

**State Plan for Pandemic EBT
Children in Child Care, 2021-2022**

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| Summary: | (1) This document is a template to assist States in the development of State plans to operate Pandemic EBT for children in schools or child care during school year (SY) 2021-2022. (2) This document relates to Section 4601 of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (P.L. 116-127) as amended by the Continuing Appropriations Act, 2021 and Other Extensions Act (P.L. 116-159), the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 (P.L. 116-260), and the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (P.L. 117-2). |

Additional context and background for this document can be found at:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/state-guidance-coronavirus-pandemic-ebt-pebt>

The P-EBT Assistance for Children in Schools and Child Care is covered under OMB Control # 0584-0660, Pandemic EBT (Schools) which expires on August 31, 2021. The collection covers the burden associated with States submitting school year plans and the submission of the FNS-366a and SF-425 reporting forms. FNS has submitted a renewal request for OMB # 0584-0660, Pandemic EBT (Schools) which accounts for the information collection burden associated with the increased complexity of determining benefit levels under the Schools portion of P-EBT, administrative cost grants, and submitting plans for the Child Care and Summer portions of P-EBT which are not currently approved under OMB #0584-0660

State Plan for Pandemic EBT
Children in School and Child Care, 2021-2022

1. **State** : New Jersey

2. **Primary Citations:** Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA);
Continuing Appropriations Act, 2021 and Other Extensions Act;
Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021;
American Rescue Plan Act of 2021

3. **Executive Summary:**

Please provide the following data. In addition, please include a statement indicating that you commit to informing USDA of any significant increase or decrease in these data points during the *date range*¹ covered by this initial plan (or subsequent amendment).

- a. The *date range* covered by this State plan or amendment
 - for children in school
 - for children in child care
- b. Estimated monthly and total *amount* of P-EBT benefits the State will issue within this plan/amendment's date range.
 - Estimated amount issued to school children in SNAP households.
 - Estimated amount issued to school children in non-SNAP households
 - Estimated amount issued to non-school children in child care
- c. Estimated total *number* of children to which the State will issue P-EBT benefits.
 - Estimated number of school children in SNAP households
 - Estimated number of school children in non-SNAP households
 - Estimated number of non-school children in child care
- d. Tentative P-EBT issuance schedule (the dates on which you will issue P-EBT benefits).
 - School children in SNAP households
 - School children in non-SNAP households
 - Children in child care

Response:

New Jersey's P-EBT plan for the 2021-2022 school year covers the period of September 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022 for children in child care.

It is estimated that \$5,252,500 will be issued to non-school children. New Jersey estimates issuing P-EBT benefits to 125,000 non-school children in child care.

¹ The date range covered by P-EBT State plan or amendment. A State's plan will typically cover the instructional months in the State's school year (September 2021 through June 2022, for example).

New Jersey is committed to informing USDA of any significant increase or decrease in these data points during the August 1, 2021-June 30, 2022 dates covered by this initial plan.

P-EBT for Children in Child Care (see Q&As #25-33)

Standard for P-EBT Eligibility

A child enrolled in a covered child care facility is eligible for P-EBT if:

1. The child is a member of a household that is enrolled in SNAP in the benefit month.
2. The child is enrolled in a covered child care facility. (Note that under the FFCRA, USDA deems all children under the age of 6 to be enrolled in a covered child care facility.)
3. During a public health emergency designation, the child's child care facility is closed or is operating with reduced attendance or hours for at least 5 consecutive days, resulting in the child's inability to attend the facility; or one or more schools in the area of the facility, or in the area of the child's residence, is closed or is operating with reduced attendance or hours.

