access Taskforce Report: Addressing Affordable Transportation Needs](#). Readers are encouraged to refer to the original resource for more detailed suggestions and information.

As part of your basic needs intake form, ask about transportation. If funding is available, offer free gas gift cards or bus passes by request for students with higher financial need.

Reduce or eliminate parking fees or waive parking fees for students receiving certain forms of financial assistance (e.g., CalWORKs).

Consider reducing or eliminating citation fees, and do not place holds on a student's record for not paying a parking citation.

Offer free or low-cost transit passes to all students in the college or in specific programs. Many colleges now offer free bus or rail rides with a student ID, often in partnership with local transit authorities. Examples of colleges that have free transit include [Cabrillo College](#), [College of Marin](#), and colleges in [Orange County](#). Some colleges assess a transportation fee that offsets program costs; for example, [Santa Rosa Junior College](#), has a transportation fee that is waived for students in some federal aid programs, such as Temporary Aid for Needy Families (TANF).

Offer free or premium parking for Ride Share/carpooling. For example, at [Solano Community College](#), a limited number of these permits are available to students who have three or more students riding in their cars. All three (or more) students must bring their student ID cards, license plate number(s) of the cars involved, and proof of enrollment to obtain the permit.

In places with limited transit options, explore whether a shuttle might be an option. [Sante Fe College](#) (FL) established a free round-trip transportation shuttle (the EXTRA shuttle) for students with low income in rural areas. The project is funded by the Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged, and has limited vouchers available.

VI.G. Financial Resources for Parenting Students

Helping parenting students navigate access to public benefits, campus services, and community resources is a crucial support that basic needs centers can provide.

In addition to the resources discussed in this section, other important programs for parenting students include WIC and CalFresh (discussed under [Food Security Services](#)) and Medi-Cal (discussed under [Physical and Mental Health Services](#)).



Ensure that your basic needs center is equipped to provide referrals to services that are specifically important to parenting students. This may include childcare, but also services such as foster care support, parenting classes, afterschool programs, school readiness programs, etc. Two places to start are your county's 211 service and the [California Child Care Resource & Referral Network](#).

Several California community colleges and college districts have been awarded Child Care Access Means Parents in School Program (CCAMPIS) grants, which are competitively awarded annually to fund campus-based and community childcare programs for students with low income. (Learn more about the program at the [U.S. Department of Education website](#), including a list of current awards.) If your college does not currently receive these funds, advocate for the college to apply in the next available grant cycle.

Parenting' Students Tax Credits and Benefits

There are several federal and state programs that can support parenting students with maintaining financial stability. Basic needs centers can help students access these benefits by:

- Providing information about CalWORKs, EOPS/CARE, and tax credits on the college basic needs website
- Integrating questions about parenting and CalWORKs/TANF as part of any basic needs application or intake process
- Understanding CalWORKs, EOPS/CARE, and tax credits so that they can explain it to students, especially the kinds of services that are available on campus and how students can access them
- Partnering with the campus CalWORKs and EOPS/CARE coordinators on outreach and awareness activities
- Posting information about CalWORKs, EOPS/CARE, and tax credits at the basic needs center, food pantry, etc.



EOPS and CARE

Single-parent students who are enrolled in Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS) might be eligible for additional support from Cooperative Agencies Resources for Education (CARE). This supplementary program provides childcare and transportation allowances, counseling and advisement, and support with textbooks and other school supplies. You can learn more about the [CARE Program at the Chancellor's Office website](#).

CalWORKs (California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids)

[CalWORKs](#) is a public benefit service that provides cash aid and services to eligible families in all 58 counties. CalWORKs is the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program for parents of children under age 18 in California, and it is operated by county welfare departments.

Every California community college has a CalWORKs program on campus for students receiving CalWORKs/TANF cash aid benefits. College CalWORKs programs provide a variety of supports that often include academic counseling; connections to community resources; and help accessing campus resources, such as textbook vouchers, priority registration, childcare, etc. Students can see if they are eligible and apply for CalWORKs at [BenefitsCal.com](https://benefitscal.com) or by contacting their local social services office.

EITC and CalEITC

Parenting students may be eligible for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) or California EITC, which are refundable tax credits. To learn more, visit the [Tax Credits](#) section.

Child Tax Credit (CTC)

Students with dependents aged 17 or younger may be eligible for the CTC (the student does not have to be the child's parent or guardian; other relationships can also apply). Students can learn more at [Child Tax Credit](#).

Young Child Tax Credit (YCTC)

YCTC is a California program for parents who qualify for CalEITC and who had at least one child under the age of 6 during the taxable year. Students can learn more at [Young Child Tax Credit](#).

Financial Aid for Parenting Students

Parenting students are often unaware that they can use federal financial aid to pay for childcare, and about two-thirds of college financial aid websites do not mention that it is available (Government Accountability Office, 2019). Strategies for improving parenting students' access to and utilization of financial aid resources include:

- Partner with Financial Aid to use the FAFSA to identify students under age 24 who have listed children. These students might be parenting young adults who have young children, and who are greater risk for basic needs insecurity (SchoolHouse Connection, 2021b).
- Help students understand that if they pay for childcare, they may be able to include those expenses in their cost of attendance as a "dependent care allowance," allowing the financial aid office to adjust the amount of financial aid a student can receive. Students can use [SwiftStudent](#) to [write a Child Care Allowance Request Letter for free](#).
- Students may not be aware that if they are eligible for a Cal Grant and they have a dependent child, they may be eligible for an additional Students with Dependent Children (SWD) Grant of up to \$4,000-6,000. Work with Financial Aid to determine what information students need to know about this grant, and provide information (e.g., flyers, website info) through the basic needs center to parenting students and expectant parents.
- Increase emergency aid outreach and amounts for parenting students (Kienzl, 2022).

Colleges can also support changes to revise financial aid policies that discriminate against parenting students. Examples of discriminatory policies and biased policies that can harm student parents include:

- Financial aid and other resources that are only available only to recent graduates or full-time students (Kienzl, 2022).
- Financial aid formulas that fail to account for expenses associated with childcare (Georgetown University, 2018). Under new California laws, colleges must implement a student parent cost of attendance policy by 2026-2027 (see Student Parent Cost of Attendance and Net Price Calculator section, below).
- Emergency aid grant or loan policies that do not allow parenting-related expenditures, such as a child's medical bills or a childcare emergency (Yates, 2024).
- Lack of training and awareness for financial aid and basic needs center staff around eligibility requirements for student parents. Many student parents do not access the state and federal aid programs that they are eligible for because they are confused by complicated eligibility requirements related to income, household size, exemptions, etc. Student parents who seek assistance have reported negative, confusing, and unhelpful interactions from financial aid officers (Yates, 2024).
- Limited hours of availability for financial aid guidance. Student parents may be unable to visit a financial aid office during traditional 9-5 business hours (Yates, 2024).



Student Parent Webpage

In the 2023-2024 legislative cycle, [AB 2458, CHAPTER 962](#) was signed into law. AB 2458 amended existing [Education Code 66027.81](#) and added Section 66027.82. Per Education Code 66027.81, as of February 1, 2023, all California community colleges are required to host a webpage for parenting students that clearly lists all on- and off-campus student parent

services and resources including, but not limited to:

- The description of the service or resource (see resource list in [Appendix D](#)).
- The location where the service or resource is provided; for many resources, this will be locally determined information.
- The point of contact for the service or resource, including a name, telephone number, and email address.
- Any eligibility restrictions on accessing the service or resource.

In addition to the requirements established in Education Code 66027.81, AB 2458 expanded the information and resources required for inclusion on the student parent web page. Listed below are the resources and information required per Education Code 66027.81 and the expanded items that were established in AB 2458:

- Priority registration for a student parents, as established in Education Code 66025.81
- The CalFresh Program
- The California Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)
- Federal and state tax credits, including, but not limited to, the following:
 - The federal Earned Income Tax Credit
 - The California Earned Income Tax Credit
 - The Child Tax Credit
 - The Young Child Tax Credit
 - The Foster Youth Tax Credit
 - The federal Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit
 - The federal American Opportunity Tax Credit
 - The federal Lifetime Learning Credit
 - Free tax filing services offered online through Volunteer Income Tax Assistance programs

The student parent web page should include State and federal financial aid applications and programs, including, but not limited to:

- The FAFSA
- The CADAA
- Awards for students with dependent children established pursuant to Article 9 (commencing with Section 69465) of Chapter 1.7 of Part 42
- Any other federal or state financial aid application or program available for students with dependent children
- The CalWORKs program



The California Alliance for Student Parent Success created a comprehensive [Campus Student Parent Web Page Toolkit](#) and accompanying [Sample Campus Student Parent Web Page](#) that colleges can use.

[Appendix D](#) provides useful links to include on the student parent webpage or to aid in webpage development. To increase awareness, information about the student parent webpage should be included in campus orientations and faculty should be encouraged to embed the webpage link in their class syllabi. Colleges must update the student parent webpage at the beginning of the fall and spring semesters.

Student Parent Cost of Attendance and Net Price Calculator

The student parent web page must also provide information regarding cost of attendance adjustments, including the dependent care allowance; information about campus or local childcare providers; and any other financial support or income available for student parents. Per Education Code 66027.82, the Chancellor's Office will develop guidance for student parent cost of attendance estimates and adjustments by July 31, 2025. Upon availability of the forthcoming student parent cost of attendance policy, on or before the start of the 2026–27 academic year, all California community colleges will implement the student parent cost of attendance policy and accompanying model instructions for the purposes of the following:

- Identifying a student parent for purposes of adjusting the student parent's cost of attendance to include food, housing, transportation, and childcare expenses. The model instructions shall include, but are not limited to, confirmation by a financial aid officer based on information found in the student parent's FAFSA or CADAA.
- Updating and posting the cost of attendance and dependent care allowance information on the financial aid and student parent web pages.
- Sharing cost of attendance information in admitted student materials.
- Explaining the dependent care allowance to student parents.
- Informing student parents of affordable childcare options offered by the campus or within the local community.

Additionally, on or before the start of the 2026–27 academic year, all California community colleges must update their campus net price calculator to include a baseline student parent cost estimate, disaggregated by age and number of dependent children, using the methodologies and information described in the forthcoming Chancellor's Office guidance and any available federal guidance on best practices. The Chancellor's Office will adapt the existing [Net Price Calculator tool](#) to include information regarding student parent cost estimates. The modified Net Price Calculator tool will be available to colleges on or before the start of the 2026-27 academic year.

