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To: Superintendents of Public School Districts
BOCES District Superintendents
School Business Officials
Charter School Leaders
School Food Directors

From: Kathleen R. DeCataldo

Subject: Mandatory Collection of Student Enrollment, Free and Reduced-Price Eligibility, and Instructional Modality Data for the Issuance of Pandemic Food Benefits

Section 4601 of the federal Continuing Appropriations Act, 2021 and Other Extensions Act (P.L. 116-159) extends the Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) program for eligible school children attending schools implementing federal Child Nutrition Programs, including the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Seamless Summer Option (SSO) and Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) for the 2020-21 School Year (SY). This memo provides notice to School Food Authorities (SFAs) to immediately commence compiling eligibility and other data necessary for the issuance of SY 2020-21 P-EBT benefits to eligible children.

A child's free or reduced-price eligibility status established in School Year (SY) 2019-20 will be used for establishing eligibility for P-EBT in SY 2020-21 for a retroactive initial round of benefit distribution. However, SFAs must update student information systems with any changes to student addresses and free and reduced-price eligibility for SY 2020-21 to provide an opportunity for children who were not eligible for free or reduced-price meals last school year, as well as children who are newly enrolled in school (kindergarten, transfers, etc.), to establish their eligibility in SY 2020-21. SFAs should use their established direct certification systems and application processes to determine new student eligibility.

This data collection requirement applies to SFAs providing free meals to all students through the SFSP or SSO. Participation in one of these programs during SY 2020-21 does not automatically qualify a child for free meals or for P-EBT; children must meet the free or reduced-price eligibility criteria established under the NSLP and SBP or attend a school participating in Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) or Provision 2 (P2).

P-EBT Eligibility Criteria

Unlike SY 2019-20 P-EBT, there are eligibility criteria for SY 2020-21 in addition to free and reduced-price eligibility.

A school child is eligible for SY 2020-21 P-EBT benefits if the following condition is met: The child would have received free or reduced-price school meals under the NSLP and SBP if not for the COVID Health Emergency. This includes children who are:

- a. directly certified or determined other source categorically eligible for SY 2020-21, **or**
- b. certified through the submission of a household application processed by the child's school district for SY 2020-21, **or**
- c. enrolled in a CEP school or a school operating under P2, **or**
- d. directly certified, determined other source categorically eligible, or certified by an application in SY 2019-20 **and** the SFA has not made a new school meal eligibility determination for the child in SY 2020-21.

Additional data collected through other mandatory reporting mechanisms will also be used to establish monthly payment eligibility for P-EBT.

Data Collection

The New York State Education Department (SED) will collect current school enrollment and parent contact information from all Level 1 Centers two times. The first collection will occur in the next few weeks. The second collection will occur at the end of June 2021. Any changes to parent contact information for SY 2020-21 not included in the first collection should be made to student information systems prior to the end of the academic school year to be included in the second data collection of roster information by the Level 1 Centers.

Free and reduced-price eligibility data must be updated and submitted to the NYSED Level 2 Data Warehouse via the Student Information and Repository System (SIRS). Inaccurate eligibility data in your local student management system will result in loss of benefits for children and families.

Initial 2020-21 SY P-EBT student benefits will be determined based on daily school modality reports (in-person, hybrid or remote) provided to the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) by the New York State Department of Health (DOH) for public schools outside of New York City.

Student Instructional Modality Data reported by LEAs through the Student Daily Attendance template via SIRS will be transferred to OTDA to reconcile initial benefits, when necessary, after the end of the academic school year and after the 2020-21 SY data warehouse collection.

Distribution of Benefits to Families

Benefits will be issued in two phases by OTDA. Initial benefits will be based on daily school modality reports provided by DOH. The daily school modality data will be used to establish the predominant modality (fully in-person, hybrid or remote) profile of each school for each month of the school year.

Eligible children enrolled in a school building identified as hybrid for a given month will receive \$82 for that month. Eligible children enrolled in a school building identified as remote for a given month will receive \$132 for that month. Benefits will be reconciled based on Student Instructional Modality Data after the end of SY 2020-21.

Children who received hybrid benefits for a given month initially but who are entitled to remote benefits, based on actual student instructional modality, will receive additional benefits commensurate with the remote benefit. Children who received no benefit for a given month, but who are entitled to a hybrid or remote benefit based on actual student instructional modality, will receive the commensurate benefit.

SFAs that provide meals to non-public schools will receive information and special assistance to collect essential data for the issuance of P-EBT benefits to these non-public school students. SED will provide this information in a separate forthcoming correspondence.