



Food and Nutrition  
Service

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March 10, 2021

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

**TO:** Dr. Patty Bennett  
Regional Administrator  
Mid-Atlantic 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 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 Pennsylvania's enclosed plan to operate P-EBT for school children.

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

The Pennsylvania Department of Human Services and the Pennsylvania Department of Education will issue P-EBT benefits through the State'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 July 2020 through June 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 for a period of at least 5 consecutive days. 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 at school.

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, Pennsylvania will:

- issue benefits for September through November 2020 within six weeks of plan approval,
- issue benefits for December 2020 through February 2021 in early June,
- issue benefits for March through May 2021 in mid-July,
  - all issuances will be staggered over a maximum of 10 days,

- with the assistance of one of the state’s regional education service agencies, collect spreadsheets from every school in the state twice during the year with student instructional models for each month, on a retroactive basis:
  - schools will place each student into fully in-person, fully remote, and hybrid instructional categories for each month in the reporting period,
- issue a benefit for every instructional day to eligible students with fully virtual schedules,
- issue an average hybrid benefit to eligible children with hybrid schedules,
- reviewed school district schedule data at the time of plan submission and determined that a 13-day monthly benefit (65% of the fully virtual benefit) is a reasonable reflection of hybrid schedules across the state for September 2020 through March 2021,
- survey schools with hybrid schedules in late April / early May to reassess the state’s average hybrid benefit, and
- set a constant monthly benefit for children with fully virtual schedules by averaging the number of instructional days by the number of months in the school year.

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.

Pennsylvania estimates that it will issue \$1.0 billion to approximately 928,000 children for school closures and reductions in attendance and hours extending from July 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 Pennsylvania. 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**

Pennsylvania 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**

Pennsylvania 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 Pennsylvania Department of Human Services 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 Pennsylvania Department of Human Services will complete the FNS-292B, the FNS-46, the FNS-388, and the FNS-778 reports in accordance with existing requirements.

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

Sincerely,

Cindy Long  
Deputy Administrator  
Child Nutrition Programs