

**State Plan for Pandemic EBT: Children in School  
School Year 2020-2021**

<b>Issuing Agency/Office:</b>	FNS/Child Nutrition Programs, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
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<b>Summary:</b>	(1) This document is a template to assist States in the development of State plans to operate Pandemic EBT for school children during school year (SY) 2020-2021. (2) This document relates to Section 4601 of the Continuing Appropriations Act, 2021 and Other Extensions Act (P.L. 116-159).
<b>Disclaimer:</b>	<b>The contents of this guidance document do not have the force and effect of law and are not meant to bind the public in any way. This document is intended only to provide clarity to the public regarding existing requirements under the law or agency policies.</b>

*Additional context and background for this document can be found at:*

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/state-guidance-coronavirus-pandemic-ebt-pebt>

**State Plan for Pandemic EBT: Children in School**  
**School Year 2020-2021**

1. **State:** Tennessee

2. **Primary Citations:** Families First Coronavirus Response Act;  
Continuing Appropriations Act, 2021 and Other Extensions Act

3. **Executive Summary:**

Please provide the following data. In addition, please include a statement indicating that you commit to informing USDA of any significant increase or decrease in these data points during the **date range<sup>1</sup>** covered by this initial plan (or subsequent amendment).

- a. The **date range** covered by this State plan or amendment.
- b. Estimated monthly and total **amount** of P-EBT benefits the State will issue within this plan/amendment's date range.
  - Estimated amount issued to school children in SNAP households.
  - Estimated amount issued to school children in non-SNAP households
- c. Estimated total **number** of children to which the State will issue P-EBT benefits.
  - Estimated number of school children in SNAP households
  - Estimated number of school children in non-SNAP households
- d. Estimated total amount of administrative funds the State needs to complete the work described in this State plan/amendment.<sup>2</sup>
- e. Tentative P-EBT issuance schedule (the dates on which you will issue P-EBT benefits).
  - School children in SNAP households
  - School children in non-SNAP households

**Response:**

- a. Tennessee proposes to build off its previously approved P-EBT plan for August and September 2020. The date range for the current plan will be from October 1, 2020 through September 30, 2021. The date range for the benefit issuance will be October 2020 through June 2021. The state commits to informing USDA of any significant increase or decrease in these data points during the date range covered by this plan.
- b. The estimates of P-EBT issuance during the date range coverage period are as follows:
  - Monthly issuances of \$80,692,200 (total approximate number of students from fall 2020 (765,000) multiplied by \$105.48). Total issuance of \$645,537,600 (monthly estimate multiplied by the eight months, October 2020 – June 2021). The state will not review the school file against SNAP households. The state will issue new cards to SNAP households for P-EBT instead of loading P-EBT benefits onto those households' existing SNAP EBT cards.

- The estimated total number of children to which the State will issue P-EBT benefits (based on Fall 2020 estimates) is approximately 765,000. The state will not review the school file against SNAP households. The state will issue new cards to SNAP households for P-EBT instead of loading P-EBT benefits onto those households' existing SNAP EBT cards.
- c. The estimated total amount of administrative funds the State needs to complete the work described in this plan is \$25,607,400
- d. The state intends to issue P-EBT benefits retroactively by the 20<sup>th</sup> of the month for all eligible recipients. The state will not review the school file against SNAP households. The following is the tentative issuance schedule:

February 20, 2021 - October 2020 and November 2020

March 20, 2021 - December 2020

April 20, 2021 - January 2021

May 20, 2021 - February 2021

June 20, 2021 – March 2021

July 20, 2021 – April 2021, May 2021, and June 2021\*

\*The majority of Tennessee's schools will end in May 2021 so the benefit issuance will be for April and a partial month of May 2021.

#### 4. P-EBT for School Children

##### A. Eligible Children

###### *Standard for P-EBT Eligibility*

A child is eligible for P-EBT benefits if two conditions are met:

1. The child would be eligible for free or reduced-price meals if the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program were operating normally. This includes children who are:
  - a. directly certified or determined "other source categorically eligible" for SY 2020-2021, **or**
  - b. Certified through submission of a household application processed by the child's school district for SY 2020-2021, **or**
  - c. Enrolled in a Community Eligibility Provision school or a school operating under Provisions 2 or 3, **or**

d. Directly certified, determined other source categorically eligible, or certified by application in SY 2019-2020 and the school district has not made a new school meal eligibility determination for the child in SY 2020-2021.

