



CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program



2024 Check Booklet Toolkit

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Table of Contents

| | |
|--|---|
| Authority and Purpose | 1 |
| General Responsibilities | 1 |
| California Department of Food and Agriculture | 1 |
| California Area Agency on Aging | 1 |
| CDFA and AAA Agreements | 1 |
| AAAs and Provider Agreements | 2 |
| Check Booklets | 2 |
| AAAs Receipt of Check Booklets | 2 |
| USDA FNS Nondiscrimination Statement | 2 |
| AAAs Distribution of Check Booklets to Service Providers | 2 |
| Distribution of Check Booklets to Participants | 3 |
| 2024 SFMNP End of Year Closeout | 4 |
| Participant Waiting List | 4 |
| Security of Check Booklets | 4 |
| Lost/Stolen SFMNP Check Booklets | 4 |
| Participants | 5 |
| Participant Eligibility | 5 |
| Participant Benefit Level | 5 |
| Designation of a Proxy | 5 |
| Participant Rights and Responsibilities | 5 |
| Nutrition Education | 5 |
| Ineligible Applicants | 5 |
| Participant Use of Checks | 6 |
| Monitoring Reviews | 6 |
| Complaint Procedures | 6 |
| Record Retention | 6 |

2024 SFMNP Forms

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|---|---------------------------------------|
| CDFA/ AAA Agreement | Lost or Stolen Check Booklet(s) Form |
| AAA/ Provider Agreement | Proxy Form (<i>Participants</i>) |
| Receipt of Check Booklets | Participant Rights & Responsibilities |
| Check Control Log (<i>Service Providers</i>) | Nutrition Education Material |
| Participation Eligibility Guidelines | Ineligible SFMNP Participation |
| Self-Certification Form (<i>Participants</i>) | Complaint Form |
| SFMNP Closeout Form (<i>Check Return</i>) | |

Authority and Purpose

The Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) is administered nationally by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Services Agency (USDA, FNS), and in California, by the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) and is implemented under [7 CFR 249](#) CDFA partners with the California's Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) to distribute the SFMNP check booklets which include five (5) checks redeemable for \$10 each. The AAAs serve this purpose well because they administer several senior programs on a local level either directly or through their affiliation with senior organizations and centers.

The SFMNP is a federally funded program that provides low-income seniors with check booklets that can be used to purchase fresh, nutritious, unprepared, locally grown fruits, vegetables, honey, and herbs from Authorized Certified Farmers' Markets (CFM) to low-income seniors.

General Responsibilities

California Department of Food and Agriculture

The CDFA, Office of Grants Administration (OGA) oversees the SFMNP and is responsible for all aspects of grant administration including monitoring of the AAA to ensure compliance with program requirements, statutes, federal regulations, and agreement terms and conditions. The OGA will provide AAA assistance and consultation throughout the SFMNP season as well as, work collaboratively with the California Women, Infants and Children Program (WIC) to train, assist, and monitor Farmers' Markets and farmers' compliance with federal regulations. The current WIC Authorized CFM Directory for each county is available at: [Authorized Market List](#).

California Area Agency on Aging

The AAAs are responsible for implementing the SFMNP at the local level and ensuring no conflicts exist. Responsibilities include controlling the security of SFMNP checks and distribution to eligible participants or their designated proxy, advising participants of their rights and responsibilities under the SFMNP, and distributing nutrition education and other materials provided by OGA. AAAs must also maintain adequate documentation and control logs to assure adherence to the SFMNP program requirements, statutes, federal regulations, and agreement terms and conditions.

Every AAA must appoint a Coordinator for their agency. The AAA Coordinator acts as the primary contact for OGA and oversees the receipt and distribution of the SFMNP check booklets.

CDFA and AAA Agreements

The SFMNP federal regulation, [7 CFR 249](#) requires an agreement between the state agency (CDFA) and local agencies (AAA) that administer the SFMNP.

The [2024 SFMNP Agreement](#) specifics how CDFA and the AAAs agree to implement the 2024 SFMNP.

A new Agreement is required annually at the beginning of each SFMNP season. A signed copy must be emailed to OGA at grants@cdfa.ca.gov within 15 calendar days from receipt.

***Note:** SFMNP Check Booklets will not be issued to AAAs until OGA has received a signed agreement.

AAAs and Provider Agreements

The SFMNP federal regulations also require an agreement between the AAA and service providers (i.e., senior centers, meal programs, etc.). If the AAA works with an outside provider for the distribution of SFMNP check booklets, both parties are required to complete and sign a *Service Provider Agreement*. AAAs should email signed copies of their provider agreements to the OGA at grants@cdfa.ca.gov before distribution of any SFMNP checks.

Check Booklets

AAAs Receipt of Check Booklets

Shipments of SFMNP check booklets are sent directly to the AAAs from the printer and include a packing label that indicates the sequence numbers of the check booklets in the shipment.

Upon receipt, the AAA Coordinator and a secondary staff must certify the total number of check booklets received and the sequence number of the check booklets. The AAA Coordinator completes, signs, and returns the *2024 Receipt of Check Booklets* form to the OGA.