Student Parent Data Collection

SB 2458 also requires the Chancellor Office to establish a new student data element within its Management Information System (MIS) for colleges to use, to report the total number of student parents enrolled within their institutions. In 2023, the Chancellor's Office established [SB39](#), a new student parent data element. For purposes of student parent identification and reporting, a "student parent" means a student who has a child or children under 18 years of age who will receive more than half of their support from that student. Colleges can also use SB39 data to support granting priority course registration and providing information about available public benefits to student parents (See [Chancellor's Office Memorandum DII 23-400-02](#) for additional information.) There is a variety of methods that colleges can employ to populate the SB39 data element. Colleges can pull student parent data through self-reported information from the CCCApply system or from the FAFSA, through self-service portals, and through working with various categorical programs that are providing services to parenting students. SB39 data reported to the Chancellor's Office MIS will also be included in the California Cradle-to-Career Data System.

Part VII: Strategies to Address the Social Determinants of Educational Success – Physical and Mental Health



JFF defines the “Physical and Mental Health” determinant this way: “Considers a student’s overall well-being in terms of the extent to which they can persist throughout their educational journey, whether academically or socially, and addresses risk factors such as food insecurity, mental and emotional stressors, and overall physical health.”

This section addresses many resources that can help students afford health care; preventative and crisis-related health services; and daily health essentials, including nutritious food.



VII.A. Connecting Students to Medi-Cal/Covered California

Medi-Cal is California’s version of the federal Medicaid program. It provides no- and low-cost health insurance and health services in California for individuals and families who have low income or meet other requirements.

Read and share this guide for Californians from Department of Health Care Services to learn more about eligibility and applying: [myMedi-Cal: How to Get the Health Care You Need](#).

Eligibility

Students may be eligible for Medi-Cal if their income is below 138% of the Federal Poverty Level, they were formerly in foster care, they are enrolled in programs such as CalFresh or CalWORKs, they are pregnant, they have a disability, or they meet other eligibility requirements. Students who are not eligible for Medi-Cal, but who do not have health insurance, may still be eligible for reduced-cost health insurance options at [Covered California](#), the state’s health insurance marketplace.

Students who are undocumented, lawful permanent or temporary residents, refugees, asylees, humanitarian immigrants, and visa holders can apply for health coverage through Covered California. Students who have undocumented legal status may qualify for Medi-Cal if they are under age 26, if they are a DACA recipient/Dreamer, or if they are pregnant (learn more about rules for [students who are immigrants](#)).

How Colleges Can Help Students Enroll in Medi-Cal

There are several ways that colleges can help students get connected to low- or no-cost health insurance.

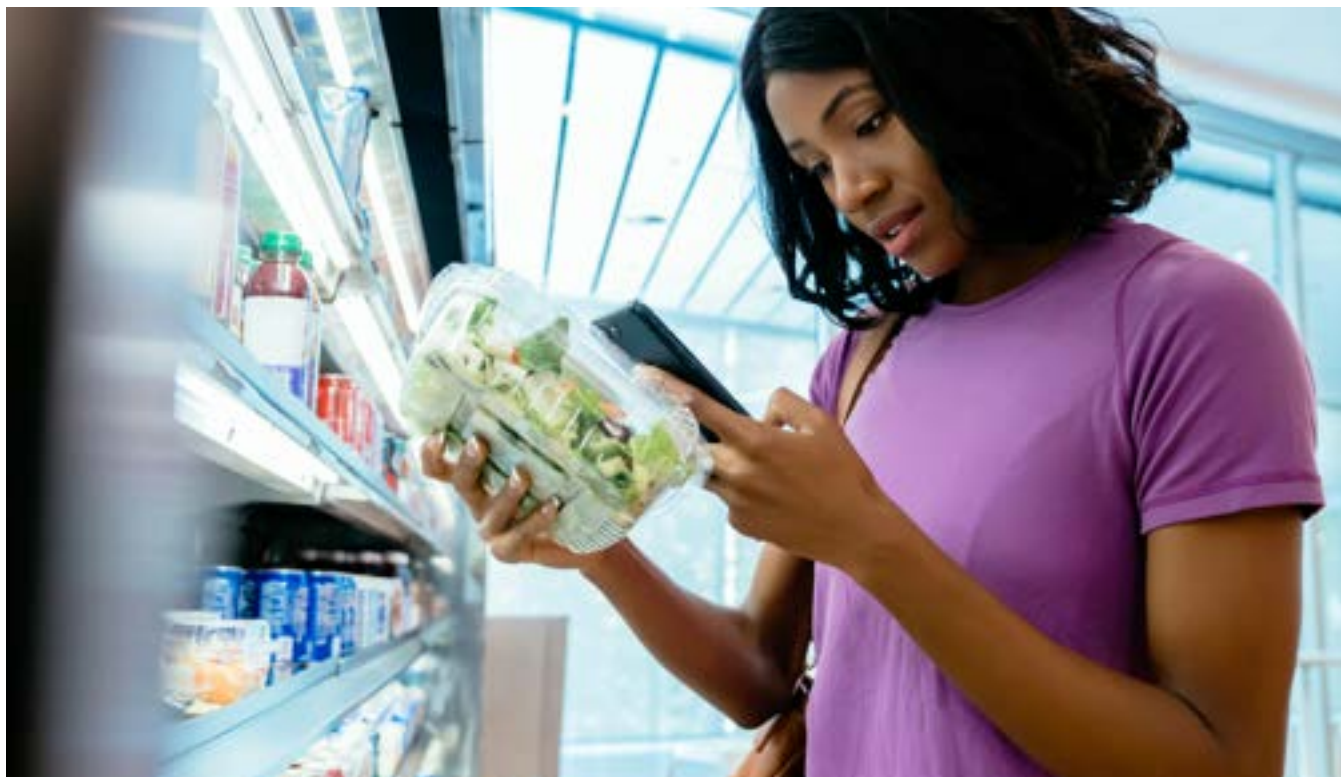
Direct students to BenefitsCal.com for a streamlined application experience for CalFresh, CalWORKs, and Medi-Cal. Students can also apply at the Covered California website or by visiting their local county social services office. See the section on [Maximizing Students' Access to Public Benefits](#) to learn more.

Share information about health insurance, including Medi-Cal, on the college website (example: [Orange Coast College](#)).

Have a Covered California Certified Enrollment Counselor available to help students apply for coverage (example: [Santa Rosa Junior College](#)), such as during specific appointment windows. Certified Enrollment Counselors must be affiliated with a Certified Entity, which is often a local clinic, community health coalition, or hospital. Learn more about [Certified Enrollment Counselors](#).

Make sure that students who are currently or formerly in foster care understand that they are eligible for Medi-Cal up to age 26 (example: [Las Positas College](#)).

Under a 2024 Medi-Cal expansion, all income-eligible Californians may qualify for Medi-Cal, regardless of immigration status. This includes students with undocumented legal status. Train staff and include information about Medi-Cal and immigration status on campus health services, immigration services, and equity-related webpages.



VII.B. Providing Medi-Cal Services

There are several programs through which California community colleges can bill Medi-Cal for reimbursable physical, mental, and sexual health services.

Local Education Agency (LEA) Medi-Cal Billing Option

The LEA Medi-Cal Billing Option Program (BOP) allows California schools and colleges to bill Medi-Cal for physical and behavioral healthcare for students. Once a college is registered as a LEA Medi-Cal provider, there is a wide array of services for which they may bill Medi-Cal, including: primary healthcare, onsite Medi-Cal eligibility workers, case management, nutritional services, immunizations, mental health services, and more.

Although most colleges are not enrolled in the LEA Medi-Cal Billing Option Program, it is an exciting opportunity for health services funding at the California community colleges.

Learn more:

- [Local Education Agency Medi-Cal Billing Option: Pre-Enrollment Strategies](#) tip sheet from California Community Colleges Health & Wellness
- [California Department of Health Care Services \(DHCS\) LEA Medi-Cal Billing Option](#) webpage

CYBHI Fee Schedule Program

The [Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative \(CYBHI\) Fee Schedule program](#) is a first-of-its-kind effort that creates sustainable reimbursement pathways for LEAs and public institutions of higher education to receive funding for mental health and substance use disorder services at school or on a school-linked site. The program sets the reimbursement rate for certain outpatient, school-linked behavioral health services that are provided to young people who are under age 26; enrolled in school or public higher education; and covered by Medi-Cal, private/commercial insurance, and disability insurers. Under this program, students and their families do not pay out-of-pocket expenses and the services do not impact their health insurance.

DHCS is creating a statewide provider network of institutions implementing this program. As of the time of writing, more than 300 institutions have been selected for the network, including three California community colleges or districts (San Diego Community College District, Moorpark College, Oxnard College). More information can be found at the program website, linked above

Family PACT Program

The [Family PACT \(Planning, Access, Care, and Treatment\) Program](#) is a comprehensive reproductive healthcare access initiative that provides health information, counseling, and family planning services (e.g., contraceptives, diagnosis and treatment of sexually transmitted

infections, screening exams, pregnancy tests) for people in California who have low income. To be eligible for Family PACT, an individual must be a California resident; earn a taxable family income at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty guidelines; be able to become pregnant or get someone else pregnant; and have no other source of healthcare coverage for family planning services, or meet certain criteria for eligibility with other health coverage. Having health insurance, including Medi-Cal, does not necessarily disqualify a student from Family PACT.

Colleges can become Family PACT providers if they meet certain eligibility requirements (having a licensed medical provider with a National Provider Identifier, being enrolled and in good standing with Medi-Cal, and being able to provide the program's comprehensive family planning and reproductive health services), complete a series of Family PACT required trainings, and submit a provider application.

The Chancellor's Office supports California community colleges that would like to become Family PACT providers. In a 2020 study, 25 California community colleges with Family PACT programs showed greater provision of sexual and reproductive health services and higher levels of staffing and revenue in comparison to 35 California community colleges that are not Family PACT providers (Trieu, Shenoy, Lui, & Hayes, 2022). Learn more about becoming a provider at FamilyPACT.org and see example Family PACT webpages at [Los Angeles Pierce College](#), [Irvine Valley College](#), [East Los Angeles College](#), and [Cerritos College](#).

VII.C. Health Center Partnership

What services does your college provide to support students' mental and physical wellness? Many colleges offer a wide array of services and resources that are covered under the health center fee. Basic needs staff should be aware of these services in order to refer students when appropriate.

The basic needs center can partner with campus health services in a number of ways:

Include physical and mental health services in your basic needs online hub and referral process. Provide a brief overview of the services that are available, and up-to-date information about how students can receive services (e.g., location, hours of operation, contact number).

