

**State Plan for Pandemic EBT
Children in School and Child Care, 2021-2022**

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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 children in schools or child care during school year (SY) 2021-2022. (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), the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 (P.L. 116-260), and the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (P.L. 117-2).

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 is covered under OMB Control # 0584-0660, Pandemic EBT (Schools) which expires on August 31, 2021. The collection covers the burden associated with States submitting school year plans and the submission of the FNS-366a and SF-425 reporting forms. FNS has submitted a renewal request for OMB # 0584-0660, Pandemic EBT (Schools) which accounts for the information collection burden associated with the increased complexity of determining benefit levels under the Schools portion of P-EBT, administrative cost grants, and submitting plans for the Child Care and Summer portions of P-EBT which are not currently approved under OMB #0584-0660

State Plan for Pandemic EBT
Children in School and Child Care, 2021-2022

1. State: Texas:

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

- 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. 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

Response:

The date range for the current plan for school children and childcare children will cover from August 1, 2021, through June 30, 2022. The State commits to informing the U.S. Department of Agriculture (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 is \$56,916,181:
 - Estimated average monthly amount issued to school children in SNAP households

¹ The date range covered by P-EBT State plan or amendment. A State's plan will typically cover the instructional months in the State's school year (September 2021 through June 2022, for example).

- is \$33,580,547.
 - Estimated average monthly amount issued to school children in non-SNAP households is \$23,335,634.
- Total issuance of \$573,183,000 (monthly estimate multiplied by the eleven months in the 2021-2022 school year):
 - Estimated total amount issued to school children in SNAP households is \$320,982,480.
 - Estimated total amount issued to school children in non-SNAP households is \$252,200,520.
- The estimated total number of children to which the State will issue P-EBT benefits is approximately 1.443,000:
 - Estimated number of school children in SNAP household is 808,080.
 - Estimated number of school children in non-SNAP households is 634,920.

The Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) plans to spend the \$17,196,770 million in FFY 2022 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 Claims Code Notice and/or Approval Notices Postage Costs; and
- Other 100% P-EBT Related Administrative Costs.

The tentative state plan is to issue benefits on a staggered schedule twice for school year (SY) 2021-22. The first benefit issuance is in late April 2022 and will cover August 1, 2021 – December 31, 2021. The second benefit issuance is in early August 2022 and will cover January 1, 2022 – June 30, 2022.

4. P-EBT for School Children (see Q&As #6-24)

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 2021-2022, **or**
 - b. certified through submission of a household application processed by the child’s school district for SY 2021-2022, **or**
 - c. enrolled in a Community Eligibility Provision school or a school operating under Provisions 2 or 3, **or**
 - d. on the school’s most current prior year list of directly certified children, children determined other source categorically eligible, or children certified by application **and** the school district has not made a new school meal eligibility determination for the child in SY 2021-2022.
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 2020-2021 graduates and other non-students. (*Please review P-EBT Q&As #16-19 on P-EBT eligible and P-EBT ineligible virtual learning models.*)
- How will the State determine and/or confirm each child’s eligibility for free or reduced-price meals²? 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 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:

- The 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

² The burden associated with National School Lunch Program applications is covered under OMB Control # 0584-0026, 7 CFR Part 245 - *Determining Eligibility for Free & Reduced Price Meals and Free Milk in Schools*, expiration date 7/31/23.

