



Food and Nutrition
Service

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April 19, 2021

SUBJECT: Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer Program (P-EBT)
Approval of New Jersey's State Plan for Children in Schools and
Child Care

TO: Dr. Patty Bennett
Regional Administrator
Mid-Atlantic Regional Office

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (P.L. 116-127; the Act) 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) 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 New Jersey's enclosed plan to operate P-EBT for children in schools and child care.

Summary of State's Plan

The New Jersey Department of Human Services' Division of Family Development, the New Jersey Department of Agriculture's Division of Food and Nutrition, and the New Jersey Department 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 2020 through June 2021. The State's plan for SNAP-enrolled children in child care covers the months of October, 2020 through June, 2021.

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. Children in child care are eligible if they are enrolled in SNAP and their child care facility is closed or operating with reduced attendance or hours, or if they live in the area of a school that is closed or operating with reduced attendance or hours. The 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 through their schools or child care providers.

Children in Schools

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 SY 2019-2020 eligibility data will have a means to address that they do not issue benefits to last year's graduates and 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, New Jersey has or will:

- issue benefits for the months of September (as applicable) through the month prior to benefit issuance in a single distribution at a date to be determined after plan approval; issue benefits for the rest of the school year retrospectively on a monthly basis,
- created an online platform to collect school and student-level data from school districts to support P-EBT:
 - School Food Authorities will submit the necessary information by the 10th of each month following the benefit month,
- collect school-level operating schedules from school districts for each month of the school year:
 - schools operate under one of four basic schedules; these generally follow the districts' default schedules, but can vary; the four operating schedules are:
 - fully in-person,
 - fully virtual,
 - hybrid (where there is a mix of students with in-person and virtual schedules in the school), and
 - combination (where the school operates different schedules at the grade level),
- collect the school districts' default operating schedules (in-person, virtual, hybrid, or a combination of schedules across schools within the district):
 - the state will not use district-level default schedules to set student P-EBT benefits; instead, the state will use this information as an integrity check on school-level schedules,
- collect, from School Food Authorities, the names of children whose parents or guardians elected a fully virtual schedule,
- issue a fully virtual benefit to:
 - children in schools with fully virtual schedules,
 - children in grades with fully virtual schedules (in schools that operate combination schedules), and
 - children whose parents or guardians elect a fully virtual schedule,
- issue a standard hybrid benefit to:
 - children in schools with hybrid schedules, and
 - children in grades with hybrid schedules (in schools that operate combination schedules),
- surveyed a representative sample of districts with hybrid schedules prior to plan approval to identify a statewide average hybrid benefit of 9 days per month; the state will monitor changes in schedules and adjust the hybrid benefit, if appropriate, before the end of the year,
- set a constant monthly benefit for children with fully virtual schedules by averaging the number of instructional days by the number of months in the school year, and
- not issue to children placed in non-NSLP schools before further communication with USDA.

Children in Child Care

At a minimum, the State will identify all children under age 6 who are enrolled in SNAP at any time since October 1, 2020. The State will not issue child care benefits to any child for months after their SNAP enrollment ends. Finally, the State will ensure that children who receive a benefit through P-EBT's child care component do not also receive a benefit through P-EBT's school component for the same month.

In addition, New Jersey will:

- identify the county of residence for each SNAP-enrolled child under age 6,
- for each month from October through the end of the school year, determine whether any school in the county has at least one school that is closed or offering only distance learning to its students:
 - if the State identifies at least one such school, all SNAP-enrolled children under age 6 will receive a full P-EBT benefit in the same amount as the children in the county's closed or fully distance learning schools;
 - if the State does not identify at least one such school, but identifies at least one school offering mixed in-person/distance learning, then all SNAP enrolled children under age 6 will receive a partial P-EBT benefit in the same amount as the children in the county's mixed in-person/distance learning schools.

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.

- New Jersey estimates that it will issue \$563.7 million to approximately 846,000 school children for school closures and reductions in attendance and hours extending from September 2020 through June 2021.
- New Jersey estimates that it will issue \$116 million to approximately 105,000 SNAP-enrolled children in child care from October 2020 through June 2021.

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 New Jersey. 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

New Jersey 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

New Jersey 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 New Jersey Department of Human Services’ Division of Family Development 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 New Jersey Department of Human Services’ Division of Family Development will complete the FNS-292B, the FNS-46, the FNS-388, and the FNS-778 reports in accordance with existing requirements.

FNS appreciates New Jersey’s commitment to meet the nutritional needs of children during a challenging time. If you have questions, please contact the FNS Mid-Atlantic Regional Office.

Sincerely,

Cindy Long
Deputy Administrator
Child Nutrition Programs