

# PUERTO RICO SUMMER 2023

PANDEMIC EBT STATE PLAN

Amendment

DEPARTMENT OF THE FAMILY

ADMINISTRATION FOR THE SOCIOECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE FAMILY

Issuing Agency/Office:	FNS / Child Nutrition Programs, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program		
Title of Document:	ocument: State Plan for Pandemic EBT: Summer 2023		
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Summary:	(1) This document is a template to assist states in the development of an approved state plan to operate Pandemic EBT for school children and for children in child care during summer 2023. (2) This document relates to Section 1101 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), the American Rescue Plan Act, 2021 (P.L. 117-2), and the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 (P.L. 117-328).		
Disclaimer:	The contents of this guidance document do not have the force and effect of law and are not meant to bind the public in any way. This document is intended only to provide clarity to the public regarding existing requirements under the law or agency policies.		

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

The submission of a P-EBT state plan, associated template and related reporting obligations are addressed in OMB# 0584-0660, expiration 11/30/2023.

1. State: PUERTO RICO

2. Primary Citation: Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA), as amended.

## 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 summer period covered by this initial plan (or subsequent amendment).

- a. Estimated total amount of P-EBT benefits the state will issue to school children within this amendment's date range. (Consult the appropriate table in Section 4, "Benefit Levels.")
- b. Estimated total number of school children to which the state will issue P-EBT benefits.
- c. Tentative P-EBT issuance schedule (the date(s) on which Summer P-EBT benefits will be issued). Assuming that the public health emergency ends on May 11 as anticipated, P-EBT funds will not be available beyond the end of fiscal year 2023. As a result, states must issue all P-EBT benefits by September 30, 2023. This applies to P-EBT benefits for school year 2022-2023 and summer 2023. Benefits issued by the states for the summer and school year after this date may result in liability to the state.
- d. Names of state agencies involved in administering this plan.

- a. The total amount of P-EBT benefits that Puerto Rico will issue within this Summer 2023 State plan is: **\$40, 552, 694**
- b. Estimated total number of children to which Puerto Rico will issue P-EBT benefits during this summer state plan is: **291,746**
- c. For the tentative **issuance schedule** for summer 2023 P-EBT benefits please refer to the **next page (pag-4) diagram**.
- d. The agencies involved are the PR Department of the Family, the PR Department of Education, and the Private schools.

# P-EBT ISSUANCES SCHEDULE

TENTANTIVE ISSUANCE SCHEDULE.

# JUNE

NAP
PARTICIPANTS
DIGITS
0, 1, 2, 3, 4

OPEN ONLINE REGISTRATIONS

7

DE P

# **JUNE**

NAP
PARTICIPANTS
DIGITS
5, 6, 7, 8, 9

O

# Familia Familia

# **JUNE**

Private non-NAP households' students, starting on

7



## NOTE:

Familia

Children that apply between June 7<sup>th</sup> and July 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023, will receive their benefits, once the applications are processed and approved. This will be between June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023, and August 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

## 4. Summer P-EBT for school children:

- A. Describe how the state will identify school children who attended an NSLP-participating school at the end of school year 2022-2023 who qualified to receive free or reduced-price school meals under the NSLP or SBP. This group includes:
  - 1. School children who attended a school that participated in the Community Eligibility Provision or Special Provisions 2 or 3 in school year 2022-2023.
  - 2. Children who were directly certified for free school meals or who were certified by application for free or reduced-price school meals during school year 2022-2023, or children who are determined newly eligible for free or reduced-price meals.

States may not issue summer 2023 P-EBT benefits to children who did not attend an NSLP-participating school at the end of the school year immediately preceding the summer (i.e. at the end of SY 22-23).

B. Describe how the state will ensure that households with children eligible for free or reduced-price school meals will have an opportunity to establish their eligibility by application through the end of SY 22-23 and into the summer of 2023 (to the extent possible). USDA understands that states that elect to keep their school meal application process open beyond the end of the school year will set a summer application deadline that allows the states to process these applications and issue benefits by September 30, 2023.

