

PRESS RELEASE

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County of Orange Social Services Agency Marks First Full Year of Countywide Restaurant Meals Program

County Outreach Efforts Lead to Significant Program Growth

Orange County, Calif. (March 5, 2020) — The County of Orange Social Services Agency (SSA) is pleased to share results of the first full year of the implementation of the Restaurant Meals Program (RMP) countywide.

RMP is a program that enables eligible elderly, disabled and homeless CalFresh recipients to purchase prepared meals at participating restaurants using their Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards. The program is intended to increase food access for those who may not have a place to store or cook food, may not be able to prepare food or who lack access to a grocery store.

The Orange County Board of Supervisors initially authorized SSA to implement RMP as a pilot program, which launched in the cities of Anaheim and Santa Ana in early 2018. Based on the success of the pilot, the Board of Supervisors approved SSA's recommendation to expand the Restaurant Meals Program countywide in November 2018, with program expansion beginning in January 2019.

Through significant outreach efforts, SSA has been able to secure restaurant participation in 30 out of 34 Orange County cities, ensuring program accessibility to the most vulnerable members of the community. Prior to the countywide expansion, SSA had 51 participating restaurants in Santa Ana and Anaheim; this figure grew to 108 as of January 1, 2020, with nearly 50 additional Orange County restaurants awaiting approval from the United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service.

In 2019, over 85,000 RMP transactions were completed in Orange County with a total of \$889,000 in revenues generated for local businesses. These transactions represent a 745% increase over the prior year.

Additionally, RMP continues to show growth and diversity with the addition of five approved restaurant locations on the campus of California State University, Fullerton.

"We are very pleased with the success of the Restaurant Meals Program in Orange County and look forward to seeing continued growth in our number of participating restaurants," said SSA Director Debra Baetz. She continued, "RMP helps the community on a number of fronts — in our ability to provide greater access to prepared meals and in our support and partnership with local businesses in the community."

To learn more about the Restaurant Meals Program, please visit:

<http://ssa.ocgov.com/calfresh/calfresh/rmp>

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