



Food and Nutrition
Service

1320 Braddock Place
Alexandria, VA
22314

July 21, 2021

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

TO: Cheryl Kennedy
Regional Administrator
Mountain Plains 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 Montana'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 Montana Human and Community Services Division and the Montana Office of Public Instruction 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, Montana will:

- issue the U.S. standard benefit of \$375 to all eligible children,
- tentatively issue a single benefit for the entire summer period in August for children who have been identified as eligible by July 26,

- set an application submission deadline of July 26 for households of children who become newly eligible during the covered summer period:
 - Montana SFAs will use their standard NSLP applications for summer P-EBT benefits,
 - school districts will process these applications either during or immediately after the end of the covered summer period,
 - the State will issue summer P-EBT benefits to households whose applications were submitted before the end of the covered summer period that were not included in the August issuance in a September issuance.

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, Montana 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 August.

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

Estimated Caseload and Value of P-EBT Benefits

Montana estimates that it will issue \$28.1 million to approximately 75,000 school children, and \$8.5 million to approximately 22,500 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 Montana. 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

Montana 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

Montana 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 Montana Human and Community Services Division 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 Montana Human and Community Services Division will complete the FNS-292B, the FNS-46, the FNS-388, and the FNS-778 reports in accordance with existing requirements.

FNS appreciates Montana commitment to meet the nutritional needs of children during a challenging time. If you have questions, please contact the FNS Mountain Plains Regional Office.

Sincerely,

Cheryl Jackson Lewis
Acting Deputy Administrator
Child Nutrition Programs