Basic needs staff and volunteers receive training in recognizing the signs that a student may be in mental health distress, using or misusing substances, or at risk for suicide, as well as the process for referring students to the campus health center for mental or behavioral health support.

Cross-promote health center events such as vaccination and flu shot clinics, peer support groups, etc.

Provide information, posters, and outreach materials about basic needs center services so that health center staff can refer students knowledgeably.

Collaborate with health center and mental health staff about how they can sensitively discuss basic needs insecurity with students. For example, they might add questions such as these to intake forms:

- “Do you have a permanent and safe place to sleep at night? Do you ever have to stay in temporary living situations, like a motel or friend’s apartment, because of housing costs?”
- “Do you ever have a hard time affording enough food to eat? Do you ever have to skip meals because of costs?”
- If student is pregnant or parenting: “Are you always able to afford the essentials you need for your child(ren), such as diapers and nutritious food?”

Another strategy is to have health center staff proactively offer information, without asking students about their particular status. For example: “A lot of students need help sometimes with affording things like food and housing. There are staff who can help with accessing free resources—would you like to learn more about that?”

Promote awareness of the availability of Wellness Vending machines that offer free or discounted health products (e.g., contraceptives, menstrual products, pregnancy tests, lubrication, and non-prescription drugs). A 2022 law, AB 2482, required that five California community colleges participate in the Wellness Vending Machine Pilot Program. See examples at [Mesa College](#), [Santa Barbara City College](#), [Moorpark College](#), and [Modesto Junior College](#).

VII.D. External Partnerships

Partnerships with community-based providers are a cornerstone of the health services offered by many community colleges. These may include Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) and other clinics, hospitals, health services for specific populations, etc. Below are a few examples of these kinds of partnerships and how they support students.

Partner for events. Host a health services fair on campus that highlights no- and low-cost services in the community, provides health and nutrition education, offers free resources such as condoms, etc. Alternatively, invite local providers to table at existing student resource fairs.

Co-locate health services: partner with health clinics to provide services on campus, whether around a specific need (e.g., reproductive and sexual health) or for clinical services more broadly. For example, at Arkansas State University Mid-South (community college), a local health clinic provides health services on campus one day per week (Reichlin Cruse & Bernstein, 2020). Consider partnering with local health plan organizations or agencies that support health care enrollment through Covered California, on co-location enrollment events, to support students and their families to enroll in low- or no -cost health benefits.

Referral pathways for mental health: most community colleges offer short-term mental health triage and support, but not long-term counseling. Several California community

colleges have had success establishing referral systems and even co-locating mental health services between the college, the county mental health agency, and community providers. Learn more in [Partnering with Local Mental Health Providers to Support Foster Youth in College](#) (California Community Colleges Health & Wellness).



A consortium of community colleges in San Bernardino and Riverside have partnered with Inland Empire Health Plan (IEHP), one of the nation's largest Medicaid health plans, in a new demonstration project emanating from *Vision 2030*. The project aims to increase insurance enrollment by using financial aid and basic needs data to drive student outreach, leverage on-campus events to enroll students in Medicaid or Covered California, and strengthen community partnerships for preventative healthcare services. Learn more: [Vision 2030 Demonstration Project Aimed at Creating a Template to Have California Community College Student Covered by Health Insurance](#) (December 2024).

VII.E. Crisis Support Resources

Basic needs staff should have training to recognize when a student might be experiencing mental health distress, as well as resources and referrals on hand to help. As part of your college basic needs request form, you may want to include information specifically about crisis. E.g., “A staff member will reach out to you [within this timeframe]. If you are in immediate distress or having thoughts of suicide, please call 911 or reach out to these crisis services.”

Behavior Intervention Teams (BITs) play a crucial role in identifying and responding to students who may be experiencing crisis. Basic needs center staff should be integrated into campus BITs. Food insecurity, housing instability, and financial distress can contribute to or exacerbate behavioral concerns. Integrating basic needs staff in BIT discussions helps raise awareness of these factors, connect students to early intervention and crisis support services, and foster a collaborative approach that centers student well-being. Basic needs staff should also receive training on BIT protocols to ensure the safety and well-being of staff, volunteers, and students.

Crisis Text Line

[Crisis Text Line](#) is a free and confidential service that connects texters with crisis counselors. Students can access this free, 24/7 service by texting “COURAGE” to 741-741. This service can be used for all crises, included LGBTQ-related issues, cyberbullying, suicide, anxiety, and more.

While Crisis Text Line is a global service, it has collaborated with the Chancellor’s Office and the Foundation for California Community Colleges to provide the “COURAGE” campaign.

California community college-specific awareness materials can be found online at [Crisis Text Line Awareness Materials](#).

988

The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline is a national service to support individuals who are experiencing mental health challenges, substance use concerns, emotional distress, or suicide risk. Students can contact 988 at any time (24/7/365) via phone, text, or chat for a free, confidential conversation with a crisis counselor. Access the [988 Partner Toolkit](#) at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration website for print and virtual materials you can use to promote awareness of 988.

Mobile Crisis Units

California county mobile crisis teams are mobile units that are trained to respond to behavioral health crises where they are happening, intervene safely, and connect the person in crisis to appropriate services. Mobile crisis units are designed to help prevent people in crisis from being sent to the emergency department or becoming involved with the justice system. Learn the contact information for your county mobile crisis unit(s).

VII.F. Mental Health and Wellness Resources (Non-Crisis)

Telehealth Services

Telehealth emerged as a critical tool during the pandemic. Telehealth provides campuses with flexibility and the ability to reach students who might otherwise be unreachable. Colleges can work with outside vendors to provide on-demand behavioral health support.

The Foundation for California Community Colleges entered into a unique partnership with [TimelyCare](#), which offers 24/7 counselling services at no charge to the student, and more than 50 California community colleges are in contract with this service. Other telehealth vendors also offer mental health services for higher education. For example, [Los Rios College](#) partners with [BetterMynd](#), while [Foothill College](#), [San Joaquin Delta College](#), and [Santa Barbara City College](#) use [tbh](#).

Soluna

The [Soluna App](#) is a free, confidential app (iOS and Android) that offers all California teens and young adults (ages 13-25) free mental health and wellness resources. Users can talk to a Soluna coach, use self-guided tools, explore moderated peer support spaces, and access navigation support for access real-world resources. Colleges can use Soluna's [digital and printable resources](#) to promote the app to students. Soluna is a [CalHOPE](#) program.

Wellness Central

[Wellness Central](#) is a free health and wellness resource that was created by the Health Services Association of California Community Colleges (HSACCC) in partnership with CVC-OEI and the Foundation for California Community Colleges. It offers information and resources that are customized for California community college students about the six dimensions of wellness (emotional, social, physical, academic, financial, and spiritual). Students can access it as an online course through Canvas/Instructure.

California Community Colleges Health & Wellness

[California Community Colleges Health & Wellness](#) is a long-running project of the Chancellor's Office. It offers a resource library; information about basic needs and mental health programs in the California community colleges; and an array of publications and webinars that were developed specifically for the California community colleges, some of which have been translated into Spanish.

Examples include:

- [California Community College Mental Health Screening Tools](#): Basic needs insecurity can take a toll on student mental health. Many colleges have adopted universal and/or individualized screening tools to identify and refer students who may be in mental health distress.
- [Mental Health & Suicide Prevention Apps](#): This one-pager was developed to share information about apps that students can access when or before they are in mental health distress.
- [Step by Step: Building Your College Mental Health Services](#): This tip sheet provides a tiered model for understanding how to establish and expand services for students.

VII.G. Food Security Services

College food insecurity is widespread, especially in community colleges. Because of the hard work of many colleges, advocacy groups, and resources, there has been growing innovation, support, and de-stigmatization around addressing student (and staff) hunger over the last decade. This section describes key strategies to address hunger on campus.



Food Pantries

For many colleges, the first step to addressing student basic needs insecurity has been to establish a food pantry, because “they are tangible and address immediately the most basic need: hunger. Food pantries are also compelling and receive wide community support” (John Burton Advocates for Youth, 2020b, p. 13). The following are key considerations for launching a food pantry. These can also be useful for colleges that are experiencing challenges with, or seeking to expand, their food pantry.



Operating a food pantry can be complex, but is far from impossible! This section cannot provide guidance on all aspects of food pantry leadership. We have included key resources for certain sections below. For detailed, step-by-step guidance and in-depth considerations, we highly recommend the following resources:

- [Running a Campus Food Pantry: Student Government Toolkit](#), 2017, from the Student Government Resource Center and College & University Food Bank Alliance
- Swipe Out Hunger [Resources](#) and [Templates](#)
- [Safe and Healthy Food Pantries Project website and toolkit](#), 2020, from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Division of Extension
- [Problem-solving challenges: operating a campus food pantry to improve student success](#), 2019

Steps for opening and operating a food pantry⁴:

1. Create or work with your Steering Committee.

A Steering Committee can help you establish a goals and timeline for your food pantry; make your case to campus leadership; and brainstorm ideas, collaborate creatively, and make decisions about food pantry logistics. Your Basic Needs Center may already have a steering committee or advisory group in place. If not, your Steering Committee should be a small team of individuals that may include staff, faculty, and students. See Swipe Out Hunger’s [Pantry Basics Toolkit: A Guide to Build and Strengthen Your Food Pantry](#) for ideas of whom to involve.

2. Assess the level of need on your campus.

Work with students, faculty, and staff to gain a better understanding of how many students are experiencing food insecurity, what resources they have available, and how many would use a campus food pantry. The data gleaned from these activities can help you make your case to administrators. For more information, visit the [Collecting](#).

⁴ This section is adapted in part from “Twenty Questions You Should Be Able to Answer Before Opening a Food Pantry,” in *Running a Campus Food Pantry; How to Start a Food Pantry on Campus*, from *Affordable Colleges*; and the sources listed throughout.

[Reporting, and Using Basic Needs Data](#) section of this toolkit.

3. Get support from campus leadership.

When approaching leadership, provide the needs assessment data you have gathered on food insecurity among college students and on your campus in particular. Link the case for the food pantry to student success and current administrative priorities (e.g., retention). It can be especially helpful to solicit testimonials/narratives from real students, who can speak to how access to a food pantry has helped (or would help) them focus on and succeed in school.

4. Reach out to your regional food bank.

Food banks are large local warehouses that store food and other items (e.g., diapers). The food banks work with food pantries to distribute food in the community. These smaller partner agencies may include soup kitchens, childcare centers, community centers, colleges, churches, and other nonprofit organizations. Although food banks have specific requirements that must be met (e.g., food safety rules, reporting), they can provide many benefits, including free or reduced-cost food. Find your local food bank at [California Association of Food Banks](#) and reach out to them to learn more about becoming a partner.

