



Food and Nutrition
Service

1320 Braddock Place
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November 15, 2021

SUBJECT: Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer Program (P-EBT)
Approval of Minnesota's State Plan for School Children,
School Year 2021-2022

TO: Vista Fletcher
Regional Administrator
Midwest 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 declared on January 27, 2020. Pursuant to the authority granted under Section 1101 of the Act, FNS approves Minnesota's enclosed plan to operate P-EBT for children in schools.

Summary of State's Plan

The Minnesota Department of Human Services and the Minnesota 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. The State's plan for school children covers the months of September 2021 through June 2022.

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 for a period of at least 5 consecutive days. The State will use the best feasibly available data and USDA-approved simplifying assumptions to issue benefits in amounts that are tied as closely as possible to the number of days that eligible children do not receive a meal service at school.

The State and its school districts will identify children eligible for free or reduced price NSLP meals using the most current available data. All school districts that rely on eligibility data from the most recent prior year will have a means to address that they do not issue benefits to school year 2020-2021 graduates and other non-students, and will offer households with new students the ability to establish their eligibility through the traditional school food authority-run school meal application and direct certification processes.

In addition, Minnesota will:

- use school year 2020-2021 free and reduced price status to issue P-EBT benefits through October (in line with a normal school year's 30-day carryforward period); for November forward, children will only receive P-EBT benefits if they have been certified for free or reduced price meals

- through direct certification or on applications submitted since the start of the current school year, or if they attend CEP or other Special Provision schools,
- calculate benefits for each student based on the student’s number of virtual learning days and COVID-related absences; the state will not calculate average benefits for any student:
 - students will receive P-EBT benefits for absences due to quarantines, other absences due to COVID related illness, school closures due to COVID, and approved remote learning days for COVID related reasons,
 - schools will submit individual students’ P-EBT eligible days into the State’s updated school year 2021-2022 P-EBT portal,
 - tentatively issue benefits to eligible children whose schools closed due to COVID during the months of September or October in a single issuance in November, staggered across three days,
 - issue benefits for the months of September through December for all other student-specific P-EBT eligible days in a single issuance in February, staggered across three days.
 - issue benefits for the months of January through May in a single issuance in June, staggered across three days, and
 - issue benefits for the month of June in July or August, staggered across three days.

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

Estimated Caseload and Value of P-EBT Benefits

The State will calculate monthly benefits for each eligible child in the household equal to the daily reimbursement for a free breakfast, lunch, and snack multiplied by the number of benefit days calculated as described in the State’s plan.

- Minnesota estimates that it will issue \$186.4 million to approximately 201,000 children for school closures and reductions in attendance and hours extending from September 2021 through June 2022.

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 Minnesota. 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

Minnesota 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

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

FNS appreciates Minnesota's exceptional efforts to maintain children's access to nutritious meals, and understands that even as the nation recovers from this difficult time, State agencies and local program operators will still face any number of challenges. FNS stands ready to provide additional support as needed. If you have questions, please contact the FNS Midwest Regional Office.

Sincerely,

Cindy Long
Administrator