

**State Plan for Pandemic EBT
Children in School and Child Care, 2020-2021**

Issuing Agency/Office:	FNS / Child Nutrition Programs, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
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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 school children during school year (SY) 2020-2021 and for children in child care during federal fiscal year 2021. (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) and the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 (P.L. 116-260).
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:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/state-guidance-coronavirus-pandemic-ebt-pebt>

The P-EBT Assistance for Children in Schools and Child Care should be covered under an Emergency Information Collection Request for the Pandemic EBT (Schools), to be adjusted as appropriate, which is currently under review at OMB. Once OMB has approved the request and assigned the OMB# Control Number, FNS will include the necessary information on the state plan.

State Plan for Pandemic EBT
Children in School and Child Care, 2020-2021

1. **State:** Texas

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

Note that P-EBT benefits for school children are available from the start of school year 2020-2021. P-EBT benefits for children in child care are only available from the start of federal fiscal year 2021, or October 1, 2020.

- 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. Estimated total amount of administrative funds the state needs to complete the work described in this state plan/amendment.²
- e. 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

¹ The date range covered by P-EBT state plan or amendment. For example: a state's initial plan could cover August 31 through September 30, 2020; and a later amendment could cover October 1, 2020 through December 31, 2020.

² Note that states may only claim 100% reimbursement for P-EBT administrative expenses incurred from October 1, 2020 forward.

Response:

The date range for the current plan for school children will cover from August 1, 2020, through June 30, 2021. The date range for children in child care will cover from October 1, 2020, through June 30, 2021. The state commits to informing USDA of any significant increase or decrease in these data points during the date range covered by this initial plan.

The estimates of P-EBT issuance during the date range coverage period are as follows:

- Total average monthly issuance of \$229,522,175:
 - Estimated average monthly amount issued to school children in SNAP households is \$79,144,230
 - Estimated average monthly amount issued to school children in non-SNAP households is \$93,471,865
 - Estimated average monthly amount issued to non-school children in child care is \$56,906,080
- Total issuance of \$2,524,743,928 (monthly estimate multiplied by the eleven months remaining in the 2020-2021 school year):
 - Estimated total amount issued to school children in SNAP households is \$870,586,530
 - Estimated total amount issued to school children in non-SNAP households is \$1,028,190,519
 - Estimated total amount issued to non-school children in child care is \$625,966,880
- The estimated total number of children to which the state will issue P-EBT benefits is approximately 3,700,705:
 - Estimated number of school children in SNAP household is 1,329,969
 - Estimated number of school children in non-SNAP households is 1,570,736
 - Estimated number of non-school children in child care is 800,000

HHSC plans to spend the \$30.22 million in FFY 2021 Pandemic EBT Administrative Costs funding to support the following expenditures in support of P-EBT:

- P-EBT Increased EBT Contract Costs
- P-EBT Dedicated Call Center Operations Costs
- P-EBT Dedicated Call Center IT Telephony Costs
- P-EBT Exceptions and/or Denial Notices Postage Costs
- Other 100% P-EBT Related Administrative Costs

The tentative state plan is to issue benefits on a staggered schedule between May 24th – May 28th for school children and child care children in SNAP households. For school children in non-SNAP households, benefits will be distributed on a staggered schedule based on when the household applies for benefits through the online application that will be available from June 2021 through August 2021.

4. P-EBT for School Children

A. Eligible Children

Standard for P-EBT Eligibility

A child is eligible for P-EBT benefits if two conditions are met:

1. The child would be eligible for free or reduced-price meals if the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program were operating normally. This includes children who are:
 - a. directly certified or determined “other source categorically eligible” for SY 2020-2021, **or**
 - b. certified through submission of a household application processed by the child’s school district for SY 2020-2021, **or**
 - c. enrolled in a Community Eligibility Provision school or a school operating under Provisions 2 or 3, **or**
 - d. directly certified, determined other source categorically eligible, or certified by application in SY 2019-2020 **and** the school district has not made a new school meal eligibility determination for the child in SY 2020-2021.
2. The child does not receive free or reduced-price meals at the school because the school is closed or has been operating with reduced attendance or hours for at least 5 consecutive days in the current school year. Once the minimum 5 consecutive day threshold is met, children are eligible to receive P-EBT benefits for closures or reductions in hours due to COVID-19.