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 schools across the State.
 - TEA will communicate directly with public school districts and TDA will communicate with private schools to inform them of the P-EBT process and data required for P-EBT eligibility. This data includes student eligibility for free or reduced-price meals under the NSLP and COVID-19 absence and virtual attendance data.
 - Schools are responsible for following FNS guidance for student eligibility determination and ensuring that all eligible school-age children are uploaded in HHSC’s YourTexasBenefits (YTB) portal. HHSC will only issue benefits to school-age students who have been uploaded.
 - Student eligibility will be determined using eligibility data established in school year (SY) 2021-22. Any newly eligible students will complete an NSLP Household Application. Students attending a campus that is operating the National School Lunch Program must use the current year’s eligibility based on the NSLP Household application or direct certification. For the purposes of P-EBT, eligibility determined through the household application will be made retroactive to the beginning of the school year. Free or reduced status in previous school years will not be considered. Only the current year eligibility will be used. Data for students who are determined eligible for P-EBT benefits will be provided by schools to HHSC through a direct upload to HHSC’s YTB portal.
 - **Note:** Benefits will only be issued to children who attend campuses (either in-person or virtually) which are approved to operate NSLP in SY 21-22. Eligible campuses are identified by using campus lists provided by Texas Education Agency and Texas Department of Agriculture.

Data is collected at the school level and provided to HHSC. In addition to the list of eligible students, the data will include the number of days a student was not on campus due to COVID-19. Texas does not have a standard definition of a COVID-19 related absence at the state level. For purposes of P-EBT, the definition of “out due to COVID-19” will include:

- Any absence where the school directs students to stay home for a COVID-related reason;
- Any absence initiated by the parent that is recognized and accepted by school officials as COVID-related; and
- Student is attending school virtually for COVID-related reasons, given the virtual instruction is provided due to COVID-19 and the student could have received free or reduced-price meals at school if not for the school closure or reduced operations.

Schools will be instructed to follow their local guidance for COVID-19 related absences or virtual attendance and to use their best judgement in determining if a student’s absence would fall into these parameters.

For schools that have not tracked COVID-related absences for some or all of the school year, Texas will consider a minimum block of five consecutive excused absence days are presumptively COVID-related and are P-EBT eligible. Schools will be instructed to use this calculation if COVID-related absence codes are not captured.

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 due to a COVID-19 related absence from campus. TEA and TDA will communicate directly with public and private schools, respectively, to instruct schools to track and record all eligible students.

Twice a year, schools will upload information on school-age students who meet the eligibility criteria into HHSC's YTB portal. The first upload period is estimated to begin at the beginning of April 2022, and the second upload period is estimated to begin in May 2022. HHSC will process the data uploaded into the portal against the Texas Integrated Eligibility Redesign System (TIERS) to determine current SNAP enrollment status, if the child was issued P-EBT benefits for the previous school year or summer, and if SY 21-22 P-EBT benefits were already issued. The matches in TIERS will determine the manner of benefit issuance (e.g. existing EBT card or new P-EBT card).

Households who currently receive SNAP will receive P-EBT benefits on their current EBT card. Non-SNAP households who received P-EBT in a previous school year or summer will be issued benefits on their current P-EBT card. In prior school year and summer issuances, families have been directed to retain their P-EBT card in case of future issuances.

For students and families that HHSC has no historical information, HHSC will create a unique claim code for the families. HHSC will send a notice to the household, informing them about their benefits, instructions to register in YourTexasBenefits.com, and claim their benefits using the claim code provided in the notice. When families register for an account in YourTexasBenefits.com, the families will provide their demographic and residence information so HHSC can issue their PEBT card and allow for future PEBT data matching. Benefits will be issued once household registers with the claim code and provide the demographic and residence information.

The State will issue P-EBT retroactively for the school year in a lump-sum payment on a staggered basis twice a year: once during late-April 2022, and once at the beginning of August 2022. The monthly benefit amount will be based on the number of days the student was out due to COVID-19. Prior to issuing P-EBT benefits, HHSC will communicate with local retailers to ensure the retailers have proper stock available. Additionally, HHSC is continuing its regular communication with retailers, so their supply chains are properly prepared.

The State will provide an 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. 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.

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.
- Please review P-EBT Q&As #16-19 on P-EBT eligible and P-EBT ineligible virtual learning models.

Response: [please use as much space as needed]

TEA and TDA will instruct schools to confirm that the child's school has been closed or is operating with reduced attendance or hours for a minimum of 5 consecutive days, collect student data, including the number of days the student is out due to COVID-19, on a real time basis. Schools will also be informed of the specific information needed regarding P-EBT eligibility both at school and student level.