- Describe how the State will identify eligible children and confirm their eligibility consistent with the above standard.
- How will the State determine and confirm the child's receipt of SNAP benefits in accordance with relevant SNAP privacy requirements?
- How will the State determine that a child's residence is in the area of one or more schools that is closed or is operating with reduced attendance or hours? (See Q&A #29)
- For children whose residence is *not* in the area of one or more closed schools or schools operating with reduced attendance or hours, how will the State determine that child's eligibility? Specifically, how will the State determine that:
 - the child's child care facility is closed or is operating with reduced attendance or hours, or
 - the child's child care facility is in the area of one or more schools that are closed or operating with reduced attendance or hours?
- Are there any State or local public health ordinances that limit the capacity of child care facilities in response to COVID-19 in your State? If yes, describe how you will use those to find that all SNAP-participant children under age 6 are eligible for P-EBT in those areas?
- Describe the process that the State will use to update and re-establish each child's continued P-EBT eligibility and benefit level consistent with changes in the operating status of the child care facility or area schools? How frequently will that information be updated? (Note that this information must be updated no less frequently than every other month.)
- Describe how the State will set benefit levels for children once they have been determined eligible for some level of benefit? (See Q&A #29.)
- Describe the roles and responsibilities of each State agency or other partners involved in P-EBT (e.g. which agency is responsible for confirming eligibility).
- What simplifying assumptions does the State propose? Why must the State make those simplifying assumptions? Please address both of these questions in detail.

Response:

New Jersey proposes to determine all children enrolled in SNAP and under the age of 6 as of September 1, 2021 eligible for P-EBT child care benefits through the state. As a simplifying assumption, New Jersey assumes that children who were under age 6 and not enrolled in school at the start of school year 21-22 remain enrolled in a covered child care facility through the end of the school year, even after they reach their 6th birthday.

For the months of September 2021 through June 2022 (the entire school year), New Jersey proposes to set a single average monthly P-EBT childcare benefit at 32.9% of the maximum P-EBT school benefit in a month (equal to 18 days), which is \$42.02.

Table: CACFP Lunches Served- Homes & Centers in New Jersey, 2019-2022

| CACFP lunch claims pre-pandemic months | | CACFP lunch claims current school year months | | Percent Change, School year 2021-2022 To be applied to daily rate and number of school instructional days per month. |
|--|------------------|---|------------------|---|
| September 2019 | 836,783 | September 2021 | 525,200 | |
| October 2019 | 991,144 | October 2021 | 550,134 | |
| November 2019 | 786,398 | November 2021 | 580,000 | |
| December 2019 | 729,032 | December 2021 | 572,751 | |
| January 2020 | 953,787 | January 2022 | 523,832 | |
| February 2020 | 870,141 | February 2022 | 645,410 | |
| March 2019 | 959,067 | March 2022 | 714,573 | |
| April 2019 | | April 2022 | | |
| May 2019 | | May 2022 | | |
| June 2019 | | June 2022 | | |
| Total | 6,126,352 | Total | 4,111,900 | -32.9% |

As the state agency administering SNAP benefits, the New Jersey Department of Human Services Division of Family Development (DHS/DFD) holds all SNAP caseload data. DFD will identify eligible children by querying its eligibility system records ongoing on a monthly basis for all children under the age of 6 in a SNAP household for the prior month (e.g. on February 10th, query system files for January caseload data). All children under the age of 6 in a SNAP household for that month of issuance will be included in the benefit issuance file for processing. DFD plans to issue P-EBT benefits for non-school children in SNAP households on a daily basis corresponding to the applicable month of the school year. For example, if September 2021 is issued on July 22nd, October 2021 would be issued on July 23rd and so on until benefits for each month of the school year has been issued.

Administratively, the process runs at the same time and will cause less confusion to SNAP households if they receive benefits for all of their eligible children at one time. This process will also create a clear and simple message in communications to P-EBT participants for SNAP households.

4. Benefit Levels

Standard for Benefit Levels

1. The full daily benefit level for each eligible child is equal to the free reimbursement for a breakfast, a lunch, and a snack for school year 2021-2022. The benefit is multiplied by the number of days that the eligible child’s status makes them eligible for P-EBT benefits.

| SY 2021-2022 July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022 | Free Reimbursements USDA School Meal Programs | | | |
|--|--|-----------|--------|---------------|
| | Lunch | Breakfast | Snack | Daily Total |
| Contiguous U.S. | \$3.75 | \$2.35 | \$1.00 | \$7.10 |
| Alaska | 6.03 | 3.78 | 1.63 | 11.44 |
| Hawaii, Guam, Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico | 4.37 | 2.74 | 1.17 | 8.28 |

Notes:

1. Lunch rates include the 7 cent performance-based reimbursement and the extra 2 cents per meal received by school food authorities in which 60 percent or more of the lunches served during the second preceding school year were served free or at a reduced price.
 2. Breakfast rates are those received by "severe need" schools.
 3. Snack rates are those for afterschool snacks served in afterschool care programs
- Source: <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2021-07-16/pdf/2021-15107.pdf>

- Describe the benefit levels proposed, including how days of eligibility will be determined. What simplifying assumptions does the State propose? Why must the State make those simplifying assumptions? Please address both of these questions in detail.