- Describe how the state will identify eligible school children for P-EBT. Also describe what measures the state will take to prevent the issuance of benefits to school year 2019-2020 graduates and other non-students.
- How will the state determine and/or confirm each child’s eligibility for free or reduced-price meals? Please describe separately for SNAP-recipient and non-SNAP-recipient children, children in public and non-public schools, new students (such as kindergarteners and transfer students), and children who become eligible during the school year.
- How will the state confirm each child’s lack of access to meals at school? Please describe separately for SNAP-recipient and non-SNAP-recipient children, and children in public and non-public schools.
- Describe the process that the state will use to update and re-establish each child’s in-person and virtual schedules. How frequently will that information be updated? (Note that this information must be updated no less frequently than every other month.).
- 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).
- Describe any simplifying assumptions the state proposes to use and the justification for using those simplifying assumptions. Please address both in detail. In addition, please describe any proposed measures that the state will take to address program integrity when using the proposed simplifying assumptions.

Response: [please use as much space as needed]

The following agencies are involved in the administration of P-EBT:

- Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) provides benefit eligibility

determination for federal nutrition programs like SNAP.

- HHSC is responsible for the issuance of P-EBT benefits, as well as the issuance of P-EBT cards and replacement cards, notices to clients and providing of customer service and support.
- The Texas Education Agency (TEA) and the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) provide support to over 1,200 public school districts, open enrollment charter schools, juvenile justice districts, Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired, and Texas School for the Deaf and private school districts across the state.
 - TDA and TEA will be responsible for sharing student eligibility data with HHSC by collecting student data through the direct certification process, the NSLP application process and student lists from schools, and communication with school districts. TEA will communicate directly with public schools and districts in Texas and TDA will work with private schools to inform the schools of the P-EBT process and required data needed for each school for children eligible for free and reduced meals under the NSLP.

Data is collected at the school level and provided to TEA and TDA. These agencies consolidate the files and provide the data to HHSC. HHSC will use data provided by TEA and TDA from the 2020-2021 school year (SY 20/21) to identify eligible school children and confirm their NSLP eligibility.

For TEA, the most updated information available was submitted in October 2020. Schools had the ability to update that information up to January 2021. TEA will work with schools and districts to identify students who became eligible after the October submission and will review and remove any SY 19/20 graduates from the SY 20/21 lists that are provided to HHSC.

TDA will collect a new list of private school students eligible for P-EBT in SY 20/21 directly from private schools in spring 2021. If a private school has not collected free/reduced applications during SY 20/21, TDA will work with that school to update their eligibility list from SY 19/20 to remove graduated students and add any new students that are eligible for P-EBT.

Schools will communicate directly with parents to identify any children that could be eligible for NSLP and establish eligibility for SY 20/21 as applicable.

A uniform process will be used for all students (SNAP recipients and non-SNAP recipients) to confirm each student's lack of access to meals at school. TEA and TDA will collect information from school campuses indicating the primary campus-level learning modality within their jurisdiction for each month August 2020 through June 2021 as applicable.

Texas does not have a mandated number of instructional school days but does have a mandated number of minutes schools are required to operate (75,600 minutes per school year). How a school district implements their calendar to meet the 75,600 minutes requirement varies by district and campus. The state used the best feasible information available by using the 10 most populated school districts in Texas to determine the number of P-EBT eligible instructional days per month from August 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021 which yields 176 instructional days for the school year.

Once the school campus primary learning modality is collected, SNAP households will receive direct issuance of P-EBT benefits while non-SNAP households will need to apply through the P-EBT link at YourTexasBenefits.com to establish a case file.