The data schools upload twice a year will reflect actual attendance information, as well as other information needed to issue benefits to the family. Since HHSC is issuing benefits to students on a retrospective basis, there is no need to update school information.

5. P-EBT for Children in Child Care (see Q&As #25-33)

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 is enrolled in SNAP in the benefit month.
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 the area of one or more schools that is closed or is operating with reduced attendance or hours? (See Q&A #29)
- 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 how the State will set benefit levels for children once they have been determined eligible for some level of benefit? (See Q&A #29.)
- 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]

United States Department of Agriculture-Food and Nutrition Service (USDA-FNS) has advised Texas to withhold the childcare portion of the plan pending the issuance of additional guidance by USDA-FNS.

6. Benefit Levels

Standard for Benefit Levels

- 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 2021-2022. The benefit is multiplied by the number of days that the eligible child’s status makes them eligible for P-EBT benefits.

SY 2021-2022 July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022	Free Reimbursements USDA School Meal Programs			
	Lunch	Breakfast	Snack	Daily Total
Contiguous U.S.	\$3.75	\$2.35	\$1.00	\$7.10
Alaska	6.03	3.78	1.63	11.44
Hawaii, Guam, Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico	4.37	2.74	1.17	8.28

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-2021-07-16/pdf/2021-15107.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 21-22, 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 \$7.10.

As part of the data upload, schools will send HHSC the number of days each student was out due to COVID-19. HHSC will multiply the number of days by \$7.10 to determine the benefit amount.

7. Implementation Timeline, EBT Processing, and Benefit Issuance

Please provide an implementation timeline for SY 2021-2022 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 2020-2021, 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 2020-2021. 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 2020-2021, 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]

Texas intends to issue benefits for August 2021 through December 2021 during the month of April 2022. Benefits for January 2022 through June 2022 will be issued during August 2022 to all eligible households.

The tentative approach is as follows:

- Day #0 – FNS approved Texas's P-EBT plan.

- Days #0-7 – HHSC/TEA/TDA finalize data reporting criteria, P-EBT communication plan to schools and the public, and submission instructions.
- Days #7-25 –HHSC/TEA/TDA finalize outreach materials for communication plan.
- Day #30 – Public awareness campaign commences.
- Day #45: First school upload and issuance.
- Day #45 – P-EBT hotline opens to provide client assistance.
- Day #60 – Exceptions process opens for applications.
- Day #90: Second school upload and issuance.
- Day #120: Exceptions process opens for applications.
- 9/30/22 – 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:

SNAP households will receive their P-EBT benefits on their current EBT card. Non-SNAP households who received P-EBT during a previous school year or summer will receive benefits on their current P-EBT card. During SY 2020-21 and Summer 2021, Texas instructed families to retain their P-EBT card in case of future issuances. If the family no longer has their current P-EBT card, they will need to contact the HHSC Lone Star Card Help Desk for a replacement card. If the household does not have a secure mailing address or has not received the replacement card from the Lone Star Help Desk within seven calendar days, then they can go to a local office to receive a replacement card. Information on replacement cards will be available on the website and shared with schools to share with families. Before contacting HHSC, families should have the following information ready: first name, last name, date of birth, social security, etc. Once the request is processed, families can expect a new EBT card in 30 days.

Non-SNAP households who could not be matched in TIERS will be sent a notice, instructing them to claim their benefits on YourTexasBenefits.com via a unique code listed in the notice. Households who claim their benefits will receive benefits on a new P-EBT card.

In addition, the State will direct issue P-EBT benefits to the SNAP childcare population in May 2022 and September 2022. 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.

EBT Benefit Type:

Non-SNAP households who did not receive a prior iteration of P-EBT will receive P-EBT benefits on a unique P-EBT card design. If the State is unable to match 100% of data 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.

