



Food and Nutrition  
Service

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April 22, 2021

**SUBJECT:** Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer Program (P-EBT)  
Approval of Maine's State Plan for Children in Schools and Child Care

**TO:** Christine Ruggieri  
Acting Regional Administrator  
Northeast Regional Office

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (P.L. 116-127; the Act) as amended by the Continuing Appropriations Act, 2021 and Other Extensions Act (P.L. 116-159) and the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 (P.L. 116-260) 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 Maine's enclosed plan to operate P-EBT for children in schools and child care.

### **Summary of State's Plan**

The Maine Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Family Independence, and the Maine 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 2020 through June 2021. The State's plan for SNAP-enrolled children in child care covers the months of October, 2020 through June, 2021.

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. 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 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 through their schools or child care providers.

### **Children in Schools**

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 SY 2019-2020 eligibility data will have a means to address that they do not issue benefits to last year's graduates and 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, Maine has or will:

- developed a survey to be completed by school district officials; the survey will collect the predominant learning method in each of the districts' schools for each month of the school year:
  - Maine will collect data for the months of September through March in an initial survey, and will collect data for the remaining months of the school year in one or more additional surveys:
    - school districts will identify schools as predominantly remote if a majority of students had fully virtual schedules for more than half of the month;
    - districts will identify schools as predominantly hybrid if a majority of students had regular schedules that included a mix of in-person and remote days for the month;
    - districts will identify schools as predominantly in-person if a majority of students had fully in-person schedules for the month,
- issue benefits for the months of September through December in a single distribution after plan approval, potentially in June,
- issue benefits for January through March in a second distribution one month after the first distribution (tentatively); issue benefits for April through June in a third distribution one month after the second distribution (tentatively),
- set an average hybrid benefit for all schools with predominantly hybrid schedules:
  - the state's hybrid benefit is an average based on hybrid schedule information gathered from school district officials;
  - the state will adjust its hybrid schedule for months after March if information gathered from school districts indicate a change in typical hybrid schedules, and
- set a constant monthly benefit for children with fully virtual schedules by dividing the number of instructional days in the school year by the number of benefit months.

### **Children in Child Care**

At a minimum, the State will identify all children under age 6 who are enrolled in SNAP at any time since October 1, 2020. The State will not issue child care benefits to any child for months after their SNAP enrollment ends. Finally, 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 same month.

In addition, Maine will:

- issue benefits for the months of October through December in a single distribution after plan approval, potentially in June,

- issue benefits for January through March in a second distribution one month after the first distribution (tentatively); issue benefits for April through June in a third distribution one month after the second distribution (tentatively),
- identify the county of residence for each SNAP-enrolled child under age 6,
- for each month from October through the end of the school year, determine whether any school in the county has at least one school that is operating remotely or with a hybrid schedule:
  - if the State identifies at least one fully remote school in the county, all SNAP-enrolled children under age 6 in that county will receive a P-EBT benefit equal to the fully remote benefit for school children;
  - if the State does not identify at least one fully remote school in the county, but identifies at least one school with a predominantly hybrid schedule, then all SNAP enrolled children under age 6 in that county will receive a P-EBT benefit equal to the state’s average hybrid benefit for school children;

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.

- Mine estimates that it will issue \$86.8 million to approximately 72,700 school children for school closures and reductions in attendance and hours extending from September 2020 through June 2021.
- Maine estimates that it will issue \$33.5 million to approximately 31,100 SNAP-enrolled children in child care from October, 2020 through June 2021.

#### **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 Maine. 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**

Maine 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**

Maine 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 Office for Family Independence 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 Office for Family Independence will complete the FNS-292B, the FNS-46, the FNS-388, and the FNS-778 reports in accordance with existing requirements.

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

Sincerely,

Cindy Long  
Deputy Administrator  
Child Nutrition Programs