The state will issue P-EBT retroactively for the school year in a lump-sum payment on a staggered basis at the end of May 2021. The monthly benefit amount will be based on the campus level primary learning modality for each eligible student for each eligible month from August 2020 through May 2021. Benefits will be issued prospectively for the anticipated learning modality for June 2021 as provided by the school. More information regarding the benefit distribution and staggered benefits is described in the timeline section.

The state will provide a denial or approval notice as applicable to all households. The notice will provide a call center number and website if a person believes the benefit amount is incorrect based on the student's actual attendance mode or if they were denied in error. HHSC staff will handle these complaints and exceptions by investigating the data available on the child and reaching out to TEA and TDA and school districts/organizations as necessary for verification. HHSC will reconcile the issuance amount on a case by case basis.

In addition, parents will be able to submit a review request through YourTexasBenefits.com. and HHSC designated staff will review individual circumstances and, as necessary, provide P-EBT benefits to align with the correct modality.

B. School Status

Standard for P-EBT Eligible School Status

Children are eligible for P-EBT benefits if they are eligible for free or reduced-price meals, but are unable to receive those meals at school due to the operating status of their schools as outlined below:

1. The school is closed (including any delayed start or early closure to the school year), or the school is operating with reduced attendance or hours.
2. School closures do not include weekends, or days when the school is closed due to a holiday or regularly scheduled break (Thanksgiving, New Year's Day, Spring Break, etc.).
3. The period of closure or reduced attendance or hours must meet the current school year minimum 5 consecutive day threshold before any child is eligible for P-EBT benefits. Once the minimum 5 consecutive day threshold is met, children are eligible to receive P-EBT benefits for closures or reductions in hours and/or attendance due to COVID-19.

- Describe how the state will identify, confirm and monitor the status of individual schools. Also describe how the state will identify the period of duration of the closure, reduced hours, or reduced attendance of the state's schools.
- How will the state confirm that the child's school has been closed or is operating with reduced attendance or hours for a minimum of 5 consecutive days?
- Describe how this information will be obtained and how often the state will collect updated information from schools. (Note that this information must be updated no less frequently than every other month.)

- Describe the state's plan for monitoring changes in eligible school status between the state's bi-monthly (or more frequent) collection of updated school data. Describe how the state will use this updated school information to revise issuance amounts.
- Describe any simplifying assumptions the state proposes to use and the justification for using those simplifying assumptions. Please address both in detail. In addition, please describe any proposed measures that ensure program integrity when using the proposed simplifying assumptions.

Response: [please use as much space as needed]

School campuses will respond to a survey that will include the date the school met the five-day threshold of reduced attendance or hours, school closure or delay and the virtual attendance percentage (VAP). With the student NSLP eligibility lists and VAP survey data provided by TEA and TDA, SNAP recipients will be issued the P-EBT benefit amount in accordance with each child's, school reported, level of learning modality.

HHSC will process the data collected from the online application against the Texas Integrated Eligibility Redesign System (TIERS) to determine current SNAP enrollment status and if P-EBT benefits were already issued. The matches in TIERS will prevent duplicate participation and determine the manner of benefit issuance (e.g. existing EBT card or new P-EBT card).

An online application process will be used for non-SNAP recipients to confirm each student's lack of access to meals at school. School NSLP lists and VAP survey results will be compared with the non-SNAP households that apply and households who qualify will receive the P-EBT benefit level in accordance with the school campus selected on the application.

5. P-EBT for Children in Child Care

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 received SNAP benefits at any time since October 1, 2020.
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 one or more schools that is closed or is operating with reduced attendance or hours?

- 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 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: [please use as much space as needed]

HHSC will determine children in child care eligibility by identifying children of ages zero (0) to 5 years and 11 months who were certified to receive SNAP benefits at any point during the months of October 1, 2020, through June 30, 2021. Children will only receive P-EBT benefits for each month they were eligible for SNAP. HHSC will issue a monthly benefit amount to each child in one payment based on the monthly issuance amount for the school in that child's county with the highest VAP. The best feasible simplifying assumption for Texas is to match a child's home residence zip code to the school with the highest VAP within that child's county of residence using the VAP data provided by TEA and TDA. The schools within a child's zip code will be mapped to a county and HHSC will determine the highest VAP to determine the monthly issuance amount.