2. The child does not receive free or reduced-priced meals at the school because the school is closed or has been operating with reduced attendance or hours for at least 5 consecutive days in the current school year. Once the minimum 5 consecutive day threshold is met, children are eligible to receive P-EBT benefits for closures or reductions in hours due to COVID-19.

- Describe how the State will identify eligible school children and confirm their eligibility for P-EBT. Also describe how the State will ensure that it does not issue benefits to school year 2019-2020 graduates and other non-students.
  - How will the State determine and/or confirm each child's eligibility for free or reduced-price meals? Please describe separately for SNAP-recipient and non-SNAP-recipient children, children in public and non-public schools, new students (such as kindergarteners and transfer students), and children who become eligible during the school year.
  - How will the State confirm each child's lack of access to meals at school? Please describe separately for SNAP-recipient and non-SNAP-recipient children, and children in public and non-public schools.
  - Describe the process that the State will use to update and re-establish each child's in-person and virtual schedules. How frequently will that information be updated? (Note that this information must be updated no less frequently than every other month.)
  - Describe the roles and responsibilities of each State agency or other partners involved in P-EBT (e.g. which agency is responsible for confirming eligibility).

**Response:** [please use as much space as needed]

The following entities are involved in the administration of P-EBT:

- The Tennessee Department of Human Services (TDHS) is responsible for the issuance of P-EBT benefits, as well as the issuance of P-EBT cards and replacement cards, notices to customers and provision of customer service and support.
- The Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) The Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) trains local school districts how to make free and reduced eligibility determinations and provides continuous support throughout the school year. Local school districts determine school meal eligibility and track student learning mode classifications. TDOE and TDHS will work in conjunction to resolve any issues or concerns regarding PEBT.

To identify eligible school children and confirm their eligibility, TDHS will use data provided by the school districts directly. TDHS will instruct school districts to upload a list of currently enrolled students who are eligible for Pandemic EBT via a portal. Eligible students include:

1. The child would be eligible for free or reduced-price meals if the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program were operating normally. This includes children who are:
  - a. directly certified or determined “other source categorically eligible” for SY 2020-2021, or
  - b. Certified through submission of a household application processed by the child’s school district for SY 2020-2021 (to include all families of new students, such as kindergarteners, and to any family that may have become newly eligible for free or reduced price meals this year), or
  - c. Enrolled in a Community Eligibility Provision school or a school operating under Provisions 2 or 3, or
  - d. Directly certified, determined other source categorically eligible, or certified by application in SY 2019-2020 and the school district has not made a new school meal eligibility determination for the child in SY 2020-2021. This will exclude individuals who have graduated.
  
2. The child does not receive free or reduced-priced meals at the school because the school is closed or has been operating with reduced attendance or hours in the current school year. Once the minimum 5 consecutive day threshold is met by the school, children are eligible to receive P-EBT benefits on days that they do not receive meals at school due to school closures or reductions in hours due to COVID-19.

Public and private school districts are required by the state to track a school’s learning mode (i.e. virtual, hybrid or fully in-person). A school’s learning mode classification will confirm their access to meals at school and P-EBT benefit level. Schools will also be responsible for identifying which students are enrolled in virtual classes 100% of the time or hybrid and sharing this information with TDHS.

The state intends to leverage simplifying assumptions to issue two benefit amounts, one amount for hybrid students and one amount for fully virtual students (more details are provided in the Benefit Level section). The state plans to issue P-EBT retroactively as indicated in the above response. TDHS will request that school districts provide any updates to a school’s learning mode via the portal as outlined in Implementation Timeline, EBT Processing, and Benefit Issuance section below.

**B. School Status**

<i>Standard for P-EBT Eligible School Status</i>
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Children are eligible for P-EBT benefits if they are eligible for free or reduced-price meals, but are unable to receive those meals at school due to the operating status of their schools as outlined below:

1. The school is closed (including any delayed start or early closure to the school year), or the school is operating with reduced attendance or hours.
2. School closures do not include weekends, or days when the school is closed due to a holiday or regularly scheduled break (Thanksgiving, New Year's Day, Spring Break, etc.).
3. The period of closure or reduced attendance or hours must meet the current school year minimum 5 consecutive day threshold before any child is eligible for P-EBT benefits. Once the minimum 5 consecutive day threshold is met, children are eligible to receive P-EBT benefits for closures or reductions in hours and/or attendance due to COVID-19.

