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mRelief launches End-to-End Mobile Tool to Enroll Californians in CalFresh

The tool is the latest effort underway to stem student hunger amid recent reports that 48 percent of students are food insecure.

Launching on UC Davis Campus in Yolo County, eligible CalFresh applicants can now schedule, submit documents and retrieve benefits via mobile devices.

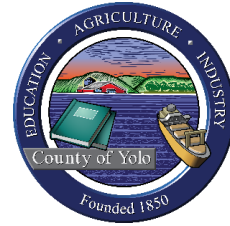
Davis, CA – mRelief’s easy-to-use web and text messaging platform, launched in partnership with the California Department of Social Services in February 2017, helps low-income Americans find out if they qualify for food stamps. Today, they launch an end-to-end process which is being utilized to address the barriers eligible users face securing CalFresh benefits. After low-income families discover eligibility, they can now use a mobile-responsive platform to apply, schedule an interview and submit necessary verifications for CalFresh benefits – the three required steps to receive food benefits.

“This is so easy,” [posted](#) Glenda Ross, a CalFresh applicant who was recently approved and used the tool to navigate the process. Ross went on to say, “No standing in line for hours just to see a worker. Interview conducted over phone and approved the same day. This is extremely efficient and hassle free. Modern technology at its best.”

[Video Demo.](#)

After submitting an application for CalFresh benefits, applicants must complete a required interview. The mRelief tool has an adaptive SMS (text messaging) flow to facilitate the applicant’s preferred experience. Via the mRelief platform, applicants can receive reminders, text required documents ahead of their interview and receive updates on delays and outstanding documents. In initial testing of the tool, more than 70 percent went on to attend the required interview.

“We started this work providing information to clients on whether they met the basic requirements,” said Rose Afriyie executive director of mRelief. “Now, in partnership with government, we have built a platform that helps clients apply, share times to complete



application requirements so interviews don't conflict with work or school, and know at each step what is outstanding to enroll."

The pervasiveness of student hunger underscored the need for this technology on local campuses. A [2016 report](#) by Students Against Hunger showed that 48 percent of students were food insecure in the past 30 days. In September 2016, [AB 1747](#) was signed into law in California requiring campus eateries to register to accept purchases under CalFresh. "We are really excited to partner with mRelief to leverage SMS and its power to help serve students in need, and the overall community," said Nolan Sullivan, Yolo County Health & Human Services Agency, service center branch director.

[Student Outreach Campaign.](#)

"More than ever, students are juggling coursework, part-time jobs and personal lives, thinking about where their next meal comes from becomes a major stressor," says UC Davis Global Food Initiative fellow, Dana Ng. "With CalFresh, satisfying the basic need of getting a meal is made possible and more accessible for students."

The process has been made possible by collaborations with county employees to ensure that optimizations to CalFresh enrollment are consistent with existing business processes and do not involve extensive manual work by case workers. Overall, the application tool eliminates manual follow-up that is currently done to facilitate scheduling and long term case management that requires in-person help.

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[Yolo County Health & Human Services Agency](#) promotes a healthy, safe and economically stable community. Their values are: collaborative – promoting teamwork and partnership; accountable – transparent, efficient, and effective; respectful – demonstrating integrity and trust; equitable – honoring diversity and promoting equality; and strategic – forward thinking and innovative.

[mRelief](#) has built an easy-to-use platform on web and text messaging for low-income Americans to find out if they qualify and enroll in food stamps. Their mission is to restore dignity by transforming access to social services. The organization is a vendor to the California Department of Social Services and the Yolo County Health & Human Services Agency. mRelief has connected more than 230,000 families to social services.