

RECENT EPSTEIN FILES RELEASE CALLS FOR FURTHER ACTION

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On Jan. 30, the Department of Justice released its second batch of documents related to Jeffrey Epstein, following the initial release of files a month earlier. Much of the materials were redacted. Following the release, the public has commented on what is contained in the files.

The DOJ released 3.5 million documents containing 2,000 videos and 180,000 images. These files are available on the DOJ website under the Epstein Library.

Many of the files contain images, videos and written descriptions related to sexual abuse, exploitation and trafficking of underage girls and women. Additionally, there are statements from victims and conversations between the suspected perpetrators associated with Epstein.

A few days after the files were released, the DOJ removed thousands of documents after some victims' identities could be found through uncensored photos and unredacted names. More than 500 attorneys and reviewers from the department reviewed the files.

The release has left some people, including Fresno City College students, outraged and skeptical of the government's intention now that the files are released.

"I don't know if there's any possible reparation for the victims," FCC student and pre-allied health major Hayleigh Nodal said. "Just hold the people that were found in it [Epstein Files] accountable."

On Nov. 19, 2025 The Epstein Files Transparency Act was signed into law. It required the Department of Justice to release all unclassified records, documents, communications and investigative materials in the DOJ's possession that relate to the investigation and prosecution of Epstein.

The first batch of documents were released on Dec. 19, 2025. However, many of the files accessible to the public in downloadable formats had been unreadable due to a large number of the pages being blacked out and censored.

The DOJ stated that, "redactions were to be limited

to the protection of victims and their families. Some pornographic images, whether commercial or not, were redacted, given the Department treated all women in those images as victims. Notable individuals and politicians were not redacted in the release of any files," in a letter sent to Congress.

Despite the statement, people online speculated that individuals and politicians were being protected from incrimination and association with the redactions in the files. These redactions also failed to protect victims in its initial January release.

Six people suspected of being complicit in the crimes were originally named in the redacted version of the files. They were billionaire Les Wexner, Sultan Ahmed bin Sulayem; along with Nicola Caputo, Salvatore Nuara, Zurab Mikeladze and Leonic Leonov, according to The Guardian.

"The reality is, the Justice Department acknowledged that their identities should not have been redacted. And I just thought it was important for someone to step up and say, I'm going to hold these elite, powerful men accountable," Congressman Ro Khanna, the co-sponsor of the Epstein Transparency Act, told PBS News.

An X account with the handle TheEpsteinFiles focused on exposing everyone related to the files, has gathered more than over 200k followers. The account keeps people up to date on Epstein related news.

In a recent poll it asked, "Is the release of Alien information to distract from The Epstein Files?" following Donald Trump's recent order to direct federal agencies to release any information regarding aliens and UFO's.

Out of 884 votes, 91% said yes, 9% said no.

Student Opinion

Students from FCC voiced disapproval of the way the original files were handled.

Anthony Kramer, a history major at FCC, said it, "feels like a very big injustice for the American people."

Kramer said the DOJ should have released the files when they first had access to them. He speculated the original redactions were to protect the high profile individuals in the files.

Nodal was frustrated that both Epstein and his accomplice Ghislane Maxwell didn't face immediate consequences despite previous allegations about sexual abuse.

Epstein was arrested in July 2006 for soliciting prostitution and was later released in July 2009. He was arrested again on July 6, 2019, this time for federal sex trafficking charges. Both charges involved Epstein and underage individuals.

"I don't think there's been enough action against the people who were found to be in the Epstein Files," Nodal said. "The fact that the FBI waited so long to release anything on Epstein when he was already a horrible human being is really disappointing."

Nodal mentioned President Trump, who according to The New York Times, was referenced more than 38,000 times in over 5,300 files.

Cesar Martinez, an aerospace engineering major at FCC, also felt frustrated with the time it took for the files to be released.

"I feel like all of those people in there should be brought to justice and put in prison, rightfully so," Martinez said. "The only thing that would satisfy would be arrests being made."

Martinez urged people to look past political affiliation. He believes anyone involved should be investigated.

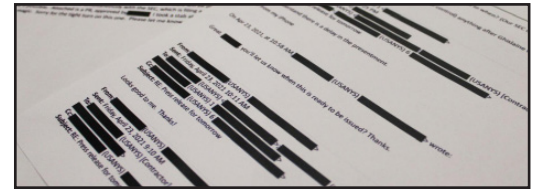


Photo of documents from the Epstein Files printed

WHY CALIFORNIA STUDENTS SHOULD APPLY FOR BENEFITS

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As the cost of necessities continues to rise, many students are struggling with tuition, food and basic health care coverage. Programs like SNAP and state medical benefits are designed to help low-income individuals, including college students. Still, many students don't know much about these benefits or realize they meet the eligibility requirements for California benefits.