- Describe how the State will identify, confirm and monitor the status of individual schools. Also describe how the State will identify the period of duration of the closure, reduced hours, or reduced attendance of the State's schools.
- How will the State confirm that the child's school has been closed or is operating with reduced attendance or hours for a minimum of 5 consecutive days?
- Describe how this information will be obtained and how often the State will collect updated information from schools. (Note that this information must be updated no less frequently than every other month.).
- Describe the State's plan for monitoring changes in eligible school status between the State's bi-monthly (or more frequent) collection of updated school data. Describe how the State will use this updated school information to revise issuance amounts.
- Describe any simplifying assumptions the State proposes to use and the justification for using those simplifying assumptions. Please address both in detail. In addition, please describe any proposed measures that ensure program integrity when using the proposed simplifying assumptions.

**Response:** [please use as much space as needed]

To be eligible, the school must meet the minimum 5 consecutive day threshold (either closed for 5 days or operating at reduced attendance or hours for 5 days) and be eligible for free or reduced-price meals under the regular NSLP guidelines. Students will receive an average P-EBT benefit for days that they do not attend in person and do not have access to a meal service at the school due to COVID-19. Tennessee schools will track the learning mode for each student (fully virtual, fully in-person or hybrid). Tennessee will identify, confirm and monitor the status of individual student for PEBT eligibility through bi-monthly reporting from school districts. TDHS and TDOE will provide guidance to each district on how to classify and report a student's learning mode. Most school districts that were confirmed P-EBT eligible through the approval of our September 2020 P-EBT plan have not resumed fully in-person instruction. All students in a fully virtual or hybrid learning mode who are eligible for free or reduced-price benefits under

normal NSLP rules will be eligible for P-EBT. Districts or schools operating fully in-person will have eligible students if they meet the following criteria:

- Students who opt into fully remote learning (classified as “virtual” for the purposes of benefit calculation), or
- Students who are not able to attend school due to COVID-19 exposure (classified as “hybrid” for the purposes of benefit calculation).

Please see the state’s intended use of simplified assumptions outlined below in the “Benefit Levels” section.

**C. Benefit Levels**

*Standard for Benefit Levels*

1. The full daily benefit level for each eligible child is equal to the free reimbursement for a breakfast and a lunch for school year 2020-2021. The benefit is multiplied by the number of days that the eligible child’s status makes them eligible for P-EBT benefits.

SY 2020-2021 July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021	Free Reimbursements USDA School Meal Programs		
	Lunch	Breakfast	Daily Total
Contiguous U.S.	\$3.60	\$2.26	\$5.86
Alaska	5.79	3.64	9.43
Hawaii, Guam, Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico	4.20	2.64	6.84

Notes:

1. Lunch rates include the 7 cent performance-based reimbursement and the extra 2 cents per meal received by school food authorities in which 60 percent or more of the lunches served during the second preceding school year were served free or at a reduced price.
2. Breakfast rates are those received by "severe need" schools.

Source: <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2020-07-22/pdf/2020-15764.pdf>

- Describe the benefit levels proposed, including how days of eligibility will be determined. What simplifying assumptions does the State propose? Why must the State make those simplifying assumptions? Please address both of these questions in detail.

**Response:** [please use as much space as needed]

In an effort to structure the program in a way that is more beneficial to students, Tennessee intends to utilize the simplifying assumptions option by issuing P-EBT benefits in two distinct amounts, one amount for students enrolled in a fully virtual learning mode (inclusive of

students whose school district is operating an in-person or hybrid model but the family opts into fully virtual learning) and one amount for students enrolled in a hybrid learning mode (inclusive of students who are absent from an in-person learning model due to COVID and the need to quarantine).

The fully virtual benefit amount will be calculated using a monthly average based on the school calendar. This method factors in school holidays and allows Tennessee to spread the total maximum benefit for the school year across multiple months. In Tennessee, there are 180 days required per school year (10 months) which makes the average 18 days/month. Tennessee believes using 18 days to inform the fully remote amount is reasonable. This allows the state to issue one consistent benefit of \$105.48 per month ( $\$5.86 \times 18$  days), thus mitigating household confusion.

