



SAN FRANCISCO  
HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY

# CalFresh Emergency Grocery Card Program: Technical Assistance Toolkit

Step by step guide to providing technical assistance  
to CalFresh recipients of GiveCards

**Updated November 7th, 2025**



# Important updates on 11/7/2025

- Following lawsuits filed by California and other states, California CalFresh recipients are beginning to see the immediate restoration of their full benefits on their EBT cards.
- The Emergency Grocery Card Program will continue to be available for San Francisco CalFresh recipients to receive a one-time emergency prepaid grocery card.
- Instances of cards being claimed by someone other than recipient are an identity theft issue and should be reported to the police. We are not able to replace grocery card funds that are lost or stolen but client should call SFHSA immediately.
- A recording of a step by step walkthrough of the activation process is now available: [HERE](#)

# What is the CalFresh Emergency Grocery Card Program?

- San Francisco's response to the federal shutdown which is delaying CalFresh benefits
- Public-private partnership to provide one-time prepaid grocery cards to those who were CalFresh recipients as of October 2025
- Support is provided as a prepaid card through GiveCard, a financial technology company that helps organizations and governments disburse funds. To learn more: [www.givecard.com](http://www.givecard.com)
- Card is a prepaid debit card, which can be accessed virtually or as a physical card
  - Allows people to purchase groceries at most of the same places that accept EBT
  - But this is **not** an EBT card, nor is it a replacement: it is a separate, one-time supplement
  - Does not have functions of bank card: no ATM withdraws, cannot deposit/transfer balance
  - Not permitted for sugary or alcoholic beverages or tobacco



# Supporting Community

Community members trust your organization and will turn to you for support. You can help by:

- **Spreading the word** to CalFresh clients about the emergency grocery cards.
- **Assisting clients** to claim their prepaid grocery card.
- **Directing complex questions** about eligibility and card access to SFHSA and about card functionality to GiveCard

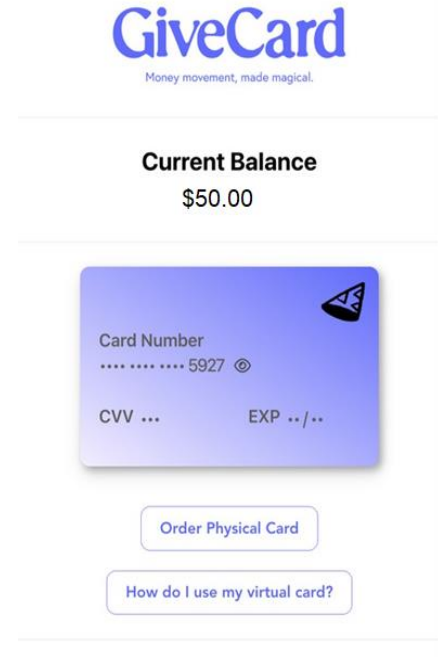
Together, let's get grocery cards into the hands of our community members!



# How to use GiveCard

- To use immediately as a **virtual card**:
  - Input card details to order groceries online, just as you would a debit card
  - Add the card to smartphone wallet (for instructions, click "How do I use my virtual card?")
    - Would enable tap to pay
  - When making online purchases, billing address provided in account
- Alternately, clients may also choose to request a **physical card** by clicking "Order physical card"
  - Can be used like a debit card at in-person locations or used online to place orders for groceries
  - Card will arrive within 7 business days

*Note: The virtual and physical cards are linked to the same account—any purchases on one will automatically update the balance on the other.*



# Important to know

- All CalFresh households will receive a letter this week with instructions for claiming their prepaid grocery card.
- Must claim card by December 31, 2025
- Must use funds by March 31, 2026
- One gift card per household. GiveCards amounts are not a household's usual CalFresh EBT amounts. They are based on average benefit amount for households of similar sizes:
  - 1-2 person household: \$200
  - 3-4 person household: \$350
  - 5+ person household: \$500
- Prepaid grocery card will not impact eligibility or benefit amount for CalFresh, CalWORKs, CAAP, Medi-Cal



# Sample Client Letter

*Arrives in white envelope with "City and County of San Francisco Human Services Agency" on the top left. Letterhead has the SFHSA logo in black and white.*



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CLIENT NAME  
ADDRESS BAR

**Subject: Important: One-Time Prepaid Grocery Card Benefit for CalFresh Households**

Dear Client,

## You Must Take Action to Receive Your Prepaid Grocery Card

This one-time aid will be provided as a prepaid card from GiveCard. Your prepaid grocery card will **not** be loaded onto your EBT card. You must activate or request your card by December 31.

