



Food and Nutrition  
Service

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April 17, 2020

**SUBJECT: Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer Program (P-EBT)  
Approval of Massachusetts State Plan**

**TO: Kurt Messner  
Regional Administrator  
Northeast Regional Office**

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (P.L. 116-127) (FFCRA or the Act) authorized a temporary assistance program for households with children affected by school closures during the public health emergency that was declared on January 27, 2020. On March 20, 2020 the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) announced and began accepting State plans for the Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer (P-EBT) program. Pursuant to the authority granted under Section 1101 of the Act, FNS approves Massachusetts' enclosed plan to operate P-EBT.

### **Summary of State Plan**

The Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education will issue P-EBT benefits to current Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) households and non-SNAP households, which include children eligible for free and reduced price school meals, through the State's SNAP EBT card system. The State will use procedures described in its approved plan to identify eligible children in both SNAP and non-SNAP households. As detailed in its approved plan, the State will use existing case information to issue benefits to current SNAP households and the State will obtain all necessary data to issue EBT cards to eligible non-SNAP households.

The State will issue benefits only to households of children whose schools were closed for at least 5 consecutive days during the emergency designation and who would have received free or reduced price meals under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act if not for the school closures. The State will conduct a public information campaign to alert those receiving benefits regarding the purposes of P-EBT and how P-EBT benefits and EBT cards are to be used, as described in the plan. The State must also provide information to non-SNAP households about what to do if they do not wish to receive or use P-EBT benefits. In addition, 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 free breakfast and lunch (\$5.70), multiplied by the average number of days school was canceled in the month.

The State estimates that it will issue \$45,486,000 to 113,000 SNAP households and \$55,221,800 to 276,801 non-SNAP children for school closures extending from March 16, 2020 through May 1, 2020, a total of 35 days. The State will issue

additional benefits for canceled school days if schools remain closed beyond May 1, 2020.

The State agency must notify the FNS Regional Office immediately should difficulties arise with card stock volume or production.

### **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 Massachusetts. 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**

The State agency 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**

Massachusetts will continue to comply with civil rights requirements, to include providing equal access to individuals with disabilities and individuals who are limited English proficient.

### **Reporting**

The Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance will complete the FNS-292B form on a bi-weekly basis in accordance with existing requirements. The Massachusetts Department of Health and Human Services will also complete all other normally recurring SNAP reporting, including the FNS-46 and FNS-388 reports, on a timely basis and in accordance with existing requirements.

The Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance will submit monthly reports to FNS with the following information for P-EBT benefits issued in that month:

- Number of children receiving P-EBT benefits, separately identifying the numbers in SNAP and non-SNAP households.
- Number of households receiving P-EBT benefits (as described in your state plan), separately identifying SNAP and non-SNAP households.
- Total dollar value of P-EBT benefits issued, separately identifying the values issued to SNAP and non-SNAP households.

- Average P-EBT issuance amount per household, separately identifying the average for SNAP and non-SNAP households.

FNS appreciates Massachusetts' commitment to meet the nutritional needs of children during a challenging time. If you have questions, please contact the FNS Northeast Regional Office.

Sincerely,

Cindy Long  
Acting Associate Administrator  
Regional Operations and Support