On a statewide average, students learned virtually 2.098 days per week when schools operated a hybrid learning model. Using a standard conversion factor (18 days of benefits/5 days per week) of  $3.6 \times 2.098$  extrapolates to 7.5 days. This average was determined using data that was collected from School Food Authority's based on their learning model in September 2020. Out of 1,438 schools, 683 were in-person, 324 were 100% virtual, and 431 were hybrid. Of the 431 hybrid schools, 200 schools were 3 days virtual and 208 schools were 1 day virtual. Calculating the hybrid amount to equal 7.5 days allows school districts operating in a fully in-person model to categorize any student's absent due to COVID as "hybrid" for that month. The hybrid benefit amount will equal  $\$5.86 \times 7.5$  hybrid virtual days for the month (\$43.95). Tennessee agrees to collect data to reassess this average every two months. This will confirm whether the current hybrid calculation remains the same or will change.

Tennessee is using its experience in administering P-EBT earlier this year to better inform its strategy. The requirement to calculate the exact number of days each child missed led to confusion with parents and other stakeholders when issuing the September P-EBT payment. Additionally, school districts reported significant challenges in tracking and calculating the number of P-EBT eligible days. Variations in hybrid models was the primary contributor to the challenges. Many districts employed different hybrid schedules in different schools within their districts. This led to inconsistencies in administration within and across districts.

To account for the fluid nature of the pandemic and that a student's status may change mid-month, the state will be issuing benefits retroactively for the previous month using the learning mode that the student is enrolled in for most of that month. Furthermore, for students who become eligible for P-EBT mid-month, the learning mode they were enrolled in for most of that month will inform their benefit amount.

## **5. Implementation Timeline, EBT Processing, and Benefit Issuance**

Please provide an implementation timeline for SY 2020-2021 with estimated dates for major milestones in your plan.



- States should develop their timeline cooperatively, including input from its EBT processor and all State agencies involved in implementing P-EBT. Instead of using specific dates, describe important milestones and realistic durations between them. USDA suggests that States build their timelines from the date USDA approves the State's plan (Day #0).
- The timeline must include the State's tentative issuance dates. In SY 2019-2020, most States issued in phases, and on a rolling basis thereafter. For example: issuance to SNAP households Day #10, to non-SNAP households on Day #15, and to newly identified cases from Day #16 onward. This is a best practice, which we encourage States to continue.
- Examples of other possible milestones include, but are not limited to:
  - o State Education agency provides student data to SNAP State agency (Day #5)
  - o P-EBT hotline becomes active (Day #9)
  - o Public notice campaign begins (Day #10), etc.

Please also address each of the following:

- Will the State issue P-EBT benefits on a unique P-EBT card design? If so, who will receive these cards, non-SNAP households only? Or also SNAP households?
- How will the State distinguish P-EBT from SNAP and D-SNAP issuances? USDA strongly encourages the use of a sub-benefit type, even if your State did not do so in SY 2019-2020. This will greatly facilitate the States' ability to report and USDA to maintain accountability for P-EBT.
- What will be your draw/spend priority for P-EBT, SNAP, and D-SNAP? USDA suggests making P-EBT first on your draw/spend priority.
- How will the State handle expungement of P-EBT benefits? USDA recommends that States follow the same expungement rules that the State currently follows for SNAP.
- During SY 2019-2020, large numbers of P-EBT cards were returned to EBT processors via mail, due to incorrect addresses. How will you and your EBT processor handle returned P-EBT cards? How will you handle the need to issue replacement cards in these cases?
- Will you issue **new** P-EBT cards to existing P-EBT households?
  - o If so, who will receive these cards? Non-SNAP households only? Or also SNAP households?
  - o If not, how will you handle cases where the P-EBT household no longer has their P-EBT card?

**Response:** [please use as much space as needed]

It is Tennessee's goal to begin issuing P-EBT benefits in February 2021. The feasibility of this will depend on the date of plan approval. The state may need to change the issuance schedule

depending on when the plan is approved and how the timeline intersects with the holidays. The tentative approach is as follows:

Day 1 – Plan approval is received.

Day 2 – Inform school districts of the reporting criteria and the process for uploading their data to the portal. submission instructions.

Day 11\* –deadline for school districts to submit files. By February 10<sup>th</sup>, schools will upload student data for October and November 2020. By April 10<sup>th</sup> schools will upload student data for December and January 2021. By June 10<sup>th</sup> schools will upload file for February, March and April 2021. By July 10<sup>th</sup> schools will upload file for May and June 2021.