5. Acquire a fiscal sponsor.

In order to collect donations, be tax-exempt, and/or partner with regional food banks, food pantries must have 501(c)(3) nonprofit status. Although food pantries can apply for independent nonprofit status, it is simpler and less expensive to partner with an existing charitable organization that is willing to serve as your fiscal partner.

Reach out to possible fiscal partners, which may include your college's foundation, local charities (e.g., United Way, 4-H), churches, community food pantries, and other local organizations that are interested in addressing hunger or student needs. Your regional food bank may have recommendations.

For more information, see pages 18-20 of the [Running a Campus Food Pantry](#) toolkit.

6. Get buy-in from other key campus partners, which may include the following.

For more ideas, see [You Don't Have to do it Alone](#) (Swipe Out Hunger).

Campus services. There are several departments on campus with whom you may need to coordinate to establish services. Examples include the department overseeing campus risk management and insurance,



facilities services, and dining services.

Student organizations. Student government members may serve on the basic needs committee. Student government can also pass a resolution to address hunger on campus. Student clubs, athletic teams, and cultural organizations can help with outreach, reducing stigma, and programming or events.

*Faculty allies.*⁵ Faculty can serve on the basic needs committee. They may also support in areas such as grant writing, contributing letters of support, or educating other faculty about the importance of student hunger. Faculty can also help ensure that the food pantry is permanent and sustainable. For example, food pantry operations could be tied to a specific department and/or integrated into curricula; e.g., nutrition students can create educational materials to be disseminated at the food pantry.

Other community partners. You can potentially partner with local restaurants, farmers/growers, grocery stores, or nonprofits to sponsor the food pantry through donated goods or funding.

7. Determine eligibility.

Who will be eligible to receive food at the pantry? Some college pantries are open to all students who are currently enrolled, while others are open to all students, faculty, and staff, or even community members. Your options will depend on the resources you have available; you may also start by only being open to students, and then expanding eligibility.

8. Find and set up your pantry location.

House your food pantry in a space that is easily accessed, clean, and secure. You can contact the campus facilities office for help identifying locations. Using a building that already receives many visitors may help reduce any stigma or embarrassment that students may feel. Also, consider what messages your food pantry location might send to students. For example, some students may not feel safe accessing a food pantry located in the campus police or public safety office.

9. Determine your food pantry model.

There are two main models for food pantries. These models will be influenced by the resources and location you have available.

⁵ Several of these suggestions come from Problem-solving challenges: operating a campus food pantry to improve student success.



Two Main Models for Food Pantries

Prepackaged Model	Shopping Model
ABOUT: - Volunteers prepare boxes or bags of food when the pantry is closed, to be distributed when the pantry is open. - During the COVID-19 pandemic, some food pantries delivered boxes to students' homes. WORKS WELL FOR: - Smaller pantry spaces - Fewer volunteers - Less food STRATEGIES: - Create themed bags to give students more choices (e.g., breakfast, lunch, or dinner bags; vegan/vegetarian bags). - Allow students to opt-out of specific items so that they can be saved for others (e.g., canned tuna, nuts). Provide a table or bin where students can place items that they don't want.	ABOUT: - Visitors have the opportunity to choose what they would like. - Visitors may be able to walk through the food pantry and select items, or they may make selections on a request form that pantry volunteers use to fill a bag or box. WORKS WELL FOR: - Larger spaces - Normalizing the food pantry experience STRATEGIES: - If inventory is a challenge, use a points system to allow visitors to shop for different items. For example, students may have 10 points per week to spend, or 100 points per semester, and items cost different amounts (see image below) - Issue a reusable grocery bag and encourage students to use it every time they visit.

Bonus Sub-type: Farmer's Market

ABOUT:

- The farmers' market-style food pantry is a particular kind of prepackaged or shopping-style pantry. It focuses on fresh produce and is usually held outside, on specific days.

WORKS WELL FOR:

- Pantries that have access to produce donations, typically through relationships with local farmers/growers. One way to start accepting these donations is by registering your pantry at [AmpleHarvest.org](https://ampleharvest.org). You can also reach out to local farmers directly, and/or to the organizers of your local farmers' market.
- Pantries that have access to an outdoor area (e.g., quad) where they can distribute food.

STRATEGIES:

- If a farmer's market on campus is not feasible, colleges can help educate students about using their CalFresh/EBT benefits to buy food at local farmers' markets.

THE STUDENT FOOD PANTRY POINT SYSTEM



100 points per semester (up to 16 points per week)

Below are examples of items that can be obtained with your points:

1 Point Items – Individually Wrapped Items

- Granola Bars
- String Cheese
- Nuts
- Top Ramen
- Instant Oatmeal Packet
- Individual Cereal Packs
- Single Serving Beverages
- Travel Size Toiletries
- Individual Mac & Cheese
- Yogurt Cups
- Nutrigrain Bars
- Tuna Cans



2 Point Items – One Complete Meal



- Salads
- Soup
- Canned Vegetables
- Canned Fruit
- Tomato Sauce
- Regular Peanut Butter
- Toilet Paper Rolls

3 Point Items – Family Size/Multiple Meal Items

- Full Size Toiletries
- Large Jars
- Rice
- Pasta
- Peanut Butter
- Milk
- Boxed Milk (Soy)
- Dried Beans
- Bread
- Cheese
- Large Peanut Butter
- 2 Liter Juice



8 Point Items – Clothing Items

8 points per semester, 2 points per item



Students may take:

Up to four 1 point items



Up to three 2 point items



Up to two 3 point items



Up to four 8 point items



Depending on the category, each item may be worth 1, 2, or 3 points:

1 point = side dish or non-food item



Granola Bars



Canned tuna



Toiletries



Canned soup



Canned Fruit



Top Ramen

3 points = items for multiple meals



Pasta



Box of cereal



Dry beans

Image 10: [San Joaquin Delta College](#) uses a points system to manage inventory at their food pantry. Screenshot is provided for informational purposes.

10. Decide what kinds of food and other items you will offer.

Your location and equipment requirements are directly related to the kinds of foods you will offer. Shelves are useful for storing nonperishable foods and keeping them off the floor (and away from pests). Frozen and fresh foods require refrigeration; in this case, you may need to co-locate your food pantry at a kitchen on campus. See the section below ([Toiletries and Similar Items](#)) to learn about other food pantry offerings.

11. Train staff and volunteers in food safety. Understand risk management.

Learn about food safety at the [Safe and Healthy Food Pantries Project](#). Their website and toolkit addresses how to collect, store, handle, and transfer food pantry items safely, including fresh produce. It includes sample policies and templates you can use.

Risk management is an essential topic that is related to safety which must be navigated with your campus. The risk management office is often part of financial and administrative services. Learn more on pages 27-28 of [So You Want to Start a Campus Food Pantry? A How-To Manual](#).



12. Decide your hours and days of operation.

Many pantries and mobile food distribution sites are only open for set periods (e.g., one day per week, every other Friday)—how often is largely determined by how much food is available, how high is the demand, and how many volunteers there are. If your pantry will only be open on certain days, will your pantry be open during the daytime, when more students are on campus, or after most classes are done for the day? For how many hours will the pantry be open?

13. Determine how you will acquire food and funding.

There are many ways to acquire initial and ongoing funding, beyond the Basic Needs Center funding. These include campus fundraisers and donation drives; faculty and staff donations; grant writing, endowments, and foundation donors; local businesses and alumni donors. Collaborate with your campus foundation or fundraising department. For

more ideas about how to work with on-campus and off-campus fundraising partners, see [Pantry Basics Toolkit: A Guide to Build and Strengthen Your Campus Pantry](#) from Swipe Out Hunger.

Food donations are the cheapest way to acquire stock, but they limit the amount and types of food you can offer. Acquiring no- or low-cost items from the regional food bank is more reliable. A smart practice is to hold food drives and donation activities throughout the year as a way to supplement, not replace, food purchases. See pages 35-44 of [So You Want to Start a Campus Food Pantry? A How-To Manual](#).

Food drives have also gone virtual! Many food banks and pantries actually prefer virtual food drives, because they have more control over what items are donated and because donors often give more than if they have to physically bring in food. [#GiveHealthy](#) is an example of a platform that your pantry can use to set up virtual food donations (no cost). For more ideas about in-person and virtual food drives, see Swipe Out Hunger's [Food Drives Guide](#).

14. Develop a nutrition policy. Ensure that it is communicated to donors.

Having a dedicated nutrition policy in place can help guide your food pantry in purchasing foods, soliciting donations, training volunteers, planning events, educating students, and promoting wellness. The Safe and Healthy Food Pantries Project has a detailed section on [A Healthy Food Pantry](#) that can help you develop and implement a nutrition policy, including a [template for developing a policy](#).

If you use a shopping model, you can provide a recommended “shopping list,” educational posters, and sample recipes to nudge visitors to take a mix of foods. For example, Care and Share Food Bank for Southern Colorado created a [Healthy Pantry Toolkit](#) with many printable and shareable resources for both food pantry staff and visitors.

15. Recruit and train volunteers.



This text is reprinted from [Running a Campus Food Pantry](#), page 47, under Creative Commons License 4.0. See pages 49-53 for helpful templates and checklists for managing volunteers.

“As part of your marketing campaign at the beginning of each term, you will need to recruit volunteers for the food pantry. The number of volunteers you need and the number of hours they will need to work depends on your pantry’s size and operating style. Look at all of the tasks you will need to cover – food collection, food prep, distribution, marketing, fundraising, etc. – and set a goal for how many volunteers you will need. Make sure to factor in the fact that some volunteers will inevitably fall through and increase your goal accordingly. Keep recruiting until you hit your goal.

You can find volunteers from several different sources:

- The community service office [...]
- Your student government [...]
- Other student groups [...]
- The student body [...]

When reaching out to the student body, here are some keys to effective recruitment:

- Have a compelling story for why students should get involved. Be ready to tell a short, persuasive message about why the food pantry is important and why students should volunteer.
- Be ready to give a quick explanation of what a volunteer's likely tasks would be.
- Cast a wide net. You can never have too many volunteers.
- Use a wide variety of tactics to recruit students: tabling, class announcements, email announcements, posters, social media, and whatever else makes sense on your campus.
- Actively ask people to get involved! Every interaction with someone new is an opportunity to recruit them.
- Follow up with potential volunteers immediately, while their interest is fresh.

Have interested students fill out a volunteer application form with their contact information, volunteer experience, availability to volunteer, and other pertinent data. Use the application to screen out any applicants who lack the necessary availability or present other problems, then invite the remaining applicants to attend a volunteer orientation session."