- A. The PR Department of Education will send the list of ALL eligible P-EBT school children, who attended an NSLP-participating school at the end of SY 22-23 and which were qualified to receive free or reduced-price school meals under the NSLP or SBP. The lists will be sent not later than May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2023, and will correspond to students attending public schools.
  - For those school children attending **private schools** and who were qualified to receive free or reduced-price school meals at the end of the SY 2022-23, or who has not received PEBT benefits before, school directors will have until **June 15**<sup>TH</sup>, **2023**, to send the certified lists to the Department of the Family.
- B. The PR Department of the Family will open the summer P-EBT online applications process from June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023, until August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2023. In addition, the PR Department of Education will keep their school meal application process open beyond the end of the school year 2022-23 and up to July 31<sup>st</sup>, 2023. This will allow the Department of the Family enough time to close all issuances by September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023.
  - Puerto Rico will use **Income Eligibility Guidelines for SY 22-23** for all applications received **on or before June 30<sup>th</sup>**, 2023. For those applications received **on or after July 1<sup>st</sup>**, 2023, will apply the **Income Eligibility Guidelines for SY 23-24**.

# 5. Ben<mark>efit Levels</mark>

Summer 2023 P-EBT Benefit

Please note that this new benefit from the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 has changed from the level for Summer 2022 P-EBT benefits.

Summer 2023 P-EBT Benefit				
Contiguous U.S.	\$120			
Alaska	188			
Hawaii, Guam, Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands	139			

## 6. Implementation Timeline, EBT Processing, and Benefit Issuance

Please provide an implementation timeline for summer 2023 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 past years, 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.
- If the PHE ends on or before September 30, 2023, states must issue all P-EBT benefits by September 30, 2023.
- 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.

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MILESTONES	PROPOSED DATES	AGENCY RESPONSIBLE	NAP HOUSEHOLDS	NON-NAP HOUSEHOLDS
PR PEBT-Summer 2023 Plan Approval	Day 0	FNS		
Receive lists of eligible school children from PR Department of ED	Day 1	PR Dept. ED		
Meet with EBT processor (EVERTEC) to coordinate issuance day and logistics.	Day 1	ADSEF/ EVERTEC		
Discuss final details for reopening PEBT online application process.	Day 1	ADSEF/LEDUTEC/ KPG		
Make final the IT system's changes. Implement SAIC and P-EBT issuance changes in accordance with the plan's approval date.	Day 1	ADSEF/ LEDUTECH		
Prepare data, dashboard or reports on P-EBT issuance.	Upon Request	ADSEF/ LEDUTECH	Х	х
Implement final changes to SIBIF platform for new P-EBT applicants and non- NAP participants	Upon Request	ADSEF/ KPG		х
Upload the application form to SIBIF online platform for Non-NAP households' students and new applicants.	Day 3	ADSEF/KPG		х
Launch information campaign to announce benefits issuances and online application/eligibility processes	Day 2	ADSEF/ Communications Consultant	х	х
Opens application process for Non- NAP households' students and new applicants online.	Day 3	ADSEF/FAM		х
Match PR-DOE Lists with NAP households' children's data to identify their profiles in the system.	Day 4	ADSEF/ PR-DOE	х	
Provide matched NAP children list/data to EBT processor (EVERTEC).	Day 4	ADSEF/ EVERTEC	х	

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MILESTONES	PROPOSED DATE	AGENCY RESPONSIBLE	NAP HOUSEHOLDS	NON-NAP HOUSEHOLDS
Sort NAP household children's deposit by their last social security digits.	Day 5	EVERTEC	Х	
Issue new cards for Non-NAP households' students and new applicants (if necessary)	Day 6	EVERTEC		Х
Onsets the P-EBT deposit process for NAP households' children. Children would receive their P-EBT through the household NAP card.	Day 5	EVERTEC	х	
New and Non-NAP household students applications processing. This would happen on a continuous basis and simultaneous to all P-EBT processes.	From Day 3 (until the amended deadline of July August 31 <sup>st</sup> , 2023)	ADSEF		х
Send qualified Non-NAP household children's approved applications to EVERTEC for benefits' deposit.	From Day 3	ADSEF		Х
Monitor data provided by PR-DOE and EVERTEC according to the terms of the approved State plan and in compliance with program's federal regulations.	End of Issuance Process	ADSEF/ J. Santana & Assoc	Х	Х
Complete benefit issuance Report- 292 as well as other recurring NAP reporting (FNS 46, 388 and 778)	As required by FNS	ADSEF/ J. Santana & Assoc.	Х	Х
Deadline for applying for P-EBT summer benefits NAP households, Non-NAP Households, public, private or qualified institutions.	August 31 <sup>st</sup> , 2023.	ADSEF	Х	х

## 6. Implementation Timeline, EBT Processing, and Benefit Issuance (cont.-)

Please also address each of the following:

- A. 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?
- B. 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 P-EBT issuances for previous school years. This will greatly facilitate the states' ability to report and USDA to maintain accountability for P-EBT.
- C. 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.
- D. 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.
- E. 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?
- F. Will you issue new P-EBT cards to existing P-EBT households?
  - i. If so, who will receive these cards? Non-SNAP households only? Or also SNAP households?
  - ii. If not, how will you handle cases where the P-EBT household no longer has their P-EBT card?