Day 15\* – File transfers to EBT processor Conduent, notice production begins and public awareness campaign commences.

Day 20\* – P-EBT cards will be mailed to the home address provided to TDHS from the local schools. Benefits will be posted and available on cards being mailed and clients are notified via social media, website, via community advocates.

Note: 3-5 days may need to be added to these dates based on weekend and holiday schedules. For ongoing issuance between January and June 2021, Tennessee intends to issue P-EBT benefits monthly on a retroactive basis. All eligible school districts will provide the state with a list of students eligible for free and reduced-price meals and their respective learning modes by the designated due dates. This allows for the necessary data clean up and file transfer to the state's EBT processor, Conduent. Tennessee issues SNAP benefits from the 1<sup>st</sup> through the 20<sup>th</sup> of each month. Tennessee issues SNAP benefits based off the last two digits of the social security number. Issuing PEBT benefits on the 20th of the month allows for us to conclude our monthly issuance cycle. Tennessee has reached out to Conduent and is working with them to finalize a contract for this round of P-EBT. The draft P-EBT plan has been shared with Conduent.

The state intends to adhere to the following distribution model: P-EBT Students will receive their benefits on a new P-EBT card for this round. This means that a separate P-EBT card will be issued for each child in a household. Then each month, their P-EBT benefits will go on this same card. These P-EBT cards will have a unique design and will not look like the regular SNAP EBT cards. P-EBT benefits will follow the same expungement rules that the state follows for SNAP. For families whose cards have been lost or damaged, TDHS has a replacement card request process via its P-EBT assistance line. The state will continue its use of the PEBT benefit code which was modified specifically for P-EBT. Currently the P-EBT draw/spend priority is first before SNAP. Undeliverable cards will be returned to Conduent. Conduent will provide the state with a report listing P-EBT cards that were returned, deactivated, and destroyed.

## 6. Customer Service

### *Recommended Standard for Household Support*

USDA strongly encourages States to develop a customer service plan that anticipates common questions from households of children that are eligible and potentially eligible to

participate in P-EBT, and that ensures that all who are eligible are able to receive and use their P-EBT benefits.

1. USDA strongly encourages States to provide a means to resolve disputes and answer questions from actual or potential P-EBT households.

2. USDA strongly encourages States to provide relevant program information to actual and potential P- EBT households.

- How will the State resolve disputes or issuance errors (incorrect benefit amount, denied benefits, etc.)? Based on the large number of such inquiries received by USDA, the States, and EBT processors, USDA suggests a phone number (hotline) staffed by personnel empowered to research and address such cases.
- Please describe how the State will serve groups with potential access problems, for example: homeless children, foster children, children without social security numbers, children with limited English proficiency, households without internet access, and people living with disabilities.
- Describe the State's public information campaign. That is, the information you will provide to the general public (i.e., not directly to P-EBT participants), and how you will provide that information (i.e., print or broadcast advertising, social media, mailers to the general population).
- Describe the information you will provide directly to P-EBT participants (this is different than the information you provide to the general public), and how you will provide that information. For example:
  - What will you provide to explain the purpose of P-EBT and how to use the benefit? Based on the large number and wide variety of public inquiries that USDA, States, and EBT processor call centers received regarding P-EBT in Spring and Summer of 2020, USDA recommends it include:
    - A description of P-EBT
    - Instructions for PINing a P-EBT card
    - Explanation of where benefits can be used
    - Explanation of how benefits can and cannot be used (i.e., eligible foods and non-eligible items)
    - Explanation of violations and penalties, such as trafficking
    - An indication that benefits are non-transferable
    - Instructions for destroying the card, if they want to decline benefits
    - Information regarding a hotline, helpdesk, or website/portal that participants can reach out to, if they have questions, need assistance (setting up a PIN, for example)
  - How will you provide P-EBT information to non-SNAP households? How will you provide P-EBT information to SNAP households?

- Will you provide information via mailers? Will the mailer(s) be a flyer/brochure, buck slip, letter, or some other alternative? USDA recommends flyers/brochures, because these can be used more flexibly than buck slips.
- Will you provide information via e-mail, text messages, social media, website, robo-call, and/or other electronic means?