- **Your Activation Code:** XXXXX  
Make sure not to share this code with anyone else. It can only be used once.
- **Your Gift Card Amount:** \$XXX

## To Receive Your Prepaid Grocery Card

### 1. Activate a virtual card online:

Go to [www.givecard.com/foodsf](http://www.givecard.com/foodsf) and enter your activation code.

- You'll be able to use the card immediately online or through a mobile wallet.



# Important to know continued...

**For only CalFresh recipients who use a General Delivery address or PO Box** as their CalFresh mailing address:

- SFHSA will offer in-person pickup of the grocery cards, beginning 11/6/25 from 8am to 5pm at:
  - 170 Otis Street *for families with children under 18 on their CalFresh case*
  - 1235 Mission Street and 1221 Mission Street *for all others*
- Those who do not use General Delivery or PO Box as their mailing address will be redirected to request a virtual card or physical card by mail
- **Quickest way to access funds is virtually with their letter**
- Can expect longer than usual lines & wait times
- Will still need to verify their identification





# Before getting started

- **Empower clients to try on their own!**
- Make sure client has letter from SFHSA
- Make sure client knows their Date of Birth
  - Date of Birth is for the primary applicant (person the letter is addressed to)
- Ask client if they know how to use Apple Wallet or Google Wallet
  - If so, they can save GiveCard onto their phone for immediate use (in-store or online)
  - Go through process on client device so they can save card and/or information
  - This is the fastest and most convenient way to get the GiveCard. Encourage clients to use this option if they are able.
- If clients will redeem & use online or on their smartphone, ask them to think of password before starting to save time
  - Password must be: at least 8 characters, 1 number, and 1 special character (e.g. #, @, \$, &, +, - or !)



# Step 1: Navigate to GiveCard site

- [givecard.com/foodsf](https://givecard.com/foodsf)

(secure link hosted by GiveCard)

- Translation will be in upper left for Spanish & Chinese
- Will need browser translation for other languages



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| GiveCard

## One-Time Prepaid Grocery Card Benefit for CalFresh Households

Due to the federal government shutdown, CalFresh benefits are temporarily delayed. To help during this time, San Francisco Human Services Agency are providing a one-time prepaid grocery card to CalFresh households.

This card is not a replacement for CalFresh, it's a one-time supplement to help you buy food while benefits are paused. It can only be used at grocery stores.

The card amount is based on the average CalFresh benefit for a household your size and may differ from your usual amount.

Continue



## Step 2: Validate Identity

Validate identity with:

### 1) Unique Activation Code

(6-Digit code found in your letter)

**Note: Do Not Share** this activation code with anyone else as it can **only be claimed once**.

### 2) Date of Birth

(for person the letter is addressed to)



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GiveCard

### Enter your Activation Code

This is a unique 6-character activation code made up of letters and numbers. You should have received it in your mailed letter from the San Francisco Human Services Agency. Example: G79DK2.

Activation Code \*

Please enter your 6-character code

Date of birth \*

mm/dd/yyyy

Back

Continue



## Step 3: Create an account

- It is recommended that clients create an account in order to:
  - Check their balance
  - Lock their card if lost or stolen
  - See billing address
- Creating an account requires an email or phone number.
- If client does not have an email or phone number --or they do not want to create an account--click on "Do not have an email or phone number?" (They will only be able to order a physical card)



