



Food and Nutrition
Service

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March 4, 2022

SUBJECT: Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer Program (P-EBT)
Approval of Utah's State Plan for School Children,
School Year 2021-2022

TO: Bill Ludwig
Regional Administrator
Southwest 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 declared on January 27, 2020. Pursuant to the authority granted under Section 1101 of the Act, FNS approves Utah's enclosed plan to operate P-EBT for school children.

Summary of State's Plan

The Utah Department of Workforce Services and the Utah State Board of Education will issue P-EBT benefits through the State's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) EBT card system to households with eligible children. The State's plan for school children covers the months of September 2021 through June 2022.

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 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 eligibility data from the most recent prior year will have a means to address that they do not issue benefits to school year 2020-2021 graduates and other 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, Utah will:

- issue benefits from September through February in May,
- issue benefits for March and April in June,
- issue benefits for May and June in July,
- issue any catch up benefits in October,
- rely entirely on new free or reduced price school meal eligibility determinations in SY 2021-2022; school districts are collecting new

applications and conducting direct certification and are not relying on SY 2019-2020 or SY 2020-2021 eligibility,

- newly income-eligible students will be eligible for benefits back to September 1, 2021,
- automatically issue benefits to income-eligible students whose NSLP-eligible school temporarily closes for a minimum of 5 consecutive days due to COVID:
 - all income-eligible children in the school will receive a benefit consistent with the number of days the school was closed,
 - this information will be collected on a bi-monthly basis from schools,
- automatically issue benefits to income-eligible students who are enrolled in an NSLP-eligible school and are learning virtually,
- offer a reconsideration process for children with COVID-related absences in months where the school did not close for at least 5 consecutive days due to COVID:
 - parents will initiate a claim for benefits and attest that their children's absences are COVID-related,
 - if the school is tracking COVID-related absences, the State and school will confirm that the children are eligible for free or reduced-price meals and that absences were COVID-related and,
 - if the school is not tracking COVID-related absences, the State and school will confirm that the children are eligible for free or reduced-price meals and that the absences were at least excused,
- provide guidance to schools detailing the requirements for:
 - determining school eligibility based on school closures or reductions in attendance and hours, and
 - determining what is a COVID-related absence.

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.

- Utah estimates that it will issue \$11.1 million to approximately 156,000 children for school closures and reductions in attendance and hours extending from September 2021 through June 2022.

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 Utah. 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

Utah 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

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

FNS appreciates Utah’s exceptional efforts to maintain children’s access to nutritious meals, and understands that even as the nation recovers from this difficult time, State agencies and local program operators will still face any number of challenges. FNS stands ready to provide additional support as needed. If you have questions, please contact the FNS Southwest Regional Office.

Sincerely,

Cindy Long
Administrator