**Response:** [please use as much space as needed]

TDHS has a multi-faceted approach to assist with efficiency and providing great customer service. TDHS will ensure robust and accurate communication to all eligible households regardless of primary language, lack of permanent address or access to technology. Customers will have the ability to update their mailing address, check their benefit amount, request a new card, decline the PEBT benefit, and file an appeal using a customer portal, IVR technology or speaking directly with a call center agent. Customers will also have access to general PEBT program information via our webpage and chat bot. An internal PEBT inbox was created for field staff to forward issues that cannot easily be resolved. This inbox is monitored by dedicated team from the SNAP unit who problem solves issues utilizing the records provided by the school districts and the EBT vendor. In instances where THDS is unable to locate a child in the records received from the school districts, the family will be referred to their respective schools where issues of eligibility can be determined.

TDHS will modify its previously established formal appeal process to allow applicants who were denied P-EBT benefits, in whole or in part, an opportunity to participate in the administrative appeal process. Appeals can be filed online using the Online Appeals portal.

The primary basis for filing an appeal for the 2020-2021 school year will be based upon an appellant's broadly construed disagreement with the amount of benefits awarded. THDS will assess answers to the eligibility questions listed below during the appeal process are as follows

A) Was the child eligible for a free/reduced lunch program? This will be explained to customers: Since many or most schools are serving all meals for free under the SFSP or the SSO this school year, parents may mistakenly believe that they satisfy the free or reduced-price eligibility component of P-EBT. Children must be eligible for free or reduced-price meals under normal NSLP standards. Customers will be made aware of this prior to getting to the appeal stage. Based upon the current process, TDHS has a vendor fielding all PEBT calls. As part of the process, they will be explaining this when a potential appellant is on the phone. Also, this explanation would be included in any PEBT eligibility FAQs section on the program, and the PEBT web page.

We can include this in Online Appeals but will not wait until the customer files an appeal to notify them of this information because we would have missed a number of

opportunities to effectively communicate what the program's eligibility is (and is not) based upon.

B) Was the school a CEP, Provision 2 school and/or was it participating in the free/reduced lunch program?

C) Did the child participate in a type of school instruction (virtual or hybrid) that resulted in the child missing on-campus days on which, but for the fact that they were participating in a virtual or hybrid learning situation, they would have received a meal? (This will be explained to customers: since the schools are reporting to TDHS every 2 months, they will provide the actual average number of days that the school operated. So, benefits would be determined based upon a collective average for the particular school rather than on an individual per child basis. This would prevent discrepancies in amounts that might pose a challenge to legal analysis of the actual benefit amount owed to a particular individual child.)

D) Did the child miss the 5 consecutive days of school and, if so, when?

Due to the volume of PEBT inquiries and appeals observed during the first two issuances, the Appeals and Hearings division will utilize the P-EBT assistance line to assist in the delivery of direct customer service support. Our appeals process also supports applicants with accessibility needs using the established appeals process available to all customers.

The call process for appeals will include an offer to the caller to assist them in using the Online Appeal portal. If the caller does not want assistance with creating the online appeal, the call agent will provide the caller with directions on how to access the online appeal portal and how to file an appeal using the information on the web page. Alternatively, if the caller accepts this offer, the call agent will request the needed information from the caller to complete the online appeal form in its entirety.

TDHS and TDOE are committed to equitable access for all eligible families regardless of circumstances. We are currently working with each school district's homeless liaison to address issues related to families who have not received their cards due to outdated addresses or lack of permanent address. School districts may choose to serve as the mailing address for these families. Should schools elect this option, program integrity safeguards have been built into this arrangement. Families will need to sign an attestation that they received the card and at the end of 30 days of receipt of the card, the school district will be required to submit to TDHS the signatures and any cards that were not picked up. TDHS will continue the collaboration with a team within the Tennessee Department of Children Services (TDCS) that was established during the first round of P-EBT on address/location updates for foster children. Collection of social security numbers (SSN) are not necessary to apply for NSLP, therefore children without SSNs may pursue eligibility for P-EBT through a NSLP applications.

The state is also committed to serving all eligible children regardless of primary language. In the spring, the state stood up a P-EBT webpage, <https://www.tn.gov/humanservices/covid-19/p-ebt-and-covid-19-faqs.html> that is available in four languages. Furthermore, all outreach materials have been translated into four languages. These materials will be shared with school districts to distribute to their families.

