

16. Certification Periods

16.1 Establishing Certification Periods

16.1.1 Definition [63-504.1]

A certification period is the number of months for which a CalFresh household is certified to receive benefits before a recertification (RC) of eligibility is required.

16.1.2 Beginning Month [63-504.111]

For a new application, begin the certification period in the first eligible month, starting with the month of application. If an applicant is ineligible in the month of application, the first month in which they are eligible will be the first month of the certification period.



Example:

A family of three applies for CalWORKs and CalFresh on July 25. Mom has just been laid off and received her last paycheck on July 20. Her total earnings for July are \$2,500. The current income puts the family over the applicant income test for CalWORKs and CalFresh, but it appears they would be eligible beginning in August. The BDA for the AU/household is August 1 and a SAR cycle will be established for August through January based on the BDA of August 1. The AU/household first SAR 7 will be due in January and their first annual RD/RC will be due in July.

For a timely reapplication or recertifications, begin the certification period with the month after the last certification period ends.



Example:

A 12-month certification period ends in October. The household completes the SAWS 1 and SAWS 2 on October 12. Begin the new certification period in November.

16.1.3 Length

Households shall be assigned the longest possible certification period. If a household is certified for less than the maximum certification period, the reason must be documented on the Maintain Case Comments window.

However, a Public Assistance (PA) semi-annual reporting household's certification period shall:

- Be aligned with the CalWORKs RD, and
- NOT exceed the MAXIMUM certification period of 12 months.

16.1.4 PA HH Definition 63-504.121]

Public Assistance (PA) means a program funded under Title IV-A of the Social Security Act of 1935, as amended, or matching state funds for public assistance programs. Programs must be means-tested, and all household members must be receiving or authorized to receive benefits from a Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), or state-funded program. California's TANF program is CalWORKs.

- A PA household is defined as a household in which ALL members are receiving or are authorized to receive CalWORKs benefits, including two-parent family benefits, and households receiving Native TANF.
- Benefits can be services such as CalWORKs family reunification.
- For purposes of family reunification, parents, although ineligible for cash aid, will be considered PA CalFresh households based on the child(dren)'s temporary absence from the home and the parents' receipt of CalWORKs family reunification services.
- This includes households whose Public Assistance benefits are suspended, recouped, or who are entitled to but not paid benefits because the PA grant is less than \$10.00.

If at least one household member receives any of the following, the household is NOT considered PA:

- GA
- RCA/ECA
- Cash Assistance Program for Immigrants (CAPI)
- Adoptions Assistance Program (AAP).

A household that does not meet the PA criteria is considered a nonassistance (NA) household.

[Refer to “Categorically Eligible (CE) Households,” page 11-1].]

16.1.5 NA HH Definition [63-504.122]

A nonassistance (NA) household contains at least one individual who is not authorized to receive federally funded Public Assistance (PA) Benefits. This includes households with at least one member who:

- Does not participate in any federally aided TANF program.
- Receives General Assistance (GA).
- Receives Cash Assistance Program for Immigrants (CAPI).

- Receives Refugee Assistance (01, 07 and 08 cases), ECA.

16.1.6 Certification Period Chart

This chart is a quick reference guide for use in determining certification periods. Whenever possible, a household should be certified for the maximum number of months. When a household is certified for a shorter time period, the reason why must be documented on the Maintain Case Comments window. Refer to the following pages for more detailed information.

HH TYPE	CERTIFICATION PERIOD	
	MINIMUM # OF MOS.	MAXIMUM # OF MOS.
Public Assistance	1	Align with submit month but must not exceed 12 months (CalWORKs RD to be aligned with CalFresh RC)
Non Assistance	1	12 (align with submit month but must not exceed 12 months)
Elderly Simplified Application Project (ESAP): All household members are either elderly and/or Disabled with No Earned income	36	36
ALL adult members are elderly or disabled	1	24 (requires one SAR 7 at the 12th months)
Residents of Indian reservation	1	24
ES with postponed verification	1	12

16.1.7 PA Households [63-504.121]

PA households shall be certified for no more than 12 months. When the CalWORKs RD due date falls before the 12th month, the CalFresh certification period shall expire in the month when the CalWORKs RD is due.



Example:

A CalWORKs family applies for CalFresh in January and is approved. The CalWORKs RD is due in September. Certify the household for nine months, beginning in January and ending in September, the month when the CalWORKs RD is due.

**Example:**

A CalWORKs family applies for CalFresh in January. The CalWORKs RD is due in March. Certify the household for three months, beginning in January and ending in March, the month when the CalWORKs RD is due.