Returned Mail:

P-EBT will follow the same returned mail rules that the State follows for SNAP. P-EBT cards returned as undeliverable are processed with all other undeliverable EBT cards: they are disabled and destroyed. Recipients can call the HHSC Lone Star Help Desk to have a replacement card issued. If the household does not have a secure mailing address or has not received the replacement card from the Lone Star Help Desk within seven calendar days, then they can go to a local office to receive a replacement card.

Replacement Cards:

Recipients can call the HHSC Lone Star Help Desk to have a replacement card issued. If the household does not have a secure mailing address or has not received the replacement card from the Lone Star Help Desk within seven calendar days, then 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 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 and caregivers 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 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)
 - 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 is not in agreement with the P-EBT amount received for an approved child based on the child’s actual attendance, the parent will have the opportunity to initiate a review process by contacting their school to determine if the student should have been uploaded and/or had a higher COVID-19 related absence count than was originally reported by the school. Additionally, families who call the 2-1-1 P-EBT hotline will be assisted by HHSC staff, who will be available to conduct inquiry and address these on a case-by-case basis. For schools using the five consecutive absence days tracking method, families can call the P-EBT hotline to request benefits for student COVID-19 absences numbering 1-4 days; HHSC call center staff will document the household verbal attestation and HHSC will confirm with the schools the absences are excused. For questions that HHSC cannot respond to, such as individual student eligibility questions, the family will be referred to the student’s school. Students denied eligibility will not be notified of the denial.

Complaint Process:

Since schools are responsible for uploading students determined eligible for P-EBT, when a parent contacts HHSC to initiate a complaint, HHSC will direct the family to communicate directly with the school where that child attended for additional assistance. If the student's absence count is incorrect or if the student was not included in the school upload but should have been, the school will be able to reupload the student into HHSC's portal at a designated period in the semester. For schools using the five consecutive absence days tracking method, families can call the P-EBT hotline to request benefits for student COVID-19 absences numbering 1-4 days; HHSC call center staff will document the household verbal attestation and HHSC will confirm with the schools the absences are excused.

If the student is matched in HHSC's TIERS database and previously received P-EBT, benefits will be loaded onto their existing cards. If the student doesn't match in HHSC's TIERS database, a notice will be sent to the family with instructions to register in [YourTexasBenefits.com](https://www.yourtexasbenefits.com) and use their unique claim code to receive P-EBT benefits. TDA and TEA will provide resources to help schools through this process.

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. Families who receive claim codes but do not have access to computers will be able to call the P-EBT hotline and work with a P-EBT agent on redeeming their benefits. 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 P-EBT hotline. 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, who is eligible, and how families can apply for free and reduced meals.
- What is an eligible COVID-related absence.
- When and how eligible recipients will get P-EBT, and how the benefit amount is calculated.
- Explanation about the unique claim codes.

- How to use the P-EBT funds once they are received.
- Where to get more information.
- Instructions for selecting a personal identification number (PIN) for 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 how to decline benefits.
- 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

HHSC, TEA, and TDA will jointly develop informational resources for school districts. School districts will then 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.

Please describe how your State will manage P-EBT payment errors.

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.

The State will contact USDA whenever it identifies an issuance error and provide a description of the error, the number of children involved, and the value of the over-issuance before they issue a corrected benefit to a different household and before they attempt to reclaim benefits from anyone.

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, 2021 through September 30 2022. 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.”

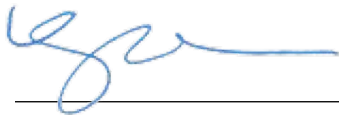
13. Civil Rights Statement

The State will continue to comply with civil rights requirements by not discriminating on the ground of race, color, or national origin, by providing meaningful access to its programs and activities for individuals who are limited English proficient, and by providing equal access to individuals with disabilities.

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 and Child Nutrition State Agency Officials:



Signature, SNAP Agency Official, Texas HHS Wayne Salter, Deputy Executive Commissioner



Signature, Texas Department of Agriculture Lena Wilson, Assistant Commissioner



Signature, Texas Education Agency Mike Morath, Commissioner

Date of Request: February 2, 2022