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ALERT **(#)**

Cyberattack
Data may have been compromised for some households involved in Child Protective Services cases in Spring 2020. If you believe your information may have been included in this breach, call 888-304-1021 from 9 a.m. – 4 p.m., M-F.
Click here for more information (https://web.archive.org/web/20210125052321/https://dhs.georgia.gov/press-releases/2020-10-09/dhs-notifies-customers-about-breach-confidential-information)

Agencies partner to help feed over 1.1M school aged children in the wake of COVID-19

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ATLANTA — The Georgia Division of Family & Children Services (DFCS) is partnering with the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) to provide food benefits to families with children who receive free and reduced lunch. The Family First Coronavirus Response Act of 2020 allows the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) to facilitate the distribution of Pandemic-Electronic Benefit Transfer Program (P-EBT).

COVID-19 related school closures impacted students' ability to receive school-based meals. Since that time, the Department of Education assisted families by providing over 28.4 million free meals through the National School Meal Program for children 18 years and under. Meals were also delivered at bus stops across the state for children that could not get to the school locations to pick up the meals.

DFCS has already released $244,103,635 in pandemic SNAP (P-SNAP) benefits to SNAP eligible families in the months of March, April, May and will also issue June

SNAP eligible families in the months of March, April, May and will also issue June P-SNAP at the end of the month. Starting in July, both DFCS and GaDOE, under the recently approved P-EBT plan, will issue funds to eligible families to offset additional food costs caused by the pandemic. The temporary funding includes a one-time allotment of $256.50 per eligible child and is intended to prevent food insecurity for families across Georgia.

Planned for a July implementation date, P-EBT assistance will be issued to families who currently receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as Food Stamps) benefits and those not currently enrolled in the program. This supplement will aid more than 1.1M Georgia students who are eligible for free or reduced school lunch (based on enrollment data as of May 2020). “We know food insecurity for students who rely on school meals during school closures is a major concern,” State School Superintendent Richard Woods said. “This partnership with DFCS is part of our efforts to ensure Georgia’s children are fed, safe, and healthy during the pandemic.”

Families who currently receive SNAP need not apply for P-EBT benefits. Eligible SNAP recipients will automatically receive additional P-EBT benefits loaded onto their existing EBT cards by mid-July if their child was enrolled in the free and reduce meals program during the 2019-2020 school year.

Constituents who do not currently receive SNAP but have children who are eligible to receive free or reduced meals as of June 2020 can apply for P-EBT benefits using an upcoming online portal. The application portal is currently being developed with an anticipated launch date of July 2020.

Once the application is available online, eligible families can use the student’s Georgia Testing ID (GTID) number of each eligible child in their household to complete the application process. Parents who do not have their child’s GTID may check their child’s report card, other school-related materials or contact their local school district for this information.

Approved applicants will receive an EBT card within three (3) to four (4) weeks of approval. Families will receive information explaining card usage and activation

procedures. “Food is more than sustenance. It symbolizes care. My family is so appreciative of the care shown to us during this time of uncertainty,” said Linnea Lindstrom, a parent living in the Savannah, Georgia area.

The allotment amounts issued to families are based on the number of children in the household who are eligible for free or reduced lunch. The benefit amount was determined by a federal equation that factored in the number of pandemic-related school closure days in Georgia for the months of March, April and May 2020.

“Both organizations care deeply about and typically support the same children and families throughout Georgia. We thought it was important to take these tangible steps together in even greater support as communities are under unprecedented hardship,” DFCS Director Tom Rawlings said. “We greatly appreciate the guidance and support of the USDA, Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) throughout the review and approval of the P-EBT plan.”

Families can use their pre-loaded EBT cards at approved EBT grocery retailers and outlets to purchase food items. P-EBT benefits are entirely federally funded at no cost to families participating in the program. Georgia Family Connection Partnership (GaFCP), a statewide network dedicated to the health and well-being of families, is committed to supporting this effort. They will work closely with DFCS and GaDOE to make this resource available in communities across Georgia by communicating with local partners in all 159 Georgia counties.

For more information and updates about P-EBT in Georgia, visit: **dfcs.georgia.gov (https://web.archive.org/web/20210125052321/http://dfcs.georgia.gov/)**.

About Georgia DFCS

The Georgia Division of Family & Children Services (DFCS) administers the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), a federally-funded program that provides monthly benefits to low-income households to help pay for the cost of food. DFCS is responsible for issuance of SNAP, Medicaid and TANF to low-income families; assistance for out-of-work parents to help them get back on their

feet as well as multiple support services and programs to help families in need.

About GaDOE

Led by State School Superintendent Richard Woods, the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) is the state agency serving Georgia's K-12 public school districts, schools, and students. GaDOE's strategic plan emphasizes transforming the agency into one that provides meaningful support to schools and districts, with an emphasis on child-focused, classroom-centered education policy. GaDOE staff work to ensure that the 1.7 million students in Georgia's public schools receive a holistic education that focuses on the whole child, and graduate ready to learn, ready to live, and ready to lead.

Learn more about GaDOE's COVID-19 response and resources at **gadoe.org/coronavirus (https://web.archive.org/web/20210125052321/https://www.georgiainsights.com/coronavirus.html)**.

About GaFCP

Georgia Family Connection Partnership (GaFCP) is a public-private partnership created by the State of Georgia and investors from the private sector to assist communities in addressing the serious challenges facing children and families. Georgia Family Connection connects and convenes key community members committed to improving the well-being of children and families and serves as a resource to state agencies across Georgia.

For more information, visit **gafcp.org (https://web.archive.org/web/20210125052321/https://gafcp.org/)**