**Example:**

A family files a joint application for CalWORKs and CalFresh in January, and is approved for both on January 20. Certify the household for 12 months, beginning in January of the current year and extending through December of that year.

**Reminder:**

Homeless PA households are not considered semi-annual reporting households for CalFresh, even if they submit a “Eligibility/ Status Report” (SAR 7) for CalWORKs.

16.1.8 NA Households [63-504.122]

NA (nonassistance) households will be certified for no more than 12 months.

16.1.9 All Adult HH Members are Elderly/Disabled [63-504.142]

Households in which ALL adult members are elderly or disabled may be certified up to 24 months even if there are children in the household. [Refer to “Elderly or Disabled [63-102(e)(i)],” page 9-1] for definition of elderly/disabled.]

**Example:**

For elderly/disabled households certified for 24 months, provided household circumstances are expected to remain stable, at least one interim contact with the household is REQUIRED. The interim contact, at the first 12 months of the certification period, the household is required to submit a SAR 7.

16.1.10 Elderly Simplified Application Project (ESAP) Households

The ESAP includes three waivers which apply only to Non-Assistance CalFresh (NACF) cases wherein *all* household members are either elderly (age 60 and over) and/or disabled with *no earned income*. The three waivers described below were approved as part of California’s ESAP:

- Extend the certification period to 36 months for E/D households with no earned income;

- Waive the recertification interview requirement for E/D households with no earned income; and
- Make use of data matching to reduce client-provided verifications for E/D households.

16.1.11 Notice of Expiration of Certification (NEC) [63-504.25]

A NEC must be sent to the household in the month before the certification period expires.

Issue the NEC at the time of certification if the household is certified for only one or two months, and the certification is not completed until the month following application.

A NEC is not required when household's cash RD and CalFresh recertification are completed jointly in the month before the final month of the certification period.

ESAP NEC Notices

The following notices are specific to ESAP households:

CF 377.2B: This notice must be sent out to ESP eligible households at the end of the 36-month period. The notice informs the household that:

- A recertification application is required
- A recertification interview is **not** required.
- The household is required to report at 12 and 24 months by completing a SAR 7 form.

CF 377.2C: This notice must be sent out to households that were determined to be eligible for ESAP at application or recertification, but they are no longer eligible due to a change during the certification period. The notice informs the household that:

- A recertification application is required.
- A recertification interview is now required.
- The household is required to report at 6, 12, and 18 months by completing a SAR 7 form.

CF 377.2D: This notice is sent if household reports a change (e.g. income from a job) during the 36-month certification period, which makes the household ineligible for ESAP. At the time of conversion (i.e., at the end of the 36-month certification), the CF 377.2D must be sent to inform the household of their new responsibilities and requirements.

16.2 Classification Changes [63-504.123]

Households which have a change in classification (such as PA vs. nonassistance household status) must retain their original certification period, unless the circumstances described in “Changing the Certification Period” apply. [Refer to “Changing the Certification Period [63-504.15 & 63-504.16],” page 16-6]]

**Example:**

A family applies for CalWORKs and CalFresh on January 20. The cash eligibility is not cleared by February 19 (30 days later). The CalFresh application must be processed as nonassistance with a 12-month certification period which begins in January. On March 2, CalWORKs eligibility is cleared. The CalFresh household is converted to PA for April, but the initial 12-month certification period of January through December is maintained. The RD and the RC must be aligned.

16.3 Changing the Certification Period [63-504.15 & 63-504.16]

Once the certification period is established, it cannot be shortened. If the household becomes ineligible, CalFresh benefits must be discontinued with a proper 10-day Notice of Action citing the reason(s) and regulation(s).

**Exception:**

When all members of a currently certified nonassistance (NA) household (HH) apply for Public Assistance (PA) benefits, the HH shall be informed that it may be re-certified for CalFresh at the same time its PA eligibility is determined. If the HH agrees to be re-certified, the HH shall be provided with the application forms and have a joint interview. A Notice of Expired Certification (NEC) is NOT to be sent. If the HH is eligible for PA benefits, a new CalFresh certification period is assigned.

For other programs the HH is applying for (e.g., Medi-Cal), the CalFresh certification period may be aligned as long as the HH agrees to it. The case file must be document that the re-certification was done at the client's request.

If a household is certified for less than the maximum number of months, the household's certification period may be lengthened as long as the total months of the certification period DO NOT exceed 24 months for households in which all adult members are elderly or disabled, or 12 months for all other households. If the certification period is lengthened, the household must be advised.

**Example:**

The EW certifies an elderly/disabled household for only 12 months. The following day, the EW realizes this household should have been given a 24-month certification period. The certification period can be extended to 24 months but a revised Notice of Action must be sent.