Response:

New Jersey will utilize the FNS methodology and set a single average monthly P-EBT Child Care benefit for the entire school year of September 2021 through June 2022 at 32.9% of maximum P-EBT school benefit in a month (equal to 18 days), which is set at \$127.80 per month. Based on the most recent analysis of CACFP participation in New Jersey compared to pre-pandemic levels during the months of September 2021 through March 2022, this would result in a monthly benefit amount of \$42.02 for each month of the school year. New Jersey commits to sharing its CACFP lunch claim data and calculations with USDA prior to issuance.

5. Implementation Timeline, EBT Processing, and Benefit Issuance

Please provide an implementation timeline for SY 2021-2022 with estimated dates for major milestones in your plan.

- States should develop their timeline cooperatively, including input from its EBT processor and all State agencies involved in implementing P-EBT. Instead of using specific dates, describe important milestones and realistic durations between them. USDA suggests that States build their timelines from the date USDA approves the State's plan (Day #0).
- The timeline must include the State's tentative issuance dates. In SY 2020-2021, most States issued in phases, and on a rolling basis thereafter. For example: issuance to SNAP households Day #10, to non-SNAP households on Day #15, and to newly identified cases from Day #16 onward. This is a best practice, which we encourage States to continue.
- Examples of other possible milestones include, but are not limited to:
 - State Education agency provides student data to SNAP State agency (Day #5)
 - P-EBT hotline becomes active (Day #9)
 - Public notice campaign begins (Day #10), etc.

Please also address each of the following:

- Will the State issue P-EBT benefits on a unique P-EBT card design? If so, who will receive these cards, non-SNAP households only? Or also SNAP households?
- How will the State distinguish P-EBT from SNAP and D-SNAP issuances? USDA strongly encourages the use of a sub-benefit type, even if your State did not do so in SY 2020-2021. This will greatly facilitate the States' ability to report and USDA to maintain accountability for P-EBT.
- What will be your draw/spend priority for P-EBT, SNAP, and D-SNAP? USDA suggests making P-EBT first on your draw/spend priority.
- How will the State handle expungement of P-EBT benefits? USDA recommends that States follow the same expungement rules that the State currently follows for SNAP.
- During SY 2020-2021, large numbers of P-EBT cards were returned to EBT processors via mail, due to incorrect addresses. How will you and your EBT processor handle returned P-EBT cards? How will you handle the need to issue replacement cards in these cases?
- Will you issue *new* P-EBT cards to existing P-EBT households?
 - If so, who will receive these cards? Non-SNAP households only? Or also SNAP households?
 - If not, how will you handle cases where the P-EBT household no longer has their P-EBT card?

Response:

New Jersey anticipates the following implementation plan for P-EBT issuance.

Timeline of Events

| | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Late June/early July 2022 | Approval of P-EBT plan by FNS |
| Mid July 2022 | System vendors (SNAP eligibility and EBT) code and test P-EBT benefit issuance based on approved plan |
| Late July 2022 | P-EBT benefits issued for childcare children for the entire school year |
| September/October 2022 | Contingency issuance for SY 21-22 corrections to childcare children |

All SNAP Under 6 P-EBT eligible children will be issued P-EBT benefits to the SNAP case they were actively receiving benefit on during a particular month within the covered period. It will be noted that these benefits are P-EBT in the issuance file. If a household/client no longer has their SNAP EBT card, they will be directed to request a new EBT card. Replacement cards are handled at the local Board of Social Services (BSS) who also have access to the P-EBT data through the State's internal case management system, ONETrac. Instructions on the P-EBT dedicated webpage direct and link P-EBT participants to their local BSS should they need a replacement card.

