



Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance

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General Information System (GIS) Message

Section 1

Transmittal:	20 TA/DC073 Upstate and New York City
Date:	July 10, 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 – “Group 2” Payments
Effective Date:	Immediately
Contact Information:	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Questions – SNAP Bureau 518-473-1469 or otda.sm.cees.snap@otda.ny.gov
Attachments:	Attachment 1: P-EBT Group 2 Notice

Section 2

The purpose of this GIS is to provide an update to social services districts (districts) on the issuance of Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) food benefits. The issuance of P-EBT food benefits was authorized as a provision of the Families First Corona Virus Response Act of 2020 and are being 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.

This update is being provided to inform districts that P-EBT benefits have been paid to all children ages 5 through 18 who were active in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Temporary Assistance (TA) households that received benefits for the month of March 2020, and are now being issued to all New York State households with school-age children who were directly certified to receive free or reduced-price school meals (FRPMs) under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act due to eligibility for Medicaid (MA). Further details are provided below.

Again, all 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 is \$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:

- **Group 1 – All children ages 5 through 18 who were active in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Temporary Assistance (TA) households that received benefits for the month of March 2020.** OTDA has paid P-EBT food benefits to approximately 710,000 children in over 400,000 TA and SNAP households that received benefits for the month of March 2020. The P-EBT benefits for these children were 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 was split, with the benefits for March and April ($\$68 + \$125 = \$193$) made available on a staggered schedule in late May, and the May and June benefits ($\$119 + \$109 = \$227$) made 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.
- **Group 2 - 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 or with certain disabilities, and who have been certified by their school or school district as eligible to participate in FRPMs for the NSLP are in this group. There are approximately 624,000 children in this second payment cohort, approximately 92,000 who receive MA and are known to the Welfare Management System (WMS), and approximately 532,000 who applied for and receive MA through the New York State of Health (NYSOH) exchange and are not known to WMS. For children in these MA-only households, benefits for March through June ($\$68 + \$125 + \$119 + \$109 = \$420$) will be deposited all at once (not split, as was done for Group 1) on a staggered schedule beginning in late June. Benefits issued to 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, to the CBIC of the oldest child in the household.
 - Benefits were issued to approximately 92,000 children in approximately 82,000 households who receive MA and who are known to WMS on June 26th and 27th and became available to these households on Monday, June 29th. Letters (see Attachment 1) informing these households of the availability of these benefits and providing them with information about how to access these benefits have been mailed and received.

- OTDA has taken every possible step to direct inquiries and actions related to P-EBT away from districts. However, among the 82,000 MA households known to WMS who just received benefits, inevitably there will be some with addresses in WMS that are not current. **P-EBT helpline operators** (further information about the helpline is provided below) **cannot process address changes for cases in WMS**. If such households contact the district informing them of an address change, it is the district's responsibility to change the address.
- Also, among the 82,000 MA households known to WMS who just received benefits, there will be some who have misplaced the Common Benefit Identification Card (CBIC) that is linked to the EBT account that was created for the P-EBT food benefits. **P-EBT helpline operators can issue replacement CBICs, but, OTDA expects that districts will treat requests for replacement cards by a MA recipient, prompted by the receipt of a P-EBT notice, the same as any other request for a replacement CBIC from a MA recipient in need of a card.**
- Beginning the week of July 10th, OTDA will begin issuing P-EBT benefits to the approximately 532,000 children who receive MA through the New York State of Health (NYSOH) exchange and are not known to WMS. Letters (see Attachment 1) informing the approximately 350,000 households in which these children live about the availability of these benefits and providing them with information about how to access these benefits will begin being mailed the following week. The issuance of benefits and the mailing of letters to all of Group 2 should be completed by the end of July.
- P-EBT payees will be listed on the WINR2027 reports in PHRED. Please note that NYSOH MA cases all will have a "phony" WMS Case Number of CVH#####.
- **Group 3 - All 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. Because, in many instances, there will be insufficient information to enable the aggregation of children by household, each child in this cohort will receive a CBIC linked to an EBT account. P-EBT benefits for March through June (\$68 + \$125 + \$119 + \$109 = \$420) will all be made available to this cohort in one payment on a rolling issuance schedule, as school district rosters are received and processed, beginning in early August and possibly continuing into early September.

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 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 for whom they are issued, and may be

used to purchase the same food items that may be purchased with SNAP benefits. Like SNAP benefits, P-EBT benefits expunge only after 365 days of EBT account inactivity.

As noted above, districts have no responsibility for the administration or issuance 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 has established a dedicated helpline at **1-833-452-0096** 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. 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/>), call the P-EBT food benefits helpline at the number above, or email the P-EBT food benefits mailbox otda.sm.eisp.PEBT@otda.ny.gov.

Notices

Districts are encouraged to post the link to OTDA's COVID-19 P-EBT informational webpage <https://otda.ny.gov/COVID-19/>.

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>

P-EBT Food Benefits Helpline

All telephone inquiries regarding P-EBT benefits can be directed to the **P-EBT Food Benefit Helpline** at **1-833-452-0096**.

P-EBT Email Inquiries

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