6. 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 2020-2021. The benefit is multiplied by the number of days that the eligible child's status makes them eligible for P-EBT benefits.

SY 2020-2021 July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021	Free Reimbursements USDA School Meal Programs			
	Lunch	Breakfast	Snack (NEW)	Daily Total
Contiguous U.S.	\$3.60	\$2.26	\$0.96	\$6.82
Alaska	5.79	3.64	1.56	10.99
Hawaii, Guam, Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico	4.20	2.64	1.13	7.97

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-2020-07-22/pdf/2020-15764.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: [please use as much space as needed]

Students will be issued benefits equal to the federal reimbursement rate for a breakfast, lunch, and snack for SY 20/21, as specified by USDA. The benefit is multiplied by the number of school days that the eligible child did not receive a free or reduced-price meal at the school. In Texas, the daily benefit per child is \$6.82.

Since school campuses in Texas operate at different levels of closures, delays, reduced attendance or hours, HHSC will request schools to provide the primary learning mode for their school for the school year broken down on a monthly basis. TEA and TDA will collect the VAP information from schools via a survey and share the data with HHSC. Texas intends to utilize the simplifying assumptions option by issuing P-EBT benefits in six VAPs per month: 0%, 20%, 40%, 60%, 80%, and 100%.

P-EBT benefit amounts will be based on the virtual attendance percentage of the maximum allowable instructional days per month. On average, Texas schools are required to meet 75,600 operational minutes per school year. Texas used the average number of instructional days of the 10 largest school districts in Texas to determine that these schools operated for an average of 176 days. Texas verified this assumption was reasonable by determining that 176 instructional days divided by 75,600 minutes equals a 7.16-hour school day. Texas further analyzed data from the 10 largest school districts to determine that out of the 176 instructional days, schools were operational approximately 9 days in August, 18 days September-through May, and 5 days in June. This means a child that attended school virtually 100% for the month of September will receive the equivalent of 18 days' worth of the daily value of P-EBT benefits. A child who attended school virtually 50% for the month of September would receive the equivalent of 9 days' worth of the daily value of P-EBT benefits. School campuses will report the primary learning modality for their school for the entire school year broken down by month.

School campuses will provide TEA and TDA with their monthly schedule (A-F). For each month, schools will first identify if the majority (51% or more) of their student population learned remotely or through a hybrid model (a mix of remote and in-person learning). If the majority of students learned virtually or in a hybrid setting, campuses will then be asked to look at one week per month when there were no planned school closures or holidays. The identified week will be used as the baseline to calculate the average number of days per week students learned remotely. The data provided for that week, will be extrapolated to determine benefit amounts for that entire month.

The schedules (A-F) will correspond to the average number of days per week that students learned remotely. The schedules would denote the following: **A** would represent zero (0) days per week, **B** would represent 1 day per week, **C** would represent 2 days per week, **D** would represent 3 days per week, **E** would represent 4 days per week, and **F** would represent 5 days per week. Student's whose school campus did not report any remote days for the month would not be eligible for P-EBT benefits for that month unless documentation is provided indicating they participated in a remote option that was offered by the school. As part of the complaint process, HHSC will develop a standardized form that schools will use to submit evidence to HHSC that a student participated in a remote option that was offered by the school.

Schedule	Average Remote Days	Calculation
A	No remote days	Not eligible for P-EBT
B	1 day per week (20%)	\$6.82 x school operating days in that month x 20%
C	2 days per week (40%)	\$6.82 x school operating days x 40%
D	3 days per week (60%)	\$6.82 x school operating days x 60%
E	4 days per week (80%)	\$6.82 x school operating days x 80%
F	5 days per week (100%)	\$6.82 x school operating days x 100%

7. Implementation Timeline, EBT Processing, and Benefit Issuance

Please provide an implementation timeline for SY 2020-2021 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 2019-2020, 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 2019-2020. 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 2019-2020, 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: [please use as much space as needed]

It is Texas' goal to issue benefits for August 2020 through June 2021 during the months of May 2021 through September 2021 to all eligible households.