**Public Awareness Campaign:** The state will conduct a public information campaign through use of websites and social media platforms. Tennessee intends to issue a press release in English and Spanish to target state-wide and local news organizations. The state will work with schools and community organizations on language to be used in emails, robo-calls or flyers. Information regarding foods that can be purchased with P-EBT benefits, explanations of violations and penalties (particularly trafficking) and that benefits are non-transferrable will be included on these platforms.

**Direct Communication:** For the first issuance, all eligible P-EBT children will receive a notice with their P-EBT card. The notice will include an explanation of P-EBT generally, eligibility for the program, issuance cycles, how to check balances, how to request a replacement card, where P-EBT can be used, who to contact for questions, who to contact to file an appeal and how to opt out. The notice will also include information on where to go for step-by-step instructions on how to PIN their card and what to do if they do not want to use the benefits. The notice is available in English and Spanish.

Similar to the spring and September issuances, TDHS will create flyers, text/email language and sample social media posts and graphics in multiple languages. These outreach materials will be shared with schools, community organizations, and sister agencies. TDOE will work with the Districts and local schools to issue communication to parents via robo calls, flyers, etc.

## **7. Over-Issuance of P-EBT benefits**

States should outline a process to manage cases of benefit over-issuance. The process should take into consideration that many households received their benefits, without application, through an automated match process that relied on the State's own administrative data. In no cases can States reclaim P-EBT benefits by reducing the household's SNAP benefit.

Finally, the States recognize that USDA is responsible for ensuring accountability of funds for P-EBT purposes. As part of its oversight responsibilities, USDA may hold State agencies liable for aggregate over-issuances or improper payments. USDA's course of action is to pursue P-EBT over-issuance claims in the aggregate where USDA believes such action is

merited, based on the nature of the error that gave rise to the over-issuance, the size of the error, and whether such action would advance program purposes.

**Response:**

TDHS will make all reasonable efforts to detect over-issuances and improper payments. These efforts will include utilizing established methods and channels to receive tips, complaints, and referrals regarding P-EBT activity. We will coordinate with relevant state agencies and local authorities for case data collection and analysis, conduct follow up inquiries as appropriate, and refer cases to USDA for final claims processing.

**8. Benefit Issuance Reporting**

The State agrees to complete the FNS-292 form as well as all other normally recurring SNAP reporting, including the FNS 46, 388, and 778 reports, on a timely basis in accordance with requirements.

**9. Administrative Funding**

A separate grant to cover State level administrative costs associated with the administration of P- EBT will be awarded to the SNAP State Agency within each State, for the period of performance October 1, 2020 through September 30, 2021. As the authorized grantee, the SNAP State Agency will be granted access to the associated letter-of-credit in which the administrative grant funds will be placed. As P-EBT related State administrative costs may be incurred by State agencies other than the SNAP State Agency, the SNAP State Agency will be responsible for entering into interagency agreements in the form of a Memorandum of Understanding, or document of similar construct, with all other respective State agencies responsible for delivering P-EBT benefits. The SNAP State Agency will be responsible for reimbursing the administrative costs of all associated agencies accordingly.

Prior to USDA releasing the grant for administrative funding, each SNAP State Agency will be required to submit a P-EBT Budget Plan using the FNS-366(a) Program and Budget Summary Statement. Funds will not be released to the SNAP State Agency's letter-of-credit until this plan is submitted and approved. The SNAP State Agency's Budget Plan should include the estimated administrative costs for all State agencies that will be handling P-EBT.

As noted in Item 9 above, the SNAP State Agency will be also responsible for reporting all administrative expenditures on a separate FNS-778, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Federal Financial Report designated specifically for P-EBT. The expenditures on the FNS-778 should align with those outlined in the FNS-366(a), Program and Budget Summary Statement. The forms associated with P-EBT will be modified accordingly.

## **10. Release of Information**

Per Section 1101(e) of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act: 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.”

## **11. Civil Rights Statement**

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

## **12. Administration of State P-EBT Plan**

The State will administer P-EBT according to the terms of its approved State plan. If the State wishes to change any of the terms of its plan, the State shall first notify USDA and will, if requested by USDA, submit a plan amendment for USDA review and approval.

### **Signature and Title of Requesting SNAP and Child Nutrition State Agency Officials:**

*Lisa A. Cowell*

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Lisa Cowell, Program Director 4, Family Assistance SNAP  
Tennessee Department of Human Services

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Samuel R. Percy, Deputy Commissioner  
Tennessee Department of Education

**Date of Request: January 14, 2021**

**Updated Request: January 22, 2021**