New Jersey will continue to use a P-EBT sub-benefit type on the EBT vendor's EPPIC system for P-EBT issuances. P-EBT will be the draw/spend priority. The same expungement rules currently followed for SNAP will be utilized for P-EBT.

6. Customer Service

Recommended Standard for Household Support

USDA strongly encourages States to develop a customer service plan that anticipates common questions from households of children that are eligible and potentially eligible to participate in P-EBT, and that ensures that all who are eligible are able to receive and use their P-EBT benefits.

1. USDA strongly encourages States to provide a means to resolve disputes and answer from actual or potential P-EBT households.
2. USDA strongly encourages States to provide relevant program information to actual and potential P-EBT households.

- How will the State resolve disputes or issuance errors (incorrect benefit amount, denied benefits, etc.)? Based on the large number of such inquiries received by USDA, the States, and EBT processors, USDA suggests a phone number (hotline) staffed by personnel empowered to research and address such cases.
- Please describe how the State will serve groups with potential access problems, for example: homeless children, foster children, children without social security numbers, children and caregivers with limited English proficiency, households without internet access, and people living with disabilities.
- Describe the State's public information campaign. That is, the information you will provide to the general public (i.e., *not directly* to P-EBT participants), and how you will provide that information (i.e., print or broadcast advertising, social media, mailers to the general population).
- Describe what information you will provide for households that do not want the P-EBT benefit that is directly issued to them. How dispose of the card, etc.
- Describe the information you will provide *directly* to P-EBT participants (this is different than the information you provide to the general public), and how you will provide that information. For example:
 - What will you provide to explain the purpose of P-EBT and how to use the benefit? Based on the large number and wide variety of public inquiries that USDA, States, and EBT processor call centers received regarding P-EBT in over the past year, USDA recommends it include:
 - A description of P-EBT
 - Instructions for PINing a P-EBT card
 - Explanation of where benefits can be used
 - Explanation of how benefits can and cannot be used (i.e., eligible foods and non-eligible items)
 - Explanation of violations and penalties, such as trafficking
 - An indication that benefits are non-transferable
 - Instructions for destroying the card, if they want to decline benefits
 - Information regarding a hotline, helpdesk, or website/portal that participants can reach out to, if they have questions, need assistance (setting up a PIN, for example)

- How will you provide P-EBT information to non-SNAP households? How will you provide P-EBT information to SNAP households?
 - Will you provide information via mailers? Will the mailer(s) be a flyer/brochure, buck slip, letter, or some other alternative? USDA recommends flyers/brochures, because these can be used more flexibly than buck slips.
 - Will you provide information via e-mail, text messages, social media, website, robo-call, and/or other electronic means?

Response:

As part of its public information campaign, DHS DFD will employ the use of press releases and social media to inform the general public about the P-EBT program and eligibility requirements. In addition, DFD has worked with its contracted Outreach agencies and community advocates to inform groups with potential access problems about the program and messaging language through various means (e.g. social media, website, robo-calls, and text messages).

To meet the customer service need, DFD has implemented a P-EBT dedicated webpage to provide current information and frequently asked questions (FAQs). The website provides general information to the public as well as information directed to P-EBT participants. The P-EBT dedicated webpage advises that benefits are for the intended children (non-transferrable) and that benefits received in error should not be accessed and to report it to the BSS. If P-EBT participants are in need of further support not addressed through the FAQs such as to resolve disputes or issuance errors, they may complete an online inquiry form that is transmitted to a dedicated P-EBT email address staffed by DFD. DFD has dedicated staff, including bilingual representatives, who respond to P-EBT inquiries online or through DFD's P-EBT hotline number to provide further assistance. P-EBT participants may also contact their local BSS for assistance with replacement EBT cards.

7. Over-issuance of P-EBT benefits

States should outline a process to recover or adjust P-EBT payments to correct errors on previous issuances. States cannot simply apply their existing SNAP benefit claim process to P-EBT. Accordingly, States should develop P-EBT-specific rules and procedures and include those in their State plans. States must also consider the capability of their SNAP systems to distinguish P-EBT from SNAP benefits.