Some students may even skip meals or delay medical care coverage to avoid out-of-pocket costs. Ricardo Castellanos, a third-year student at Fresno City College, said that growing up, his family has always used SNAP and medical benefits. But recently, as he has gotten older, he has realized the importance of being able to get his own food for himself and his family, so he applied for SNAP.

"I applied for SNAP and got it pretty quickly, probably two and a half weeks, and it usually takes longer. It helps me with separating the money I make to pay for classes and bills from things I need like food and health care," Castellanos said.

Benefits Cal provides SNAP (CalFresh), Cash Aid and Medi-Cal coverage to anyone eligible. BenefitsCal.com is Fresno County's online service portal, where a variety of programs for food, money and healthcare assistance are available to help students stay in school while also navigating day-to-day life.

According to the student center section of the Benefits Cal website, CAL Fresh benefits are provisional funds transferred on an electronic card called an EBT card or SNAP card, which looks and functions like a debit card. It can be used at most grocery stores, for online orders and at farmers' markets to buy produce.

"I know a lot of students have been told this a lot, but I believe everyone should apply for CalFresh. If you work and have to take some money out for food, EBT is a resource right there for you. Same with Medi-Cal, you won't have to worry about how you're going to pay medical bills or prescriptions if you have medi-cal," Castellanos said.

There is one application for all three programs at the bottom of the student center section of BenefitsCal.com. Applicants should allow themselves 30 to 60 minutes to complete the application and provide as much information as possible in one sitting to speed up the application process.

If applicants create an account, they can save their information and return to the application later to finish if needed. Benefits Cal reminds applicants to be prepared to

share accurate information about the money they earn, the things they pay for and the things they own.

Applicants will not need to upload documents to apply. Benefits Cal will let applicants know what documents they will need to provide later on in the process. The list of documents applicants will need to submit later includes a Driver's license, state ID card, or student ID card. They will also need to include proof of income, such as pay stubs, and, if not employed, applicants must mention the unemployment benefits they receive. Finally, applicants will also need to provide proof of expenses, such as Medi-Cal costs or child care.

Benefits Cal will then review the application and reach out to the applicant to schedule an interview. For Cal Fresh, applicants can choose between an in-person or phone interview. For Cal Works or cash aid, applicants may choose between an in-person or phone interview. The interview should take about an hour, according to BenefitsCal.com.

If applying for Medi-Cal, applicants will not need to be interviewed.

Castellanos said Cal benefits have helped him, even while working during school. Before, when money became tight for Castellanos, he said he would do lots of side jobs, like mowing neighbors' yards or cleaning the houses of people who attended his church.

When Castellanos first applied for SNAP benefits, he was nervous while awaiting his qualifications because he worried about being rejected.

"It can be more stressful than people think. The anticipation, if they say no, I think that is what hurts the most when you're trying to feed yourself and your family," Castellanos said.

However, getting groceries and healthcare is easier than many California college students think, depending on their situation. An application at BenefitsCal.com can give students access to CalFresh, even if they think they won't qualify.

The amount you receive depends on your income and household size. A single student can get up to \$250 a month for groceries, and those with roommates or family may qualify for more.

CalFresh eligibility also depends on factors such as your student status and residency. These "Student Exemptions" are explained in detail on the Benefits Cal website.

Applicants may qualify if they are under 21 years old, but must apply on the same basis as a parent. If over 49, they may qualify as an elder. They can be enrolled less

than half-time, be a single parent, or be working at least 20 hours per week or 80 hours per month.

Medi-Cal is also a beneficial program available to applicants in California, especially students. Though Medi-Cal eligibility depends on a few factors, including your income and household size, Lindsay Harris, the program supervisor at the Fresno County Department of Social Services, who oversees community engagement, said it's based on those factors.

Harris said Medi-Cal is California's version of Medicaid and is available to anyone, it just depends on your age, who is in your household for tax purposes, your citizenship status and your income level.

"There is a lot that plays into what you can be eligible for. If you're a student by yourself and you're filing taxes alone, then you can have your own Medi-Cal coverage.

However, if you're part of your family plan still or your parent or guardian still claims you as a dependent, then that becomes a factor as well," Harris said.

Harris said there is also additional coverage for students under the age of 21 for things like mental health services, if they need to see a counselor, if they need substance disorder treatment, STD treatment, if they have been assaulted and need treatment, and pregnancy treatment services.

Cynthia Ortiz, a second-year student at Fresno City College majoring in public law and policy, is a parent of children with severe conditions. She said Medi-Cal is a relief now that she is fully covered.

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Community members of Fresno Metro Ministry poses for photo after serving free samples and encouraging students to sign up for Cal Fresh benefits at FCC on Feb. 20. (Left to right) Kelsey Tutino, Niamh Schumacher, Jennifer Zaragoza and Arissa Delacerda. Photo by Jimmy Johnson.