The *2024 Receipt of Check Booklets* is used for certifying the amount and sequence numbers of the check booklets that each AAA receives. The completed form should be emailed to the OGA within fifteen (15) calendar days of receipt. The OGA will return a signed copy for the AAAs' records to be kept on file.

USDA FNS Nondiscrimination Statement

All AAA's and their service providers must display the USDA FNS "And Justice For All" Nondiscrimination Statement poster at each check distribution site in clear view for senior participants. OGA can provide additional posters upon request.

AAAs Distribution of Check Booklets to Service Providers

Each AAA Coordinator/Provider must complete the following information on the provided *Check Control Log*.

- Date the check booklets are issued to provider;
- Number of booklets issued;
- First and Last sequence numbers of check booklets issued to the provider;
- Provider Organization Name and Address;
- Printed Name and Signature of the service provider representative.

Service providers must sign the [Check Control Log](#) to acknowledge receipt of the check booklets. The AAAs retain the original and provide a copy to the service provider. AAAs must recover any check booklets that service providers do not distribute within thirty (30) days of receipt for possible reallocation. AAAs are encouraged to contact CDFA for further instructions regarding check booklets.

The AAAs are responsible to recover voided, expired or disfigured SFMNP check booklets from service providers and return them to CDFA via secured mail. The AAAs are to report the total number of SFMNP check booklets distributed/unissued on the [SFMNP Closeout Form \(Check Return\)](#) to CDFA no later than **October 31, 2024**.

Distribution of Check Booklets to Participants

AAAs and service providers may begin distributing SFMNP check booklets no earlier than **May 1, 2024**. Each participant may receive only one SFMNP check booklet that includes five \$10 checks.

The 2024 check booklets must be distributed to participants on a first come first serve basis no later than **September 30, 2024**. Participants must redeem SFMNP checks at a certified farmers' market no later than November 30, 2024.

***Important:** Checks cannot be raffled, given away as prizes, or issued in any other manner than that set forth by USDA regulations. The AAA/service providers should ensure senior participants self-certify that they meet the [Participant Eligibility Guidelines](#) before signing the [Check Self-Certification Form](#) (previously the Check Issuance Log) to receive an SFMNP check booklet.

Service providers must distribute check booklets to eligible senior participants within 30 calendar days of receiving them from the AAA.

The following information on the [Check Self-Certification Form](#) must be completed when the checks are issued:

Participants are to fill out:

- Printed name of senior participant (*not proxy*);
- Optional Senior Contact Information (address, email, phone number)
- Ethnic Category of participant (*Hispanic/Latino – Yes or No*);
- Race Category of participant (*Indicate by checking all that apply*);
- Certify they meet ALL the SFMNP eligibility Requirements (age, income, etc.)
- Signature of the senior participant or designated proxy;

Agencies must complete:

- Check Booklet number issued to the participant/proxy;
- Date of distribution to the participant/proxy;
- Planning and Service Area (PSA) Number;
- Distribution/issuance site location;

The AAAs must retain the [Check Self-Certification Forms](#) with original signatures and service providers are to keep a copy for their records.

The service provider is responsible for returning all unused check booklets to the AAAs as soon as possible, but not more than thirty (30) days after the initial receipt of them. Service providers must report to the AAAs, the total number of check booklets distributed to participants no later than September 30, 2024.

2024 SFMNP End-of-Year Closeout

Closeout information is required to comply with SFMNP federal regulations. All AAAs must provide CDFA with 2024 SFMNP distribution locations and document issued and unissued check booklets on the [SFMNP Closeout Form](#).

All unissued check booklets must be *destroyed* (i.e., shred, tear, or burn) and recorded to CDFA by October 31, 2024. AAAs must have a witness present to sign off on the destroyed check booklets.

Participant Waiting List

AAAs must keep track of inquiries on a waiting list if check booklets run out. The list should be kept until CDFA confirms or denies additional funding availability.

Security of Check Booklets

The AAAs and service providers are responsible for the security of check booklets at all times. The checks are to be treated the same as cash. Security measures include, but are not limited to:

Store check booklets in a secure and locked file cabinet;

Do not leave check booklets unattended when distributing to providers or participants;

Limit access to check booklets to authorized AAA/service provider staff only.

Lost/Stolen SFMNP Check Booklets

Lost or stolen checks cannot be replaced under any circumstances. AAAs and service providers are responsible for reporting lost or stolen check booklets to CDFA. Service providers must notify AAAs when checks or check booklets are discovered lost or stolen.

To report lost or stolen checks:

- Complete the [Lost or Stolen Check Booklet\(s\) Form](#)
- Send a signed copy to CDFA and keep the original for your records;
- Document lost or stolen checks or check booklets on the [Check Control Log](#) and the original [Check Self-Certification Form](#).

Participants

Participant Eligibility

The AAAs and service providers must ensure all senior participants self-certify they meet the required *Participant Eligibility Guidelines*:

- Are at least 60 years of age or older.
- Household annual Income does not exceed more than 185% of poverty level.
- Has not already received a 2024 SFMNP Check Booklet.

