



Food and Nutrition
Service

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February 23, 2021

SUBJECT: Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer Program (P-EBT)
Approval of Washington's State Plan for School Children

TO: Jesus Mendoza
Regional Administrator
Western 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 the continuation of a temporary assistance program for households with children affected by school closures during the public health emergency that was declared on January 27, 2020. Pursuant to the authority granted under Section 1101 of the Act, FNS approves Washington's enclosed plan to operate P-EBT for school children.

Summary of State's Plan

The Washington Department of Social and Health Services and the Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction will issue P-EBT benefits through the State's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) EBT card system to current SNAP households and non-SNAP households with eligible children. The State's plan covers the months of September 2020 through June 2021.

Children are eligible 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. 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 at school.

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, Washington will:

- issue benefits from the start of the school year through January as soon as possible after plan approval,
- issue benefits for the remaining months of the school year in two month increments; each issuance will contain benefits for the two preceding school months,

- create a web portal, through a third part contractor, for school districts to report the learning models for each of their schools:
 - schools will report a separate learning model for each month of the school year including separate learning models for each of the months from the start of the school year through January,
 - for months after January, school districts will report school learning models every other month for each of the previous two months,
- instruct school districts to identify each school’s learning model to reflect the most common learning model of its students:
 - if 51% of students have fully virtual schedules, then the school will be classified as fully virtual for that month and all P-EBT eligible students will receive a fully virtual benefit for that month (see final bullet for the amount of the fully virtual benefit);
 - if 51% of students attend school in-person, then the school will be classified as in-person and no student will receive a P-EBT benefit that month,
 - if 51% of students have a mixed in-person/virtual (hybrid) schedule, then the school will be classified as hybrid with benefits calculated at one of the following levels:
 - 4/5 of a fully virtual benefit if the most common hybrid schedule is 4 virtual days per week,
 - 3/5 of a fully virtual benefit if the most common hybrid schedule is 3 virtual days per week,
 - 2/5 of a fully virtual benefit if the most common hybrid schedule is 2 virtual days per week,
 - 1/5 of a fully virtual benefit if the most common hybrid schedule is 1 virtual day per week,
- establish a separate fully virtual benefit for each month of the school year equal to the daily P-EBT benefit multiplied by the statewide monthly average number of instructional days across the school year:
 - Washington State’s school year has 180 instructional days; averaged over the 10 months from 09/2020 to 06/2021 gives 18 days per month.

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.

Washington estimates that it will issue \$590.5 million to approximately 500,000 children for school closures and reductions in attendance and hours extending from September 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 Washington. 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

Washington 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

Washington 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 Washington Department of Social and Health Services 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 Washington Department of Social and Health Services will complete the FNS-292B, the FNS-46, the FNS-388, and the FNS-778 reports in accordance with existing requirements.

FNS appreciates Washington’s commitment to meet the nutritional needs of children during a challenging time. If you have questions, please contact the FNS Western Regional Office.

Sincerely,

Cindy Long
Deputy Administrator
Child Nutrition Programs