- A. ADSEF will issue new P-EBT cards for Non-NAP household's students. There will be no additional cost for these cards since they will be included as part of ADSEF current contract with EVERTEC. The NAP household's students will receive their benefits through their current benefit card.
- B. Puerto Rico does not receive D-SNAP, so this would not be an issue. However, P-EBT issuances will be made as a sub-benefit type to maintain accountability at no additional charges from the EBT processor.
- C. Regarding the agency's draw/spend priority, ADSEF will follow USDA recommendation of giving priority to P-EBT transactions. However, the agency aims to draw and spend funds from NAP and Summer P-EBT simultaneously. This strategy will prevent delays between the beneficiaries of each program.
- D. Puerto Rico NAP program does not apply the "Expungement" rules to NAP benefits, instead implements the "expired" rule. Which means that instead of recapturing NAP benefits that have been deposited in a participant's account because it has been inactive for at least 180 days, these funds will "expire" if not used within 180 days of its deposit in the participants' account. Therefore, ADSEF intends to apply the "Expired" rule to the P-EBT benefits.
- E. ADSEF and EVERTEC will use the same system currently in place for NAP participants' returned cards. If a P-EBT card is returned by mail to EVERTEC, they will automatically destroy it. Afterwards, they will create a list of returned cards and send to ADSEF, so the caseworkers can call the participant and update the address information and issue a new card at the local office. Once the address is corrected in the system, they will contact the participant so they can pick up the new card at a local or regional office. The PR Department of the Family will not issue new EBT cards to current NAP participants, unless the household no longer has their P-EBT card, then a new card would be issued.

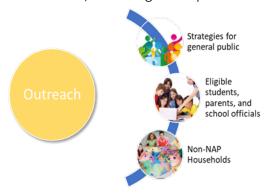
#### 7. Customer Service

To complete Section 7, we encourage states to use language from their previously approved SY 22-23 plans, if applicable.

- A. How will the state resolve dispute 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.
- B. 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.
- C. 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).
- D. Describe what information you will provide for households that do not want the P-EBT benefit that is directly issued to them. How to dispose of the card, etc.
- E. 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:
- F. 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)
- G. 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?

#### 7. Customer Service

- A. ADSEF will assign a group/staff to attend and resolve any PEBT benefits disputes or issuance errors through designated phone lines, that will be announced throughout the media campaign.
- Regarding foster care children, since these already receive NAP benefits, they will receive P-EBT benefits automatically. This only will apply just if the children are enrolled in a school that has been qualified because it is part of the USDA breakfast/lunch school program. ADSEF will contact the Foster homes to ensure that the children's data has been submitted to the PR DOE and the contact and personal information has been entered correctly in the NAP system. ADSEF will also provide follow up on these children's benefits issuance. Concerning Homeless children, the ADSEF will coordinate with Puerto Rico's CoC organizations (502 and 503) which at this time provide support services to homeless people. The purpose is to identify homeless children currently enrolled in school that could be eligible to receive P-EBT benefits. If these children are NAP participants, their P-EBT benefits should automatically be deposited in their NAP EBT card. Children without social security. Every child born in PR automatically receives a social security number when is registered. Those that do not have a social security number are non-American Citizens, therefore, they will be assigned a temporary identification number as they enter the online platform to complete the application. This number will be assigned until the end of the school year. Regarding children with disabilities, ADSEF will work with the PR-DOE in order to identify within the lists provided any children with disabilities that are not part of a NAP household. In this case, ADSEF will refer them to the online application process, or the hotline/call center which-ever is the circumstance, to complete the P-EBT benefits application.
- C. The communications and outreach plan aims to educate all stakeholders and the general public about the Pandemic-EBT benefits approved for Puerto Rico students. These children are eligible because they participate in the free or reduced-price meals of the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program. This plan will serve as a guidance document for communications and outreach strategies. ADSEF will update the recommendations as new data becomes available. The campaign will reach all eligible students, their parents and school officials, NAP certified retailers, the Retailers Association (MIDA), Agriculture Association members, the main stakeholders, and the general public.



