



Food and Nutrition
Service

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July 22, 2021

**SUBJECT: Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer Program (P-EBT)
Approval of California's State Plan for Summer 2021**

TO: Jesus Mendoza
Regional Administrator
Western Regional Office

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (P.L. 116-127; the Act), as amended, authorized a temporary assistance program for households with children without access to meals in school and to certain SNAP-enrolled children in child care during the public health emergency originally declared in January 2020. The March 11, 2021 American Rescue Plan Act (the ARP, P.L. 117-2) extends P-EBT through the end of the public health emergency, a period that includes the summer of 2021.

Pursuant to the authority granted under Section 1101 of the Act, FNS approves California's enclosed plan to issue P-EBT benefits to children in schools and child care for the 2021 covered summer period.

Summary of State's Plan

The California Department of Social Services and the California Department of Education will issue P-EBT benefits through the State's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) EBT card system to households with eligible children. In general, school children are eligible for benefits if they would have received free or reduced price meals at their schools through the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) if not for the closure or reduced attendance or hours of their schools. Children in child care are eligible if they are enrolled in SNAP and their child care facility is closed or operating with reduced attendance or hours, or if they live in the area of a school that is closed or operating with reduced attendance or hours. The ARP deems all schools closed for the 2021 P-EBT covered summer period.

Children in Schools

The State and its school districts will identify the children who were eligible to receive free or reduced price NSLP meals as of the end of school year 2020-2021. The State will offer households who become income-eligible for free or reduced price meals the ability to establish their eligibility during the 2021 covered summer period. In addition, the State and its school districts will identify eligible children through direct certification during the same period.

In addition, California will:

- issue the U.S. standard benefit of \$375 to all eligible children,
- tentatively issue a single benefit for the entire summer period in December,
- set an application submission deadline of August 15 for households of children who become newly eligible during the covered summer period:

- California SFAs will use their standard NSLP applications for summer P-EBT benefits,
- school districts will process these applications immediately after the end of the covered summer period,
- the State will issue summer P-EBT benefits to these households in December.

Children in Child Care

The State will identify all children under age 6 who are enrolled in SNAP as of the end of school year 2020-2021. The State will ensure that children who receive a benefit through P-EBT's child care component do not also receive a benefit through P-EBT's school component for the covered summer period.

In addition, California will:

- issue P-EBT benefits for the full covered summer period to children whose SNAP enrollment begins or ends during that period,
- tentatively issue a single benefit for the entire summer period in December.

Finally, the State will identify risks for improper payments and ensure a high level of integrity.

Estimated Caseload and Value of P-EBT Benefits

California estimates that it will issue \$1.5 billion to approximately 4,000,000 school children, and \$375 million to approximately 1,000,000 SNAP-enrolled children in child care during the 2021 covered summer period.

Release of Information

Pursuant to Section 1101(e) of the Act, the Secretary hereby authorizes the release of the information necessary to carry out P-EBT in California. Section 1101(e) of the Act states, "Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Secretary of Agriculture may authorize State educational agencies and school food authorities administering a school lunch program under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (42 U.S.C. 1751 et seq.) to release to appropriate officials administering the supplemental nutrition assistance program such information as may be necessary to carry out this section."

Plan Timetable and Revisions

California will distribute benefits to households consistent with the timeframes identified in the State plan. Should the State encounter challenges or delays that significantly impair its ability to implement the approved P-EBT plan or require substantive changes, the State must notify the FNS Regional Office as soon as possible. The FNS Regional Office will work with the State to identify reasonable solutions and review revised plans for approval or further revision.

Civil Rights

California will continue to comply with civil rights requirements, to include providing equal access to individuals with disabilities and individuals who are limited English proficient.

Administrative Funds

The California Department of Social Services will participate in a P-EBT Administrative Budget Planning process using the FNS-366(a) Program and Budget Summary. When the FNS-366(a) is finalized, that will determine the State's Administrative Grant level. However, the FNS-366(a), Program and Budget Summary, may be updated and revised as the State's operational plan evolves.

Reporting

The California Department of Social Services will complete the FNS-292B, the FNS-46, the FNS-388, and the FNS-778 reports in accordance with existing requirements.

FNS appreciates California's commitment to meet the nutritional needs of children during a challenging time. If you have questions, please contact the FNS Western Regional Office.

Sincerely,

Cheryl Jackson Lewis
Acting Deputy Administrator
Child Nutrition Programs