For more ideas about recruiting, training, and supporting student volunteers, see Swipe Out Hunger's [You Don't Have To Do It Alone](#).

16. Promote awareness of the food pantry and reduce stigma related to its use.

See the [Welcoming and Trauma-Informed Services and Outreach](#) section of this toolkit for more.

If possible, designate a staff member or volunteer to serve as a marketing coordinator for the food pantry. See page 31 of [Running a Campus Food Pantry](#) for more about the media coordinator role and other recommended student and staff roles.

17. Continually track and evaluate your services and offerings.

Identify key metrics for measuring the need for and use of the food pantry. Your regional food bank partner, fiscal sponsor, and/or grantmaker(s) may require you to report on specific indicators, and the California Community College System will also requires colleges to report on basic needs. Some indicators you may track include:

- How many students and which student populations are requesting help (use your intake form).

- How many students use your services. Many colleges have students swipe their student ID card every time they visit the pantry.
- How many volunteers and/or work study students support the food pantry.
- How many volunteer and/or work study hours support the food pantry.
- Source(s) of donations and purchases.
- Number of events, number/amount of donations received.

In addition, routinely collect surveys from visitors and volunteers to ask for recommendations of what could be better and what foods or resources they would like that are not currently offered. Pages 61-65 of [Running a Campus Food Pantry](#) offer several templates for assessment and evaluation tools.

18. Consider sustainability.

Establish at least one paid position that has the food pantry as part of their job description, whether it is the Basic Needs Coordinator or another staff member (e.g., pantry director).

Integrate the food pantry within the college's work study system.

Tie food pantry operations to one or more departments/curricula (e.g., nutrition and food science program, social work program).



Effect policy change: include the food pantry as part of the college's strategic plan. Create college and/or student government policies and resolutions about the food pantry and hunger as a college priority.

Toiletries and Similar Items

Other food pantry items that are often in high demand include:

- Soap
- Shampoo
- Toothbrushes and toothpaste
- Deodorants
- Razors
- Toilet paper

- Diapers, baby wipes, diaper rash cream
- Infant formula
- New unused baby bottles and nipples
- Menstrual hygiene products
- Laundry detergent
- Antibacterial wipes
- Utensils
- School supplies (notebooks, pencils)

Be sure to store non-food items separately from food items (e.g., non-food on bottom racks of shelves).

Other Creative Strategies for Distributing Food

In addition to permanent or mobile food pantries, campuses have explored other innovative options.

Drive-Thru Food Distribution

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many pantries (both at colleges and elsewhere) transitioned to providing drive-thru pickup of grocery boxes and bags, and some colleges still offer drive-thru food pickup. For example, a local food bank provides drive-thru groceries at [College of San Mateo](#). In this model, food pantry visitors are guided to a pickup area where they provide their information and a volunteer loads their food into their trunk. Learn more at [Feeding America](#).



Leftover Campus Catering Alerts

Some schools have set up systems to notify students when there is, or may be, leftover catering after an event. (Many colleges are not currently offering catered events, due to the pandemic, but will resume in the future.)

For example, students at UC Irvine can sign up for notifications via text message through [Zot Bites](#).

Colleges such as UC Merced have [built the notifications into their catering request system](#), so that it is easy to track which events will be eligible for the program.

- There is usually a specified pick-up period (e.g., 15 or 30 minutes from when the notification is sent) so that event directors are able to clean up after the event in a timely way.
- Some colleges also ask that students take only what they can eat immediately, rather than taking extra food home, to ensure that there is enough for everyone.
- Another option is to allow attendees to bring food containers to events to take food home
- If your college already has an app, you may be able to integrate the notification system there. Alternatively, there are many SMS/text alert services, which are sometimes free.

Gift Card or E-Card Distribution

Some food pantries provide grocery store gift cards, in addition to food pantry services or in lieu of them (see examples at [Hartnell College](#) and [Citrus College](#)).

There are several ways that food pantries can stretch their dollars when distributing gift cards.

Seek donations or matching donations: local or regional grocery stores may donate the gift cards or match donations up to a certain dollar amount.

Acquire discounted gift cards: the local grocery store may be willing to provide a small discount on the purchase of gift cards; alternatively, there are websites that sell discounted gift cards, such as the nonprofit-focused [RaiseRight](#).

Host a gift card drive, potentially by partnering with a student organization leading a campus event. Be sure to tell donors what kinds of gift cards are most helpful.

Food Lockers

In addition to the food pantry types referenced above, you also might consider using food lockers. Many colleges have added food lockers to support students who may not be able to visit a food pantry at a set time (e.g., student parents, students who work full time during the day). [Cañada College](#), [Diablo Valley College](#), and [San Diego Miramar College](#) are all

examples of California community colleges providing these services. Food lockers are typically a bank of temperature-controlled lockers with an integrated computer to support pickup. Typically, students place their pantry order through an online form or a mobile app. Once the order is ready for pickup, they are then provided a locker number and PIN, QR, or locker combination.

There are several companies that specialize in building, installing, and supporting food lockers, including adding custom designs or messaging. Examples of these companies include [Bell and Howell](#), [T4 Solutions](#), [Smiota](#), [Click n Collect](#), and [Parcel Pending](#) *(as with all vendors referenced in this toolkit, these are provided for informational purposes only, and the Chancellor's Office does not endorse a particular service)*.

Mini Pantries

Little free pantries and “friendly fridges” emerged in the late 2010s as an accessible, community-friendly addition to food pantries. Mini pantries can be stocked by the food pantry but can also be maintained by partners on campus, and can even be stocked with donations from students and the community. Swipe Out Hunger developed a brief guide to [Expanding Your Pantry's Reach Through Mini Pantries](#).

Connecting Students to CalFresh

CalFresh is the California version of SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), a benefit program that is primarily federally funded. CalFresh provides monthly benefits to help households with low income buy food at grocery stores, farmers markets, and other retailers that sell food. CalFresh participants use an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card, which looks like a debit card. CalFresh benefits are not income, and they do not impact students' taxes or financial aid.

Many California community college students are eligible for CalFresh. Connecting students to CalFresh and other public benefits is one of the most important and most widely recognized roles of college basic needs centers.

Post CalFresh flyers and pre-screening information on site at the basic needs center, food pantry, etc., and share these materials with partners (e.g., financial aid, health services). Find materials under [Promotion and Outreach Tools](#), below.

Regularly post information about CalFresh on your social media and prominently display information on your website. Find materials under [Promotion and Outreach Tools](#), below.

Send emails each semester to your listserv with basic eligibility information, encouraging students to visit [BenefitsCal.com](#) or your offices to learn about applying.

Request that campus leadership (e.g., student services dean) send an annual email to students to encourage them to apply. Prepare messaging and visuals for leadership to use. **Work with CalFresh Outreach Coordinator(s)** on campus or in the community to hold enrollment clinics on campus. ([Find CalFresh Outreach contractors in each county](#).)

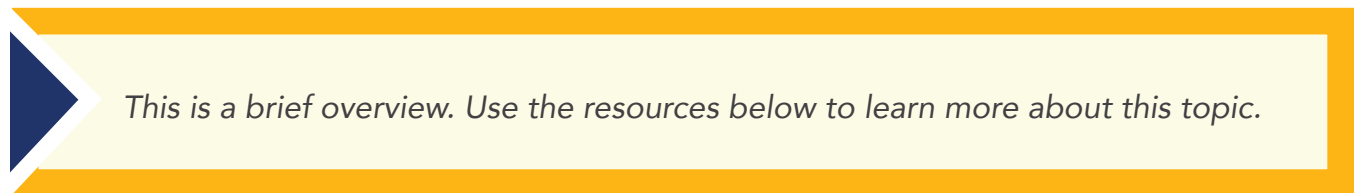
Visit departmental meetings to talk to faculty and staff about CalFresh enrollment basics so that they are prepared to refer students to you.

Train student ambassadors and/or peer leaders on campus in the basics of CalFresh eligibility and prescreening.

Partner with admissions, financial aid, and records to make sure that information about CalFresh is provided at campus orientations, during registration and financial aid appointments, etc. Learn more in the sections [Partner with Financial Aid](#) and [Collecting, Using, and Reporting Data](#).

Make sure that language used to discuss CalFresh is non-stigmatizing. For example, terms like “welfare,” “food stamps,” and “poor” or “needy” can make students feel ashamed or reluctant to apply; examples of options that may be better include “financial aid program,” “food aid,” “free debit card for groceries,” “money for groceries,” “nutrition assistance program,” “benefits to purchase groceries,” etc. The resources below, especially those from the Center for Healthy Communities (such as the [Compassionate Assistance](#) training) address this topic in more detail.

Introduction to CalFresh Eligibility



The primary requirement is meeting [gross and net monthly income thresholds](#). After determining the student’s gross income, their net monthly income must also pass a threshold test. There are several deductions (e.g., child care payments) that are removed from their gross monthly income to determine if they meet the net test.

- **Important note:** work study earnings do NOT count as income for the purposes of CalFresh.

To be eligible, students ages 18-49 must meet the income requirements, be enrolled at least half-time, and meet the following requirements:

Household must have at least one person (including children) who is a citizen or who meets certain immigrant status requirements.

Student must meet **one** of the following requirements (see [All County Letter No. 24-31 CalFresh Student Eligibility Handbook Version 2.0](#)):

- Work at least 20 hours per week or 80 hours per month, on average

- Single parent enrolled full-time and taking care of a child under 12
- Caring for a child under 6, or caring for a child who is at least 6 but under age 12 without adequate child care, or caring for a child under age 12 as a single parent
- Receiving TANF-funded benefit, including CalWORKs, Tribal TANF, TANF-Funded, Cal Grant A or B, and any other program funded with the TANF block grant
- Approved, awarded, or accepted work study for the current school term and anticipate working during the term
- Enrolled in a state-funded program that improves employability:
 - CalFresh Employment and Training Program, including Fresh Success (learn more about the Foundation for California Community Colleges [Fresh Success program](#))
 - Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)
- Has a disability and receives disability-based income, like Social Security Disability, Supplemental Security Income, Veterans' Disability, or Worker's Compensation, with disability expected to last more than 30 days; alternatively, if the student does not receive disability-based income but has verification of their inability to work (for physical or mental health reasons) from a medical professional or case manager
- Enrolled in a local/college-specific program that has been approved for the exemption—visit the [CalFresh Policy Guidance page](#) and select [Approved Programs to Increase Employability](#).
- Does not expect to be enrolled next term



Promotion, Outreach, and Training Tools

CalFresh Outreach Project

The Chancellor's Office and the Foundation for California Community Colleges (Foundation), among other partners, are working to raise awareness and promote applications for CalFresh among California community college students.

