



Food and Nutrition
Service

1320 Braddock Place
Alexandria, VA
22314

May 17, 2021

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

TO: Dr. Patty Bennett
Regional Administrator
Mid-Atlantic 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 Puerto Rico's enclosed plan to issue P-EBT benefits to children in schools and child care for the 2021 covered summer period.

Summary of Puerto Rico's Plan

The Puerto Rico Department of Family and the Puerto Rico Department of Education will issue P-EBT benefits through Puerto Rico's Nutrition Assistance Program (NAP) 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 NAP 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

Puerto Rico 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. Puerto Rico 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, Puerto Rico and its school districts will identify eligible children through direct certification during the same period.

In addition, Puerto Rico will:

- issue the U.S. standard benefit of \$438 to all eligible children,
- tentatively issue a single benefit for the entire summer period during July
 - stagger benefit issuance based on the last digit of social security number,

- set an application submission deadline of August 6 for households of children who become newly eligible during the covered summer period:
 - Puerto Rico will use their standard NSLP applications for summer P-EBT benefits,
 - Puerto Rico will issue summer P-EBT benefits to these households in August.

Children in Child Care

Puerto Rico will identify all children under age 6 who are enrolled in NAP as of the end of school year 2020-2021. Puerto Rico 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, Puerto Rico will:

- issue P-EBT benefits for the full covered summer period to children whose NAP enrollment begins or ends during that period,
- tentatively issue a single benefit for the entire summer period in July,
 - stagger benefit issuance based on the last digit of social security number,
- identify children that became newly eligible during the covered summer period and issue benefits to these households in August.

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

Estimated Caseload and Value of P-EBT Benefits

Puerto Rico estimates that it will issue \$148.9 million to approximately 340,000 school children, and \$32.1 million to approximately 73,300 NAP-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 Puerto Rico. 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

Puerto Rico will distribute benefits to households consistent with the timeframes identified in the State plan. Should Puerto Rico encounter challenges or delays that significantly impair its ability to implement the approved P-EBT plan or require substantive changes, Puerto Rico must notify the FNS Regional Office as soon as possible. The FNS Regional Office will work with Puerto Rico to identify reasonable solutions and review revised plans for approval or further revision.

Civil Rights

Puerto Rico 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 Puerto Rico Department of Family 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 Puerto Rico's Administrative Grant level. However, the FNS-366(a), Program and Budget Summary, may be updated and revised as Puerto Rico's operational plan evolves.

Reporting

The Puerto Rico Department of Family will complete the FNS-292B, the FNS-46, the FNS-388, and the FNS-778 reports in accordance with existing requirements.

FNS appreciates Puerto Rico'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