Benefits for SNAP households will be issued and staggered from May 24 through May 28, 2021.

Since an application process will be required for non-SNAP households, benefits for each household will be staggered based on when an application is received. The application process is scheduled to open in late May, or early June 2021 and be available through August 2021. The tentative approach is as follows:

- Day #0 – FNS approved Texas's P-EBT plan.
- Days #0-7 – HHSC/TEA/TDA finalize the survey, data reporting criteria, P-EBT communication plan to schools and the public, and submission instructions.
- Days #7-25 – Schools provide data to TEA and TDA. HHSC/TEA/TDA finalize outreach materials for communication plan.
- Day #30 – Public awareness campaign commences.
- Day #30 – Deadline for TEA/TDA to submit files.
- Day #45 – P-EBT hotline opens to provide client assistance.

- Day #50 – System automation deployed for application, benefit issuance, correspondence, inquiry functionality and corrections process.
- Days #52-56 – P-EBT SNAP and child care population direct issuance.
- Day #59 – Application live on YourTexasBenefits.com for non-SNAP eligible families.
- Day #60 – Exceptions process opens for applications.
- 8/13/21 – Application is closed.
- 9/30/21 – Manual processes are completed and all P-EBT benefits are distributed.

Note: 3-5 days may need to be added to these dates based on weekend and holiday schedules.

Distribution of Benefits:

The state intends to follow the same distribution model utilized in the previous iteration of P-EBT during SY 19/20. SNAP households will receive their P-EBT benefits on their current EBT card while non-SNAP households will receive benefits on a new, unique P-EBT card.

HHSC will match NSLP lists with SNAP households in the Texas Integrated Eligibility Redesign System (TIERS). HHSC will issue benefits for active SNAP households on their current EBT card at the end of May.

In addition, the state will direct issue P-EBT benefits to the SNAP childcare population at the end of May. The state will issue benefits on the households' current EBT card where possible. Because some of these children may have been certified for SNAP during the eligibility period for this program, but are not currently certified, some households will be issued a unique P-EBT card.

Non-SNAP households will be issued P-EBT benefits based on when they apply after June 1, 2021 and through August 2021. These households will receive P-EBT benefits on a unique P-EBT card.

Exception Process:

If an application record cannot be matched to student eligibility data provided by TEA and TDA, these records will be reviewed as part of the exception process. First, HHSC staff will review the application and manually check it against the student eligibility data. If no match is found, HHSC will send the record to TEA or TDA for further review. HHSC will send private school records to TDA and public and charter school records to TEA via a secure SFTP portal. TDA and TEA will review the records and contact the identified school if needed to confirm if that child was or was not eligible for P-EBT in SY 20/21. TDA and TEA will strive to send updated records back to HHSC within 5 business days. The updated record will specify if the child was eligible, not eligible, or not found. In the summer, many school staff are on break, which may slow down this process.

School Contact Information:

TEA and TDA are collecting school contact information to share with HHSC. TEA and TDA are asking schools to provide at least two points of contact from May - September; one that can

answer student eligibility questions and another contact that can verify student virtual attendance information.

EBT Benefit Type:

Non-SNAP households will receive P-EBT benefits on a unique P-EBT card design. If the state is unable to match 100% of application information to a SNAP household, that household will also receive P-EBT benefits on a unique P-EBT card design. All other SNAP households will receive P-EBT on their current EBT card when possible.

Benefit Spend Priority:

A separate identifier will be applied to distinguish P-EBT benefits from SNAP benefits on the EBT record. P-EBT benefits will be prioritized above SNAP benefits in the spend-order; if a cardholder has both SNAP and P-EBT benefits available at the time of a SNAP purchase, the P-EBT benefits will be applied before SNAP benefits.

Expungements:

P-EBT benefit expungement will be handled in accordance with the same timeframe used for handling SNAP expungements under 7 CFR §274.2(h)(2). Undeliverable cards will follow the same rules that the state follows for SNAP.