The process should take into consideration that many households received their benefits, without application, through an automated match process that relied on the State's own administrative data. Reclaiming benefits under those circumstances calls for a process that weighs the equity of the claim, the burden on affected households, and the likelihood and costs of recovery. Given those considerations, a State's P-EBT plan should consider reasonable thresholds for taking action to recover over-issued benefits. States that establish a process for benefit recovery must provide clear notice to beneficiaries of the circumstances under which the State may attempt to recover benefits or reduce a future issuance. Under no circumstances may the State reduce a SNAP benefit to settle a P-EBT claim.

Finally, the States recognize that USDA is responsible for ensuring accountability of funds for P-EBT purposes. As part of its oversight responsibilities, USDA may hold State agencies liable for aggregate over-issuances or improper payments. USDA's course of action is to pursue P-EBT over-issuance claims in the aggregate where USDA believes such action is merited, based on the nature of the error that gave rise to the over-issuance, the size of the error, and whether such action would advance program purposes.

Please describe how your State will manage P-EBT payment errors.

Response:

DFD's systematic benefit issuance process involves data matching and duplicate issuance review to ensure eligible receive the correct amount of P-EBT benefits. DFD's IT team retains master issuance files of children that have received P-EBT benefits with their allotment issuance amounts. All data is cross-checked against previous master issuance files for duplicate issuance. Upon completion of this duplicate issuance process, a summary of the findings is presented to authorized DFD staff for review. Identified duplicates are itemized for DFD review. Upon approval for issuance, the file is then transferred to the EBT vendor for issuance.

The P-EBT webpage provides instructions to P-EBT recipients who believes they may have received benefits in error. DFD logs over-issuances reported by BSSs and parents. In the event that benefits are issued erroneously, the State agency may take measures to account for the over-issuance such as canceling the P-EBT issuance amount on the SNAP EBT card. In no event shall the household's SNAP benefit be reduced to reclaim P-EBT benefits. DFD will report any over-issuance or improper payment to USDA.

8. Benefit Issuance Reporting

The State agrees to complete the FNS-292 form as well as all other normally recurring SNAP reporting, including the FNS 46, 388, and 778 reports, on a timely basis in accordance with requirements.

9. Administrative Funding

A separate grant to cover State level administrative costs associated with the administration of P-EBT will be awarded to the SNAP State Agency within each State, for the period of performance October 1, 2021 through September 30 2022. As the authorized grantee, the SNAP State Agency will be granted access to the associated letter-of-credit in which the administrative grant funds will be placed. As P-EBT related State administrative costs may be incurred by State agencies other than the SNAP State Agency, the SNAP State Agency will be responsible for entering into interagency agreements in the form of a Memorandum of Understanding, or document of similar construct, with all other respective State agencies responsible for delivering P-EBT benefits. The SNAP State Agency will be responsible for reimbursing the administrative costs of all associated agencies accordingly.

Prior to USDA releasing the grant for administrative funding, each SNAP State Agency will be required to submit a P-EBT Budget Plan using the FNS-366(a) Program and Budget Summary Statement. Funds will not be released to the SNAP State Agency's letter-of-credit until this plan is submitted and approved. The SNAP State Agency's Budget Plan should include the estimated administrative costs for all State agencies that will be handling P-EBT.

As noted in Item 9 above, the SNAP State Agency will be also responsible for reporting all administrative expenditures on a separate FNS-778, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Federal Financial Report designated specifically for P-EBT. The expenditures on the FNS-778 should align with those outlined in the FNS-366(a), Program and Budget Summary Statement. The forms associated with P-EBT will be modified accordingly.

10. Release of Information

Per Section 1101(e) of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act: 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.”

11. Civil Rights Statement

The State will continue to comply with civil rights requirements by not discriminating on the ground of race, color, or national origin, by providing meaningful access to its programs and activities for individuals who are limited English proficient, and by providing equal access to individuals with disabilities.

12. Administration of State P-EBT Plan

The State will administer P-EBT according to the terms of its approved State plan. If the State wishes to change any of the terms of its plan, the State shall first notify USDA and will, if requested by USDA, submit a plan amendment for USDA review and approval.

Signature and Title of Requesting SNAP and Child Nutrition State Agency Officials:

Natasha Johnson
Assistant Commissioner

Rose Chamberlain
Director

Date of Request _____