



Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance

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General Information System (GIS) Message

Section 1

Transmittal:	20 TA/DC051 Upstate and New York City
Date:	May 26, 2020
To:	Subscribers
Suggested Distribution:	Commissioners, SNAP Directors, TA Directors, Medicaid Directors
From:	Jeffrey Gaskell, Deputy Commissioner Employment and Income Support Programs
Subject:	COVID-19 Pandemic EBT Food Benefits
Effective Date:	Immediately
Contact Information:	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Questions – SNAP Bureau 518-473-1469 or otda.sm.cees.snap@otda.ny.gov

Section 2

The purpose of this GIS is to advise social services districts (districts) that Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) food benefits will be issued to all New York State households with school-age children who receive free or reduced-price school meals (FRPMs) under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act. This action is part of a provision set forth by the Families First Corona Virus Response Act of 2020 and will be issued in accordance with the terms of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) memorandum of March 20, 2020. On May 6, 2020, the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) received federal approval of New York State’s plan to operate and administer P-EBT food benefits.

P-EBT food benefits will be issued directly by OTDA, and districts have no responsibility for the administration of the P-EBT benefits. However, since these benefits will be issued through the EBT system and since approximately 1.3 million of the 2.1 million children who are eligible for the P-EBT benefits qualify for free or reduced-price school lunch based on their eligibility for SNAP, Temporary Assistance (TA) or Medicaid (MA), it is inevitable that local districts will receive inquiries about these benefits.

Families with eligible children will **automatically** receive P-EBT food benefits for each eligible child for the period that schools were closed for this academic year due to COVID-19. **There is no application process for these benefits.** The issuances will be based on SNAP, TA and MA data used for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) direct certification process, and eligibility rosters from school districts and schools participating in the NSLP. Only children who receive FRPMs and participate in the NSLP are eligible for P-EBT benefits. Children who only receive free or reduced-price school breakfast, milk and/or snack are not eligible for P-EBT benefits.

USDA has established the daily P-EBT food benefit rate at \$5.70 per child. The monthly P-EBT food benefit for each eligible child has been calculated, based on the number of days schools were closed during the months for which the benefits are being issued, as follows:

- March – \$68.00
- April – \$125.00
- May – \$119.00
- June – \$108.00

The maximum benefit per child will be \$420.

Under New York State's federally-approved P-EBT plan, all children eligible for the P-EBT benefits will be served in three payment cohorts:

- **Children ages 5 through 18 who were active in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Temporary Assistance (TA) households as of March 2020.** OTDA estimates that there are approximately 756,500 such children statewide. The P-EBT benefits for these children will be issued into the SNAP EBT account of the cardholder for the SNAP or TA case of which the children are members. For these SNAP and TA households, the benefit availability will be split, with the benefits for March and April ($\$68 + \$125 = \$193$) being available on a staggered schedule in late May, and the May and June benefits ($\$119 + \$109 = \$227$) being available on a staggered schedule in late June. OTDA was prohibited from including children ages 3-4 and young adults ages 19-21 with disabilities in this payment cohort. They will be served in the third payment cohort.
- **Children and young adults active in Medicaid-only cases who were directly certified for NSLP based on receipt of Medicaid.** Only children ages 3-18 in currently-active Medicaid-only cases with household income equal to or less than 133% of the federal poverty limit, and children and young adults ages 3-21 with certain disabilities, who have been certified by their school or school district as eligible to participate in FRPMs for the NSLP are in this cohort. OTDA estimates that there are 513,000 children in this second payment cohort. For children in these MA-only households, benefits for March through June ($\$68 + \$125 + \$119 + \$109 = \$420$) will all be made available on a staggered schedule in late June. Benefits issued for children in these households will be issued into a SNAP EBT account that will be linked to the Common Benefit Identification Card (CBIC) of either an adult member of the household or, if there is no adult in receipt of MA, on the CBIC of the oldest child in the household.
- **Children and young adults not included in the first two payment cohorts.** This cohort includes the following groups:
 - children ages 3-4 who may be participating in NSLP FRPMs in pre-kindergarten programs and in receipt of SNAP or TA;
 - young adults with disabilities who are ages 19-21, still in school and receiving FRPMs, and in receipt of SNAP or TA; and,
 - all other children and young adults receiving FRPMs and participating in the NSLP. These are children who may have been certified for eligibility by their school or school district, or who attend school in a Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) district or school where all children receive FRPMs.

The information obtained to pay this third cohort all will come from school district and school NSLP participation rosters. Payments will be issued to the parent/guardian of these children on a separate CBIC for each child linked to an EBT account. If Benefits for March through June ($\$68 + \$125 + \$119 + \$109 = \$420$) will all be made available to this cohort on a rolling issuance schedule, as school district rosters are received and processed, beginning in early July and concluding no later than August 31, 2020.

P-EBT benefits are not SNAP benefits. Under the authorizing legislation, P-EBT benefits are not SNAP benefits and the eligibility, and rights and responsibility rules and regulations that apply to SNAP do not all apply to these benefits. For example, disputes regarding eligibility for or the amount of P-EBT food benefits received are not eligible for fair hearings. And, eligibility for P-EBT benefits is not limited by immigration status, nor will it impact a family's "public charge" status. However, P-EBT benefits are subject to the same purchase and use restrictions as SNAP benefits. They are intended to be used to purchase food for the household of the children that received them and may only be used to purchase the same food items that purchased with SNAP benefits.

As noted above, districts have no responsibility for the administration of P-EBT benefits. The benefits will be issued directly by OTDA. All P-EBT benefits, **except those issued to children in the New York City SNAP/TA payment cohort** described above, will be issued outside of the Welfare Management System (WMS) and OTDA'S benefit issuance control systems. Since, P-EBT benefits will be issued outside of WMS, most district staff will not have any access to any or most P-EBT benefit issuance information. District staff having access to the EBT Electronic Payment Processing Information Control (EPPIC) system will be able to see the deposit of these benefits in EBT accounts.

OTDA has developed public messaging to direct questions and concerns to the agency's website and away from the districts. OTDA also is establishing a dedicated helpline that will investigate and resolve issues related to eligibility for these benefits, replace lost, stolen or compromised P-EBT cards, answer questions and, alleviate the number of phone calls directed to districts. The designated helpline currently is not yet in operation but will be soon. We will provide the helpline number to the districts as soon as it is active. If your district receives inquiries regarding P-EBT benefits, please advise the caller that your office does not administer these food benefits and to either visit OTDA's COVID-19 webpage (<http://otda.ny.gov/COVID-19/>).

Notices

Districts are encouraged to either post the link to OTDA's COVID-19 P-EBT informational webpage <https://otda.ny.gov/COVID-19/> or add the poster directly to their district's website.

FAQs

OTDA has prepared a set of FAQs for P-EBT households. The FAQs may be accessed at this link: <https://otda.ny.gov/SNAP-COVID-19/Frequently-Asked-Questions-Pandemic-EBT.asp>.

Email Inquiries

May be directed or re-directed to this dedicated OTDA email box address: otda.sm.eisp.PEBT@otda.ny.gov.