## 7. Customer Service (cont.-)

## Response:

The outreach campaign will include introducing a new card for Non-NAP households and the reproduction of informational materials and communications.

	Summer 2	023 Pandemic	EBT
	General Public	E	ligible Children & Families
SIE	Even though the National Health Emergency will end on May 11th, 2023, US Congress has approved that the Pandemic EBT Summer benefits be issued to all eligible students from now on, every summer.	Messages	Summer Pandemic-EBT is a food benefit granted to students certified by the PR-DE, under <b>the NSLP</b> on or before June 30 <sup>th</sup> of each school year.  Students who are eligible for the NSLP are eligible for Summer Pandemic EBT benefits.
PA	These children are eligible because they participate in the free or reduced-price meals of the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program during the regular school year.		Families will receive the benefits for each child in the household
Main Messages			Students in NAP households do not need to complete an online application. ADSEF will deposit the P-EBT benefits in the Family NAF Card.
	The summer PEBT program supports public health and safety, empowers families, and		Students not part of a NAP household or currently studying in a private school are required to fill in an online application. Once approved, EVERTEC with deposit their benefits in an EBT card and send by mail
	builds healthier communities.		A Hotline consumer service ready will be availabl to assist students and their families answe questions and help to fill the application access t the Internet is a problem
	Research finds P-EBT has helped reduce food insecurity, and these dollars help		Paid and Earned media messages
	support families and drive economic activity.		Direct email to students
			Direct messages to NAP participants
	Press conference		Digital materials - Brochures and posters
			Recorded message in the NAP Help Desk line
Earn Media	Press releases	Strategies	Brochure sent with the card's PIN letter wit information regarding eligible food, availabl retailers, and a new hotline for consumer service
	Media Tours		Application Portal Landing Page with relevar information about the program
	Social media posts  Facebook  Twitter		Most frequently asked questions and answers
	Application online Information Landing page		
	Print & Digital		
Paid	Broadcast		
Media			Video messages with the most frequently asked questions and answers
	Paid interviews in Certified retailers' locations		
Direct	Script for hotline in-takers		

## 7. Customer Service (cont.-)

## Response:

The outreach campaign will include introducing a new card for Non-NAP households and the reproduction of informational materials and communications.

	Non-NAP Household S	tudents and Priva	te Schools
Messages	Even though the National Health Emergency will end on May 11th, 2023, US Congress has approved that the Pandemic EBT Summer benefits be issued to all eligible students from now on, every summer.	Strategies	Paid and Earned media messages
	These children are eligible because they participate in the free or reduced-price meals program of the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program during the regular school year.		Direct email to students
	Eligible students can access the ADSEF Online portal and fill in an application for benefits. Participants will receive an EBT card with their benefits in 5 to 7 days.		Direct messages to NAP participants
	There will be a consumer service hotline ready to assist students and their families complete their applications and answer any questions.		Digital materials - Brochures and posters
	t o		Recorded message in the NAP Help Desk line
			Brochure sent with the card's PIN letter with information regarding eligible food, available retailers, and a new hotline for consumer service
			Application Portal Landing Page with relevant information about the program
	* 1		Most frequently asked questions and answers
			Video messages with the most frequently asked questions and answers

#### 8. Over-issuance of P-EBT benefits

To comp<mark>lete Section 8, we encourage states to use</mark> language from their previously approved SY 22-23 plans, if applicable.

- 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:

In case that an over issuance of benefits is identified, ADSEF will inform FNS and will provide a full description of the error, which will include the number of children involved, and the value of the over-issuance, **before** a corrected benefit is issued to a different household, and before any attempt to reclaim benefits from anyone. ADSEF will wait until instructed by FNS to confirm if an investigation and/or any other procedures are implemented.

## 9. 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.

#### 10. 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. 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 10 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.

#### 11. 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."

#### 12. Civil Rights Statement

The state will continue to comply with civil rights requirements by not discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity. The state will also provide meaningful access to its programs and activities for individuals who are limited English proficient and provide equal access to individuals with disabilities.

#### 13. Administration of State P-EBT Plan

The state will administer P-EBT according to the terms of its approved state plan. In general, conditions related to benefit issuance reporting, administrative funding, and release of information remain in effect for the covered summer period. 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.

Signatures and Titles of Requesting NAP and Child Nutrition State Agency Officials:

