



Illinois Receives Approval to Provide \$112 million More in Nutrition Benefits for Children

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CHICAGO/SPRINGFIELD - Today, the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) announced that Illinois has been approved to provide approximately 316,000 Illinois households with additional SNAP benefits.

The USDA authorized and will fund Illinois' Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) program, which will bring food benefits to all school-aged children who are eligible for free or reduced meals. The benefit will be issued to all SNAP households with school-aged children.

These new benefits will automatically be added to family Link cards. All who are eligible for the additional benefits will start receiving them today, April 20th, though April 30th.

"No child should ever have to worry about where their next meal is coming from, especially during a public health emergency," said Governor JB Pritzker. "Expanding SNAP benefits for children who are home from school will help more families stay safe and healthy."

The Pandemic EBT program will provide SNAP households in Illinois with roughly \$112 million in additional benefits for their children. Benefits are calculated using a \$5.70 per day and per student calculation. Illinois will be issuing the benefits based on a total of 10 missed school days in March and 22 missed school days in April. May benefits will also be issued in the month of May.

“We are constantly looking for ways to provide extra support for Illinois residents during this extremely difficult time,” said IDHS Secretary Grace B. Hou. “IDHS has and will continue to apply for waivers that provide additional food assistance for children and families in our state. This waiver was so important for us to secure and we are happy to announce them.”

Households with school-aged children who are eligible for free or reduced meals when school is in session, but who do not currently receive SNAP benefits, will be able to submit a simplified application for P-EBT benefits as early as next week, using the ABE. Illinois.gov online portal or by completing a paper application which will be available at the IDHS website at dhs.state.il.us.

“We have made the meeting of students’ nutritional needs one of our highest priorities throughout our COVID-19 response,” said State Superintendent of Education Dr. Carmen I. Ayala. “We have worked with Illinois school districts over the past several weeks to update our counts of students who qualify for free and reduced-price meals, since many families’ financial circumstances have changed. We want the maximum number of Illinois families who are experiencing hardship to be able to benefit from this additional financial assistance.”

Additional Background:

Illinois will be able to operate the Pandemic EBT program, a supplemental food purchasing benefit to current SNAP participants and as a new EBT benefit to other eligible households to offset the cost of meals that would have otherwise been consumed at school. For the 2019-2020 school year, Illinois had approximately 1.1 million children eligible for free-and reduced-priced lunch, or nearly 63% of children in participating schools.

Under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA), States have the option to submit a plan to the Secretary of Agriculture to provide these benefits to SNAP and non-SNAP households with children who have temporarily lost access to free or reduced-price school meals due to pandemic-related school closures. State agencies may operate the Pandemic EBT program when a school is closed for at least five consecutive days during a public health emergency designation during which the school would otherwise be in session.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program provides food assistance to low-income people and families living in the United States. It is a federal aid program administered by the Food and Nutrition Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Distribution of benefits occurs at the state level.