Visit the link above to access [Resources](#) a social media toolkit, downloadable poster, FAQ, and CalFresh 101 document that you can use to learn about and promote CalFresh awareness on your campus.



Image 11: Example of a downloadable social media image from the CalFresh Outreach Project

CalFresh Outreach at California Department of Social Services (CDSS)

Visit the [California Department of Social Services \(CDSS\) CalFresh Outreach](#) page for outreach materials, CalFresh Awareness Month resources, a list of [CalFresh outreach coordinators by county](#), and more.

CalFresh Outreach (CFO)

CFO at the Center for Healthy Communities (CHC), at California State University, Chico, is contracted under the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to fund campuses and community-based organizations to increase application assistance for CalFresh Food.

Through this program, CHC has developed an array of excellent materials that colleges can use to expand CalFresh outreach on their campus. Visit the [CFO Resource Hub](#) for resources such as CalFresh FAQs, templates, trainings, and more.

Connecting Students to WIC

The Women, Infants & Children (WIC) nutrition program provides funding and support for pregnant and postpartum people, people with a recent pregnancy loss, breastfeeding people, and infants and young children (up to fifth birthday). It is administered by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH).

WIC participants receive nutrition and breastfeeding education, referrals to family resources, and funds for healthy foods and formula. (View the [WIC Authorized Food List Shopping](#)

[Guide](#) for details.) Students can receive both WIC and CalFresh. Although there is a perception that WIC is for mothers and woman-bodied people, WIC also welcomes fathers and male-bodied parents, legal guardians, and foster families, as well as military and migrant families.

Participants receive a WIC card that is loaded with their benefits each month. Using the California WIC app, participants can view their balance, upcoming appointments, and WIC grocers, as well as scan food items while shopping to ensure that they are eligible.

Families' income must be less than or equal to 185% of the Federal Poverty Level (established annually). Visit [Apply for WIC Online](#) to view eligibility guidelines. Students who are enrolled in or eligible for CalFresh, Medi-Cal, CalWORKs, or FDPIR (Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations) are automatically income-eligible for WIC.

Outreach Strategies

Share information about WIC widely—post it in the food pantry, and anywhere that food benefits are provided; ask all students who are pregnant or parenting if they are enrolled in WIC; if you have a clothes closet that provides children's or maternity wear, post about WIC there; share information about WIC at any child-friendly events on campus (e.g., kids clothing exchanges); and include WIC in the benefits listed on your basic needs center website.

Collaborate with your campus early childhood care and education programs on outreach and enrollment activities.

Visit the CDPH webpage for [Outreach Materials](#) to print and download, or order free copies of, outreach brochures and flyers in English, Spanish, Arabic, Armenian, Chinese, Hmong, Russian, and Vietnamese.

Visit the CDPH [Communications and Outreach](#) page for toolkits, social media posts, and videos you can use to encourage students to learn more and apply.

Enrollment

To enroll in WIC, students will need to make an appointment at their local WIC office.

- There are WIC offices throughout California. Visit [How can I get WIC?](#) and input your zip code to identify the local WIC clinic(s) near you, so that you can share this info with students or help them make an appointment while they are in your office.
- You can also walk students through the [eligibility screener](#) to help them determine whether they should make an appointment.

Accepting EBT Cash and Nutrition Benefits

One of the ways that colleges can help to address food insecurity is by accepting EBT benefits at campus stores, dining halls, and other point of sale locations. EBT, CalFresh, and

SNAP are different terms that are often used interchangeably. Below is a brief overview of EBT services, California community colleges' responsibilities related to EBT, and information about how the colleges can start or expand their EBT-related services.

EBT Terms and Programs

Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) is an electronic system through which states issue benefits. Benefits programs that are issued through EBT include but are not limited to: CalFresh; CalWORKs; Medi-Cal/Medicaid; and Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Special Supplemental Nutrition Program.

People who receive cash or nutrition benefits use an EBT card to pay for items at participating retailers. EBT cards look like debit cards, use a magnetic stripe and Personal Identification Number (PIN) like debit cards, and are designed to be discreet. EBT cash benefits are intended to provide financial assistance for necessities such as rent, utilities, and food and other household essentials. People who receive EBT cash benefits can use their EBT card to pay for these items in participating stores; they can also withdraw money at ATMs. Any item that can be legally purchased with currency can be purchased with EBT cash benefits, but some types of stores are excluded.

EBT cash programs include state general assistance; refugee assistance; and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), known in California as CalWORKs (California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids). To receive CalWORKs benefits, a person must be pregnant or the parent of a child under 19, have low or very low income, and meet other requirements.

Often, the simplest way for colleges to begin accepting benefits is by becoming an EBT cash retailer. This allows students to buy food and other items on campus with their EBT card using their cash benefits, such as CalWORKs. Retailers do not need special state or federal government approval to begin accepting EBT cash. This is one reason why EBT cash is often the easiest route for schools.

CalFresh is California's implementation of **SNAP, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program**. CalFresh provides monthly benefits for households with low income to pay for food, food products, and food-producing plants or seeds. CalFresh recipients do not need to be eligible for other financial assistance or social services programs to participate in CalFresh. CalFresh eligibility is based on household size, income, and monthly expenses. There are also certain eligibility requirements that are specific to students.

The **Restaurant Meals Program (RMP)** is a long-standing program that allows CalFresh recipients who are homeless, disabled, or 60 years of age or older to use their CalFresh benefits to buy hot, nutritious, prepared meals. The purpose of this program is to provide reduced-cost meals to people who may not have the tools or ability to cook food at home.



Becoming a SNAP Retailer

In the 2023-2024 legislative cycle [AB 2033, Chapter 913](#) was signed into law. AB 2033 amended [Education Code 66023.5](#) and added Education Code 55027.2. AB 2033 requires California community colleges, on or before September 1, 2025, to identify and apply for at least one general store or a store that sells food on campus to become an authorized retail food store under the federal SNAP program, known as CalFresh in California. If approved, colleges are required to ensure the store or stores, within a reasonable time, accept the use of EBT cards.

If a campus does not have a general store or a store that sells food on campus, they are not required to apply to become an approved SNAP/CalFresh EBT retailer.

The legislative intent associated with [AB 2033](#) is for colleges that have a bookstore, general store, and/or café that sell the required types of foods, that at least one of these entities, will apply to become an approved SNAP/CalFresh EBT retailer. This is applicable for entities that are either campus owned and/or campus vendors. A few things to note:

- If the college bookstores, general stores, and/or cafés do not offer the correct combination of foods, they are not required to modify their food offerings to apply to become an approved SNAP/CalFresh EBT retailer.
- Colleges can modify their food offerings to apply for and be approved as a SNAP/CalFresh EBT retailer.
- There are specific considerations regarding entities, like cafeterias, that primarily sell prepared/hot foods. Additional information regarding restaurants and entities that sell prepared hot foods is listed below.

Determining Your Eligibility to Accept CalFresh

Determine whether your campus store(s) is/are eligible to accept CalFresh benefits. Stores must meet one of two criteria to be eligible.

- Criterion A: maintain a continuous stock of a certain variety and quantity of staple foods, including perishable foods. Staple foods are **non-prepared foods in these four categories**: fruits and vegetables; meat, poultry or fish; dairy products; and breads or cereals. Stores must stock at least three units of three staple varieties in each of these four categories, including at least three units of one perishable food in at least two categories.
- Criterion B: have more than fifty percent of total gross retail sales from the sale of staple foods. (This criterion often applies to stores that sell one type of staple food, such as butchers.)

Colleges do not have to offer fresh/raw versions of staples in order to qualify. The table below lists non-exhaustive examples of foods that colleges can stock to qualify as staples. Visit the USDA's [SNAP Staple Foods](#) webpage for more details.

Meat, Poultry, or Fish	Dairy	Bread or Cereals	Vegetables or Fruits
• Fresh ground or sliced meat, cutlets, chops, etc. • Soup with meat listed as the first ingredient • Jerky • Frozen chicken nuggets • Canned tuna fish • Eggs • Liquid egg whites	• Milk • Cheese • Butter • Plant-based dairy products (e.g., almond milk) and butter substitutes • Infant formula, in liquid or powdered form • Sauces with dairy listed as first ingredient • Sour cream • Yogurt	• Bread loaves • Pasta, including gluten-free • Tortillas • Bagels • Cereal, including infant cereal • Prepared foods with wheat flour as first ingredient • Rice and rice-based frozen meals • Buns or rolls	• Fresh fruits or vegetables • Potato products (e.g., tater tots) • Precut fruit snack packs • Frozen fruits • Canned fruits • 100% juice • Canned soup with a vegetable or tomato sauce listed as first ingredient

See [Appendix E](#) to learn the steps to become a SNAP/CalFresh EBT Retailer.

Sharing Information About SNAP Retailers

AB 2033 also amends Education Code 66023.5 to require colleges, on or before September 1, 2025, to update the existing list of on- and off-campus basic needs services and resources, to include the United States Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service's "[SNAP](#)

[Retail Locator](#)” website link. The SNAP Retail Locator contains a map with locations that are authorized retail food stores under the federal SNAP/CalFresh program and that accept the use of EBT cards.

Participate in the Restaurant Meals Program

The **Restaurant Meals Program (RMP)** allows people who are homeless, elderly, or disabled to use their CalFresh benefits to buy meals at restaurants, cafeterias, and other prepared-food vendors.

As of September, 1, 2021, the RMP is a statewide program—restaurant vendors may participate in the RMP in all 58 counties. Also, all California community colleges in participating counties are now required to apply to become RMP vendors.

Please visit the CDSS CalFresh [RMP Partner Resource](#) for step-by-step guidance on how to apply, implement, and advertise the program.

How to set up a Swipe Out Hunger Program

Swipe Out Hunger is a national nonprofit that offers college campuses an array of support services, including help setting up a swipe donation program. This promising practice allows students to donate funds in the form of meal swipes or other cafeteria currency. This generates a resource that is then available for students in crisis and/or experiencing food insecurity. Swipe Out Hunger also offers support establishing or improving campus food pantries.

The University of California Global Food Initiative created a toolkit that colleges can use to build a swipes donation program. It includes interviews and lessons learned from staff at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and University of California, Los Angeles, who established programs on their campuses: [Swipe Out Hunger: A Guide to Creating Your Campus Sustainable Meal Sharing and Recovery Program](#).

Learn more about Swipe Out Hunger and submit a consultation request on the [program's website](#).



