New York State
Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance

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New York State Announces $880 Million in Temporary Food Assistance for New York's School Children

SHARE

Aid to Help 2.1 Million Children Previously Receiving Free and Reduced-Price School Meals

Supplemental Emergency SNAP Benefits Also Being Issued for 750,000 Households in May

The New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance today announced additional food assistance of more than $880 million to help New Yorkers with children who previously received free and reduced-price meals at school. The Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) program will provide eligible households with a total of about $420 per child, with school buildings closed for the remainder of the school year due to the novel coronavirus outbreak.

"For many low-income families across the state, free and reduced-price school meals provided a critical stop-gap that allowed them to avoid food insecurity," **Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance Commissioner Mike Hein said.** "This temporary program will bring them some measure of relief by ensuring that parents have additional help purchasing healthy, nutritious food for their school-aged children during these unprecedented times."

Roughly 2.1 million children throughout the state were receiving free and reduced-price meals before all school districts were closed starting on March 16. Under Governor Cuomo's direction, the state Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) requested that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)provide food benefits to households with children who have temporarily lost access to these meals due to pandemic-related school closures. The federal Families First Act authorized states to apply for federal approval to operate Pandemic EBT programs.

Families will not need to apply for the program. About 1.3 million children living in households enrolled in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), receiving Temporary Assistance benefits or Medicaid will automatically receive the additional assistance through their existing EBT cards.

OTDA is also working with the state Education Department to identify an additional 800,000 children in households that are not receiving Medicaid, SNAP or Temporary Assistance, but are receiving free and reduced-price school meals. These families will be mailed a temporary EBT card along with instructions for activating the card and accessing their assistance.

Additionally, nearly 750,000 low-income individuals and families enrolled SNAP will receive the maximum allowable benefit for May to help them avoid food insecurity. This will mark the third consecutive month all SNAP recipients in New York State have received the maximum benefit.

OTDA will be issuing the emergency assistance to any SNAP household that did not receive the maximum allowable benefit per month, which is $194 for an individual and $646 for a family of four. The emergency assistance will be distributed later this month, after the regular benefits are issued. About half of all households receiving SNAP will receive additional benefits for May.

"Proper nutrition is essential for a healthy lifestyle and proper physical and emotional development in children," **said Commissioner of the New York State Department of Health Dr. Howard Zucker.** "For the thousands of New York families who depend on school cafeterias for daily meals, the Pandemic EBT program will provide some much needed relief."

"Many of New York's children rely on meals provided during the school day and even though our schools across the state are closed, there is no reason any child should go hungry," **said Board of Regents Chancellor Betty A. Rosa.** "This funding will truly benefit some our most at-risk students and provide them with nutritious food while they are away from the structure that our schools provide."

"Districts across the state have worked tirelessly to get nutritious meals to students while schools are closed and this program will truly build on those efforts to provide relief to families during this stressful time," **said State Education Department Interim Commissioner Shannon Tahoe.** "Throughout this pandemic we have seen

extraordinary collaboration with our partners across the state to ensure for the continuity of services for our students wherever possible and I am truly thankful that this initiative is taking the necessary steps to ensure nutrition for the proper growth and development of New York's students."

Like regular SNAP benefits, these Pandemic EBT benefits can be used to purchase food at authorized retail food stores. New Yorkers enrolled in SNAP can also use their benefits to purchase groceries online. By purchasing online for pickup or delivery, those who are most at-risk for COVID-19 can reduce their potential for exposure to the contagion in public.

Statewide, SNAP recipients can use their benefits to purchase eligible food items from Amazon. Certain ShopRite stores located throughout Albany, Columbia, Dutchess, Nassau, Orange, Rensselaer, Richmond, Schenectady, Suffolk, Sullivan, Ulster and Westchester counties are also accepting benefits online. Specific Walmart stores in Albany, Cattaraugus, Dutchess, Erie Genesee, Livingston, Madison, Monroe, Niagara, Oneida, Onondaga, Orange, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schenectady, Tompkins and Wayne counties are taking online orders.

Availability is determined by ZIP code and any interested SNAP recipients should consult the retailer's website. Those recipients using benefits online will need a supplemental payment source for non-SNAP items or fees, such as the cost of delivery. More information is available at: www.otda.ny.gov/SNAP-COVID-19.