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**GiveCard**

### Create an account to receive your card

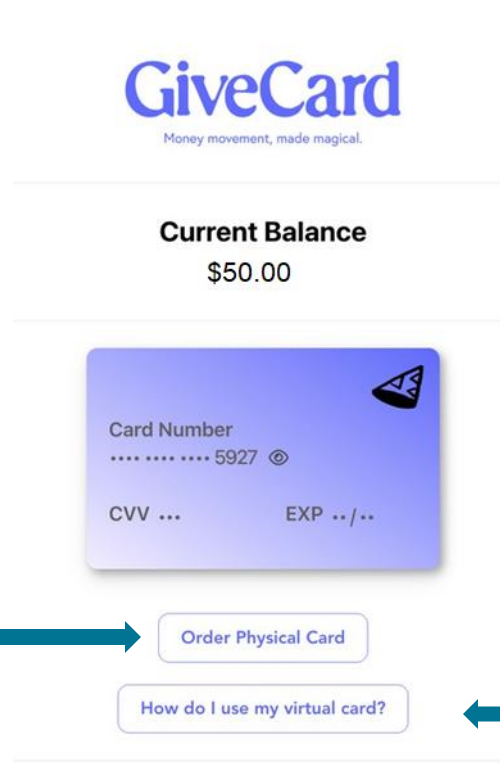
Please enter your email or phone number.

Next

→ [Do not have an email or phone number?](#) ←



## Step 4: Redemption




The image shows a web interface for GiveCard. At the top is the GiveCard logo with the tagline "Money movement, made magical." Below this, the "Current Balance" is displayed as "\$50.00". Underneath the balance is a visual representation of a blue GiveCard. The card displays "Card Number" followed by "..... 5927" and an eye icon, and "CVV ..." followed by "EXP ../..". At the bottom of the interface are two buttons: "Order Physical Card" and "How do I use my virtual card?". A teal arrow points from the left text to the "Order Physical Card" button, and another teal arrow points from the right text to the "How do I use my virtual card?" button.

If client  
prefers physical  
card, click here

For instructions on  
how to add to  
smartphone wallet,  
click here

## Step 5: If requesting a physical card

- Physical card cannot go to PO Box
- Will take up to 7 business days to arrive
- No USPS/UPS tracking available

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Enter your shipping address  
Your physical card will be mailed to this address.

First Name \*


Last Name \*

Line 2  
 (optional)

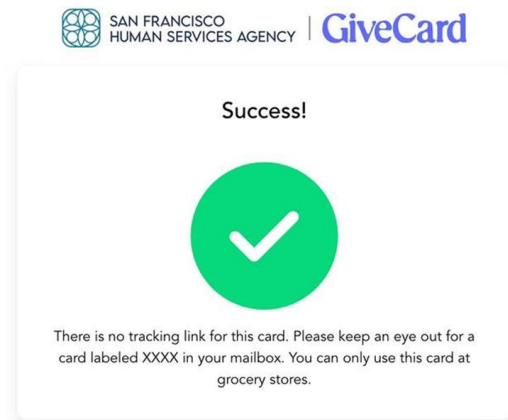
Shipping Address \*  
 Address One

Address Two  
 Apt, Suite, etc

City \*

State \*  
 State 

Zip Code \*



# For further assistance

## Direct clients to GiveCard for help with:

- Functionality
- Where to use
- User issues or errors
- Replacement cards

**Phone:** (628) 313-5351

**Website:** [www.givecard.com/support](http://www.givecard.com/support)

**FAQs:** [www.givecard.com/foodsf-help](http://www.givecard.com/foodsf-help)

## Direct clients to SFHSA if they:

- Have specific questions about their CalFresh case
- Need further assistance with activation
- Did not get activation code by 11/10

**Phone:** (855) 355-5757

**Website:** [sfhsa.org/CalFreshAid](http://sfhsa.org/CalFreshAid)

**FAQs:** [sfhsa.org/CardFAQ](http://sfhsa.org/CardFAQ) (Updated regularly!)

*Reminder: ONLY households who use **General Delivery or PO Box** as their CalFresh mailing address can visit 170 Otis (families with children under 18), or 1235 or 1221 Mission (all others) to obtain a physical card beginning 11/6*





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**Thank you for your partnership!**

Please reach out to [HSAOutreachComms@sfgov.org](mailto:HSAOutreachComms@sfgov.org) if  
you have more questions

[www.sfhsa.org](http://www.sfhsa.org)

