



Food and Nutrition
Service

1320 Braddock Place
Alexandria, VA
22314

April 9, 2021

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

TO: Christine Ruggieri
Acting Regional Administrator
Northeast 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 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 Vermont's enclosed plan to operate P-EBT for children in child care.

Summary of State's Plan

The Vermont Agency of Human Services, Department for Children and Families, Economic Services Division (ESD) and the Vermont Agency 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 SNAP-enrolled children in child care covers the months of October 2020 through June 2021.

Children in child care are eligible for benefits 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 covered child care facility.

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, Vermont has or will:

- confirmed that every county in the state includes schools that have experienced closures and/or have operated with virtual or hybrid schedules in each month through March,
- consider the state's 14 counties to constitute a single area for purposes of P-EBT child care eligibility for the months of April through June:

- the state notes its small size and that families commonly commute across counties for work and child care services,
- the state will monitor school operating status through June to confirm that some schools continue to provide hybrid or virtual schedules,
- if the State identifies such schools, all SNAP-enrolled children under age 6 will receive the state's standard hybrid P-EBT benefit for school children during that month (the most common P-EBT benefit issued to school children this year),
- monitor hybrid learning schedules across all public schools each month for the duration of the school year:
 - if justified by the data, the State will adjust the standard hybrid rate for both school children and children in child care,
- issue benefits in one payment issuance at the end of July 2021.

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.

Vermont estimates that it will issue \$4.7 million to approximately 7,200 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 Vermont. 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

Vermont 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

Vermont 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

Vermont ESD 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

Vermont ESD will complete the FNS-292B, the FNS-46, the FNS-388, and the FNS-778 reports in accordance with existing requirements.

FNS appreciates Vermont's 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
Deputy Administrator
Child Nutrition Programs