



Food and Nutrition
Service

1320 Braddock Place
Alexandria, VA
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January 15, 2021

**SUBJECT: Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer Program (P-EBT)
Approval of Ohio's State Plan for School Children**

TO: Vista Fletcher
Acting Regional Administrator
Midwest 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) authorized the continuation of a temporary assistance program for households with children affected by school closures during the public health emergency that was declared on January 27, 2020. Pursuant to the authority granted under Section 1101 of the Act, FNS approves Ohio's enclosed plan to operate P-EBT for school children.

Summary of State's Plan

The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) and the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) will issue P-EBT benefits through Ohio's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) EBT card system to current SNAP households and non-SNAP households with eligible children. The State's plan covers the months of August 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021.

Children are eligible 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. The State will issue benefits only to households with children whose schools are closed or have reduced the number of days or hours that students attend the school for at least 5 consecutive days.

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 exclude 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, Ohio will:

- issue benefits for the months of August, September, October, and November in a single distribution after plan approval; December benefits will be issued by the end of February; for households that have already been issued benefits for August and September, their benefits will be adjusted based on the benefit already paid to avoid duplicate payments,
- issue benefits retrospectively monthly for the rest of the school year,
- calculate benefits for each student based on the student's number of virtual learning days; the state will not calculate average benefits for any student,

- collect student information in January, March, May and July in order to calculate student benefits for the previous months, and
- provide guidance materials for schools detailing the requirements for:
 - o determining school eligibility based on school closures or reductions in attendance and hours,
 - o determining the number of benefit days using students' individual schedules,
 - o submitting student eligibility information and the number of benefit 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 free breakfast and lunch multiplied by the number of benefit days calculated as described in the State's plan.

Ohio estimates that it will issue \$492.2 million to approximately 600,000 children for school closures and reductions in attendance and hours extending from August 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 Ohio. 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

Ohio 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

Ohio 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

ODJFS 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

ODJFS will complete the FNS-292B, the FNS-46, the FNS-388, and the FNS-778 reports in accordance with existing requirements.

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

Sincerely,

Cindy Long
Deputy Administrator
Child Nutrition Programs