Returned Mail:

P-EBT will follow the same returned mail rules that the state follows for SNAP. Cards returned as undeliverable are processed with all other undeliverable EBT cards: they are disabled and destroyed. Recipients can call the EBT Lone Star help desk to have a replacement card issued, or they can go to a local office to receive a replacement.

Replacement Cards:

Recipients can call the EBT Lone Star Help Desk to have a replacement card issued, or they can go to a local office to receive a replacement.

8. 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 questions 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 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 Spring and Summer of 2020, 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: [please use as much space as needed]

Issuance errors:

If a parent receives a letter of denial for P-EBT for the child or the parent is not in agreement with the P-EBT amount received for an approved child based on the actual attendance mode, the parent will have the opportunity to initiate a review process through a link that can be accessed

through YourTexasBenefits.com or by calling the 2-1-1 P-EBT hotline. HHSC staff will be available to conduct inquiry and address these on a case by case basis.

Complaint Process:

Once a complaint is received by a parent, HHSC will communicate directly with the school where that child attended. HHSC will provide a standardized form to schools to verify students' NSLP eligibility status and virtual attendance information as part of the complaint process. TDA and TEA will not be involved in the complaint process or review complaint records.

Access Issues:

Texas 2-1-1 call center will have a P-EBT hotline where agents serve as front line customer support and assist clients by providing information, performing inquiry, and providing status updates. P-EBT agents will continue to have the capabilities to submit an application for a client and submit complaints that will be processed by HHSC staff. TEA and TDA will advise school districts for any homeless students to provide their school campus address for receiving their P-EBT card. Since school lists may or may not include social security numbers, if HHSC is unable to successfully match a child to a SNAP household, the child will receive a separate P-EBT card. Those with limited English proficiency will be able to speak to a P-EBT representative via an interpreter, and notices will be provided in English and Spanish. Individuals with disabilities will be served in the same manner in which we currently serve SNAP participants that require additional assistance.

Public Information Campaign:

HHSC, TDA and TEA will jointly announce the program to Texans and conduct a public information campaign to alert those receiving benefits the purpose of P-EBT and how it is to be used. The campaign will include joint press releases, information on the program on websites, flyer distribution through community partners, school districts and social media, and information distributed through 2-1-1 Option 1 & 2 and the EBT call center. HHSC will be responsible for developing graphic materials and translating materials.

Information to P-EBT participants:

HHSC will include the following information to eligible and potentially eligible P-EBT participants as applicable through online sources, notices, call centers and phone messages:

- What P-EBT is and who is eligible.
- When and how eligible recipients will get P-EBT.
- How to use the P-EBT funds once they are received.
- Where to get more information.
- 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).

Information for SNAP and non-SNAP households

School districts will provide information to eligible households as needed and HHSC will provide communications via YourTexasBenefits.com website and SNAP Outreach partners. At a minimum, additional information will be posted on the HHSC website and social media.

9. 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.

Response: [please use as much space as needed]

The state confirms that no attempt will be made to reclaim P-EBT benefits by reducing a household's SNAP benefit. The state will embed mechanisms to prevent duplicate issuance within the eligibility determination process using child and qualifying criteria provided by school agencies and guardians as applicable. Because P-EBT benefits will be issued unsolicited to certain families, the state does recognize that efforts must be taken to communicate and attempt to minimize questions and confusion.

10. 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.

11. 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, 2020 through September 30, 2021. 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.

12. 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.”

13. Civil Rights Statement

The state will continue to comply with civil rights requirements, to include providing equal access to individuals with disabilities and individuals who are limited English proficient.

14. 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, Child Nutrition and Education State Agency Officials:

Michael Morath

Signature

Print Name and Title Michael Morath, Texas Commissioner of Education

Wayne Salter

Signature

Print Name and Title Wayne Salter, Deputy Executive Commissioner, HHSC AES

Angela Olige

Signature

Print Name and Title Angela Olige, Assistant Commissioner, TDA

Date of Request: March 18, 2021