VII.H. Hygiene and Living

Basic needs centers can also facilitate access to a number of resources that may not fall under traditional food or housing insecurity services.



Toiletries

See the [Toiletries and Other Items](#) section for information about toiletries and cleaning items that are commonly in-demand at food pantries (at colleges and in the community).

Campus Showers

[AB 1995 \(effective 2017\)](#) requires that California community colleges provide students experiencing homelessness access to campus showers. Basic needs centers can help publicize days, times, and locations when campus showers are available for free use. They can also connect students to hygiene items (such as soap and shampoo offered by the food pantry).

Laundry

Some nonprofits have emerged to provide free mobile laundry services to people experiencing homelessness. [MiraCosta Community College](#) is one example of a community college that has partnered with a mobile laundry provider to provide monthly free services to students. Another organization, [Laundry Love](#), also offers free laundry services at participating laundromats.

Clothing Closets

Some colleges set up “clothes closets” or “clothes pantries.” These provide donated clothing, and may focus on a specific type (e.g., interview/professional wear, warm clothes such as coats). For example, the [Crush Clothing Closet](#) at Clovis Community College focuses on professional wear. This can be an opportunity to solicit donations from the community. Alumni, local businesses, local business associations and chambers of commerce, and local retirees’ groups can be great sources of professional wear donations.

Some colleges, such as [Butte College](#), [Santa Rosa Junior College](#), [Consumnes River College](#), and [Folsom Lake College](#), offer gender-affirming closets and items such as chest binders and breast forms. This may be an opportunity to collaborate with equity services and/or LGBTQ-focused groups on campus.

Remember parenting students! Include pregnancy wear and clothing for infants and children, or share information about local places in the community where students can go for low- or no-cost pregnancy and children’s wear. (Post this information broadly: remember that pregnant and parenting people may not always be open about their status.) You might also host a kids clothing swap as a practical and social event that can make parenting students feel seen.

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Part IX: Appendix

Appendix A. Contributors

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Appendix B. Assembly Bill-132 Postsecondary education trailer bill. (2021-2022)

The following is an excerpt. Find the full text of AB-132: https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=202120220AB132

(4) Existing law establishes the California Community Colleges, under the administration of the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges, as one of the 3 segments of public postsecondary education in this state. Existing law establishes community college districts throughout the state, and authorizes them to provide instruction to students at community college campuses.

This bill would require each campus of the California Community Colleges, no later than July 1, 2022, to establish the position of Basic Needs Coordinator and designate a staff person as the Basic Needs Coordinator. The bill would require a basic needs coordinator to act as a broker in identifying, supporting, and linking students to on- and off-campus housing, food, mental health, and other basic needs services and resources, among other responsibilities. The bill would also require each campus, no later than July 1, 2022, to establish a Basic Needs Center, which would be a central location on campus where basic needs services, resources, and staff would be made available to students, as specified. The bill would require each Basic Needs Center, among other duties, to help students to have the information needed to enroll in CalFresh and other relevant government benefit programs.

This bill would further require each campus, no later than February 1, 2022, to develop a document to be made available to students online that clearly lists all on- and off-campus basic needs services and resources, as specified. The bill would require each campus to provide the document to students as a part of campus orientations in either electronic format or paper form, and to provide to faculty, and encourage the faculty to include in their syllabi, the online link to the electronic format of the document, the location of the Basic Needs Center once established, and the contact information for the coordinator once designated. The bill would also require each campus, no later than February 1, 2022, to streamline the application and intake process for on-campus basic needs services and resources, to develop and implement a plan to identify and provide outreach to students who have basic needs insecurity, and to develop a student basic needs tab that is clearly visible and easily accessible from a drop-down menu on the home page of the internet website of the campus, as specified.

This bill would require each community college campus to report specified information to the office of the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges, and would require the office to develop and submit to the Governor and the Legislature every year beginning on or before May 1, 2023, a report based on the data and information reported by campuses under the bill and information on the use of funds made available to implement the requirements of the bill. Because the paragraph would impose new duties on community college districts, it would constitute a state-mandated local program.

SEC. 15. Section 66023.5 is added to the Education Code, to read:

66023.5. (a) As used in this section:

(1) “Basic needs services and resources” includes, but is not limited to, housing, food, clothing,

feminine hygiene, diapers, technology, childcare, and mental health services and resources.

(2) “Coordinator” means a basic needs coordinator established pursuant to this section.

(b) Each campus of the California Community Colleges shall do all of the following:

(1) No later than July 1, 2022, establish the position of the Basic Needs Coordinator, and designate a staff person as the Basic Needs Coordinator to serve as the single point of contact for students experiencing basic needs insecurity related to basic needs services and resources. The coordinator shall act as a broker in identifying, supporting, and linking students to on- and off-campus housing, food, mental health, and other basic needs services and resources. To ensure the effectiveness and impact of this position, the coordinator shall be a dedicated position solely focused on addressing the basic needs of students and meet qualifications such as experience providing services to high-need and diverse populations. The coordinator shall oversee and coordinate with other staff tasked with addressing students’ basic needs, shall inform students of all on- and off-campus basic needs services and resources and how to access them, and shall develop on- and off-campus partnerships to provide basic needs services and resources to their students.

(2) (A) No later than July 1, 2022, establish a Basic Needs Center, which means a central location on campus where basic needs services, resources, and staff are made available to students. The Basic Needs Center is intended to be a one-stop, single location and point of contact for students to more easily access and gain awareness of basic needs services and resources. The campus shall make a reasonable effort to locate all on-campus basic needs services and resources at the Basic Needs Center. If the campus cannot reasonably locate all basic needs services or resources at the Basic Needs Center, the campus shall provide students with the location and contact information, including name, telephone number, and email address, for all basic needs services and resources not located in the Basic Needs Center. The coordinator shall be housed in the Basic Needs Center.

(B) Each Basic Needs Center shall help ensure that students have the information they need to enroll in CalFresh and other relevant government benefits programs. Each Basic Needs Center shall coordinate with their campus financial aid department or financial aid office. This section shall not be construed to require or encourage the Basic Needs Center to be combined or colocated with the financial aid department or financial aid office. The funding made available by the Budget Act of 2021 to implement this section, or any subsequent Budget Act or statute to implement this section, shall not be used to combine or colocate the Basic Needs Center with the financial aid department or financial aid office and shall not be used for the administration of student financial aid programs, including staffing. Each Basic Needs Center shall connect students to the financial aid department or financial aid office as appropriate to ensure that students are receiving all available financial aid. Each Basic Needs Center shall coordinate with their local homelessness response system to refer students to community resources available to address homelessness in addition to services and resources provided by the campus. Basic Needs Centers shall be authorized to provide support to students who can be reasonably expected to enroll in the upcoming term and to provide support to students during summer and winter breaks who were previously enrolled or are enrolled for the upcoming fall or spring term.

(C) Campuses shall endeavor, to the extent feasible, to use a portion of any funds made available for basic needs support for providing funds directly to students to address urgent needs. To the extent that a Basic Needs Center is already in place, that center may be used to satisfy the requirements of this section. If the existing Basic Needs Center fulfills only part of the requirements of this section, basic needs services and resources shall be expanded as needed to satisfy all the requirements of

this section.

(3) (A) No later than February 1, 2022, develop a document that shall be provided to students at the Basic Needs Center, once established pursuant to paragraph (2), in either electronic format or paper form, and that shall be made available to students online, that clearly lists all on- and off-campus basic needs services and resources that includes, but is not necessarily limited to, all of the following:

(i) The description of the service or resource.

(ii) The location of where the service or resource is provided.

(iii) The point of contact for the service or resource, including a name, telephone number, and email address.

(iv) Any eligibility restrictions on accessing the service or resource.

(B) Provide the document to students as a part of campus orientations in either electronic format or paper form.

(C) Provide to faculty the online link to the electronic format of the document, the location of the Basic Needs Center, once established pursuant to paragraph (2), and the contact information for the coordinator, once designated pursuant to paragraph (1), and encourage faculty to include the online link to the electronic format of the document, the location of the Basic Needs Center, and the contact information for the coordinator in their syllabi.

(D) To ensure that the document remains useful to students, the document shall be reviewed, updated, and made available online on both the internet website of the campus via the student basic needs tab and the internet website-based student account associated with a student's attendance at the institution, as specified in paragraph (6), no later than the first day of every fall and spring semester or no later than the first day of every fall and spring quarter.

(4) No later than February 1, 2022, streamline the application and intake process for on-campus basic needs services and resources to minimize duplication and eliminate barriers to access. If an application is required, develop and use a single application for students to receive on-campus basic needs services and resources.

(5) No later than February 1, 2022, develop and implement a plan to identify and provide outreach to students, including nontraditional students, who have basic needs insecurity related to housing, food, and mental health. Once the coordinator is designated pursuant to paragraph (1) and the Basic Needs Center is established pursuant to paragraph (2), the outreach shall include information about the coordinator and the Basic Needs Center.

(6) No later than February 1, 2022, provide a student basic needs tab that is clearly visible and easily accessible from a drop-down menu on the home page of the campus' internet website and include the information described in paragraph (3) conspicuously on both the internet website of the campus via the student basic needs tab and the internet website-based student account associated with a student's attendance at the institution. Once the coordinator is designated pursuant to paragraph (1) and the Basic Needs Center is established pursuant to paragraph (2), information about the coordinator and Basic Needs Center shall also be included on both the internet website

of the campus via the student basic needs tab and the internet website-based student account associated with a student's attendance at the institution.

(c) (1) Each campus of the California Community Colleges shall report to the office of the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges information that shall include, but not necessarily be limited to, all of the following:

(A) The description and number of basic needs services and resources, broken down by category.

(B) The number of students served by the basic needs services and resources.

(C) The socioeconomic and demographic backgrounds of these students.

(D) Challenges and best practices in the implementation of the basic needs services and resources.

(E) Whether students who used the basic needs services and resources remained enrolled or graduated from a campus maintained by the district.

(2) The data and information reported under this subdivision shall be disaggregated by each basic needs service and resource, where applicable.

The office of the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges shall develop and submit to the Governor and the Legislature every year beginning on or before May 1, 2023, a report based on the data and information reported by campuses pursuant to subdivision (c) and information on the use of funds made available to implement this section.