Participant Benefit Level

The benefit level for the 2024 season is \$50 per eligible participant.

Designation of a Proxy

It is at the discretion of the AAA to allow eligible participants to designate an individual (proxy) to act as their authorized representative to receive an SFMNP check booklet and make purchases at Certified Farmers' Markets on their behalf. A proxy can be an authorized representative to a maximum of five participants. The AAAs are provided with an *English/Spanish Proxy Form* for participants to complete and designate proxy.

Participant Rights and Responsibilities

During enrollment, each participant or their designated proxy needs to be informed of their Rights and Responsibilities. Each participant/proxy must be provided a copy of the *Participant Rights and Responsibilities* form provided by CDFA. The participant or designated proxy must sign the *Check Self-Certification Form* acknowledging they meet all SFMNP requirements and have access to read or have the statement read to him/her.

Nutrition Education

CDFA will provide AAAs with *Nutrition Education* materials for distribution to each participant. *Nutrition Education* information related to fresh fruits and vegetables—available in English and Spanish—must be given to participants at the time SFMNP check booklets are issued. The participants should be encouraged to take the materials home and reference them when they shop at CFMs. Additional languages can be found online at www.cdfa.ca.gov/go/sfmnp.

Ineligible Applicants

The AAA must ensure the service providers advise any applicant deemed ineligible for SFMNP participation in writing, stating the reason(s) for their ineligibility and informing them of their right to appeal using the *Ineligible Participation form*. The form includes a quick check-off list and describes the conditions for appealing. The AAA must forward appeals to the OGA.

***Note:** Applicants DO NOT have the right to appeal the ineligibility for checks based solely upon the lack of SFMNP check booklets or available funding.

Participant Use of Checks

SFMNP participants must purchase goods for the amount listed on the individual check. Change cannot be given to participants by the farmers. Checks must be used at one farm stall and cannot be split among two or more vendors.

Participants are allowed to use multiple checks at one time. If a participant purchases more than the benefit value, they can use cash or other tender to pay the difference.

SFMNP Checks can ONLY be used to purchase fresh fruits, vegetables, honey, and fresh-cut herbs which must be purchased at a Certified, FMNP Authorized Farmers' Market no later than November 30.

Monitoring Reviews

All AAAs are subject to a monitoring review (site visit or desk review) once every two years as required by the SFMNP federal regulations. The purpose of monitoring reviews is to ensure the SFMNP is being carried out according to federal regulations and review how the program is being administered locally. Monitoring reviews will be conducted during the SFMNP season, July through September.

The AAAs will be required to complete and return a Monitoring Review Form and provide SFMNP documents and forms for review. Documentation may include but is not limited to agreements, control logs and self-certification forms, proxy forms, and complaint forms.

The SFMNP Coordinator will contact the AAA to schedule a monitoring site visit or desk review.

Complaint Procedures

The AAAs should follow the steps below when a complaint is filed:

- Interview the complainant to determine the nature of the problem;
- Document the complaint on the *Complaint Form*;
- If possible, determine whether the problem is limited or widespread and whether it is ongoing or a one-time occurrence;
- If appropriate, contact the market manager to discuss possible resolutions;
- If resolution appears improbable, contact CDFA for assistance;
- Retain the completed complaint form and send a copy to CDFA.

Record Retention

Record Retention and accessibility is governed by [2 CFR 200.333](#) and [2 CFR 200.337](#).

The AAAs must retain all supporting documentation about the 2024 SFMNP for three years from closeout (January 31, 2028) or until any litigation, claims, or audit findings related to the SFMNP are resolved, whichever is later. Records that must be retained include, but are not limited to tracking logs, receipts, distribution, and accountability of check booklets and provider agreements.

2024 SFMNP Forms

The following table summarizes the distribution of SFMNP Forms.

| Form Name | CDFA | AAA | Provider | Participant |
|---|----------|----------|----------|-------------|
| CDFA/AAA Agreement | Original | Copy | N/A | N/A |
| AAA/ Provider Agreement | Copy | Original | Copy | N/A |
| Receipt of Check Booklets | Original | Copy | N/A | N/A |
| Check Control Log | N/A | Original | Copy | N/A |
| Participation Eligibility Guidelines | N/A | On-Site | On-Site | To Review |
| Self-Certification Form (<i>Check Issuance Log</i>) | N/A | Original | Copy | To Fill Out |
| SFMNP Closeout Form | Original | Copy | N/A | N/A |
| Lost or Stolen Check Booklet(s) Form | Copy | Original | Copy | N/A |
| Proxy Form | N/A | Original | Copy | To Fill Out |
| Participant Rights & Responsibilities | N/A | N/A | N/A | Original |
| Nutrition Education Material | N/A | N/A | N/A | Original |
| Ineligible SFMNP Participation | N/A | Copy | Copy | Original |
| Complaint Form | Original | Copy | Copy | Copy |