Appendix C. Assembly Bill 2033 Post-secondary education: electronic benefits transfer cards: basic needs services and resources. (2023-2024)

The following text is an excerpt that highlights where AB 132 was amended or added-to. Portions of AB 2033 that pertain only to the California State University or University of California systems were removed. Find the full text of AB 2033 at https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=202320240AB2033

(1) [...] This bill would require, on or before September 1, 2025, each campus of the California Community Colleges and each campus of the California State University, and request each University of California campus, if it has a general store or a store that sells food on campus, to identify and apply for at least one general store or a store that sells food on campus to become an authorized retail food store under SNAP and, if approved, ensure the store or stores accept the use of EBT cards, as specified. To the extent that the bill would impose new duties on community college districts, it would impose a state-mandated local program.

(2) [...] This bill would require each community college campus, on or before September 1, 2025, to update the basic needs services and resources document to include the United States Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service's "SNAP Retail Locator" internet website link, as specified. To the extent that the bill would impose new duties on community college districts, it would impose a state-mandated local program.

(3) The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state. Statutory provisions establish procedures for making that reimbursement.

This bill would provide that, if the Commission on State Mandates determines that the bill contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement for those costs shall be made pursuant to the statutory provisions noted above.

SEC. 2. Section 66023.5 of the Education Code is amended to read:

66023.5.

(3) (A) No later than February 1, 2022, develop a document that shall be provided to students at the Basic Needs Center, once established pursuant to paragraph (2), in either electronic format or paper form, and that shall be made available to students online, that clearly lists on- and off-campus basic needs services and resources that includes, but is not limited to, all of the following:

(i) The description of the service or resource.

(ii) The location of where the service or resource is provided.

(iii) The point of contact for the service or resource, including a name, telephone number, and email address.

(iv) Any eligibility restrictions on accessing the service or resource.

(B) On or before September 1, 2025, update the document developed pursuant to subparagraph (A) to include in the list of on- and off-campus basic needs services and resources the United States Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service's "SNAP Retail Locator" internet website link, which contains a map with locations that are authorized retail food stores under the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and accept the use of electronic benefits transfer cards issued pursuant to Chapter 3 (commencing with Section 10065) of Part 1 of Division 9 of the Welfare and Institutions Code.

(C) Provide the document to students as a part of campus orientations in either electronic format or paper form.

(D) Provide to faculty the online link to the electronic format of the document, the location of the Basic Needs Center, once established pursuant to paragraph (2), and the contact information for the coordinator, once designated pursuant to paragraph (1), and encourage faculty to include the online link to the electronic format of the document, the location of the Basic Needs Center, and the contact information for the coordinator in their syllabi.

(E) To ensure that the document remains useful to students, the document shall be reviewed, updated, and made available online on both the internet website of the campus via the student basic needs tab and the internet website-based student account associated with a student's attendance at the institution, as specified in paragraph (6), no later than the first day of every fall and spring semester or no later than the first day of every fall and spring quarter.

SEC. 3. Section 66027.2 is added to the Education Code, to read:

66027.2. (a) Subject to subdivision (b), on or before September 1, 2025, each campus of the California Community Colleges and each campus of the California State University shall, and each campus of the University of California is requested to, identify and apply for at least one general store or a store that sells food on campus to become an authorized retail food store under the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and, if approved, ensure the store or stores, within a reasonable time, accept the use of electronic benefits transfer cards issued pursuant to Chapter 3 (commencing with Section 10065) of Part 1 of Division 9 of the Welfare and Institutions Code.

(b) If a campus does not have a general store or a store that sells food on campus, subdivision (a) does not apply.

SEC. 4. If the Commission on State Mandates determines that this act contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement to local agencies and school districts for those costs shall be made pursuant to Part 7 (commencing with Section 17500) of Division 4 of Title 2 of the Government Code.

Appendix D. Resources for Student Parent Webpages

Resources for Student Parent Websites

- [Federal and State Resource Links](#)

Resources to support webpage development

- The Pregnant Scholar: AB-2881 Toolkit
<https://thepregnantscholar.org/toolkits/ab-2881-implementation-tools>
- Student Parent Joy: Website Full List (CSU, UC, and CCC student parent webpages)
<https://www.studentparentjoy.org/ab2881/webpage-full-list>

Resources to potentially include on the webpage

- California Competes: Public Benefit Finder for California Students
<https://californiacompetes.org/resources/public-benefit-finder-for-california-students>
- BenefitsCal: CalFresh
<https://benefitscal.com/Help/program/calfresh/HCPDE?lang=en>
- California Department of Public Health: Women, Infants & Children Program
<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CFH/DWICSN/Pages/Program-Landing1.aspx>
- IRS: Earned Income Tax Credit
<https://www.irs.gov/credits-deductions/individuals/earned-income-tax-credit-eitc>
- California Franchise Tax Board: California Earned Income Tax Credit
<https://www.ftb.ca.gov/about-ftb/newsroom/caleitc/index.html>
- IRS: Child Tax Credit
<https://www.irs.gov/credits-deductions/individuals/child-tax-credit>
- California Franchise Tax Board: Young Child Tax Credit
<https://www.ftb.ca.gov/file/personal/credits/young-child-tax-credit.html>
- California Franchise Tax Board: Foster Youth Tax Credit
<https://www.ftb.ca.gov/file/personal/credits/foster-youth-tax-credit.html>
- IRS: Child and Dependent Care Credit Information
<https://www.irs.gov/credits-deductions/individuals/child-and-dependent-care-credit-information>
- IRS: American Opportunity Tax Credit
<https://www.irs.gov/credits-deductions/individuals/aotc>
- IRS: Lifetime Learning Credit
<https://www.irs.gov/credits-deductions/individuals/lc>
- California State Controller's Office: Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program
https://sco.ca.gov/eo_vita.html
- FAFSA
<https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa>
- California Student Aid Commission: California Dream Act Application
<https://dream.csac.ca.gov/landing>
- California Student Aid Commission: Students with Dependent Children (Cal Grant increase for parents)
<https://www.csac.ca.gov/students-dependents>
- CalWORKs
<https://www.calworks.org/>

Appendix E: Steps to Becoming a SNAP/CalFresh EBT Retailer

The following information is adopted from [How Do I Apply to Accept Benefits?](#) (USDA, last updated October 2024). For the most current information, please visit the USDA website.

Applying to become a SNAP/CalFresh EBT retailer is a simple, online process that costs you nothing. You can complete an online application in as little as 15 minutes.

USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is the only source that authorizes retailers – no one else. FNS does not work with outside entities to authorize retailers for SNAP. **There is no cost to apply.**

Do not complete an application if:

- You are not a Retail Food Store (including campus stores, as described in [Accepting EBT Cash and Nutrition Benefits](#) or a Farmers Market. Instead, call the [SNAP Retailer Service Center](#) at 1-877-823-4369.
- If you are a retailer that wants to accept SNAP-EBT on your website or mobile app, please do not complete this application. Instead, follow the requirements listed on the [retailer requirements page](#).

If you are a Retail Food Store or a Farmers Market, you can apply to accept SNAP benefits at your store or market locations by following the steps below.

1. Create a [Login.gov](#) account

Before you start your application, you must create an account on Login.gov.

You'll need to provide the following information:

- Email address
- Secure password
- One additional authentication method to keep your account secure (for example, a mobile phone number to receive texts for verification).

2. Complete the [SNAP Retailer Application](#)

- Once you start your application, you have 30 days to complete it. If your application is not complete within 30 days, it will be deleted.
- You will need to submit the required supporting documents. Instructions for submitting your documents are provided at the end of the application. Make sure that you have name(s), home address(es), and Social Security Number(s) for each store owner, and sales data for your store(s). **If you are unsure how to complete any information, contact the [SNAP Retailer Service Center](#) at 1-877-823-4369 for assistance.**
- If you own 10 or more stores, consider whether you are a [Multi-Store Owner](#) (MSO).

3. Wait for a Decision from FNS

- FNS will process your application and we will contact you if we need any further information.
- After you complete it, you can [check the status of your application](#) in real time.
- If you have additional questions, please call the [SNAP Retailer Service Center](#) at 1-877-

823-4369.

- You must be authorized by FNS *before* you can accept **SNAP**. You cannot accept EBT in your store until you are authorized by FNS. You will know you are authorized when you receive an FNS-issued SNAP Permit.

4. Choose your Point of Sale (POS) Equipment

In 2025, California is becoming one of the first states to transition to chip- and tap-enabled SNAP EBT cards. For current information about the roll-out, please see [SNAP EBT Chip and Tap Cards Are Coming Soon](#).

All authorized SNAP retailers must use Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) equipment and transaction services. Most retailers are required to purchase EBT equipment and services on their own.

Exceptions: Eligible farmers markets, direct-marketing farmers, military commissaries, non-profit food buying cooperatives, group living arrangements, drug and alcohol treatment centers, and prepared meal services (other than for-profit restaurants participating in State-option restaurant programs) may continue to qualify for free EBT equipment and services until further notice.

- After successful authorization, you are issued a SNAP Permit, which includes the store name, store location, your name and the names of any additional owners, and the FNS Number. Use the FNS Number when you are ordering your POS equipment and when your POS device is programmed.
- If you already have equipment, talk to your current processor about programming it to accept EBT and to obtain cost information.
- [Guidance for selecting a third party processor](#) is available. You should review the cost of leasing or purchasing equipment and services. Then, you should make the best choice for your business.

Retailers may only use [manual vouchers](#) during a system outage or disaster. Your business may currently use manual vouchers to conduct SNAP transactions. If so, and you were SNAP authorized prior to March 22, 2014 or are one of the retailer exceptions identified above, you may continue to use manual vouchers unless notified by FNS. However, you must still purchase EBT equipment and work with your EBT terminal provider regarding manual voucher supplies and processing. Other retailers may not use manual vouchers except during a system outage or disaster.

Other Resources

Staple food guidelines can be found here: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/retailer/eligible>

Training Guide and Videos

A 20-page training guide that explains program rules, regulations, and policies. The guide also answers all frequently asked questions (FAQ) about topics such as eligible food, SNAP sales tax, manufacturer's coupons, and your point-of-sale equipment. USDA encourages colleges to review the guide with all owners and employees.

- [SNAP Retailer Training Guide](#) (available in multiple languages)

Four videos accompany the guide:

- [Video 1 - Authorization](#): explains how you can apply to accept SNAP benefits and what you can expect during the eligibility process.
- [Video 2 - Basic Guidelines](#): explains how to prepare your store to accept SNAP benefits, including training requirements for everyone who works in your store, and describes how SNAP benefits can and cannot be used.
- [Video 3 - Transactions and Payment](#): explains how you can obtain equipment for accepting SNAP benefits, and how you'll receive payment for a SNAP purchase.
- [Video 4 - Information for Cashiers](#): provides an overview of SNAP for people who work in your store, describes the steps for a successful transaction and explains the DOs and DON'Ts.