Pressroom

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Governor Bullock to Bolster Food Security for Montana Families During Statewide COVID-19 Emergency

Actions will extend federal food assistance for more than 100,000 Montanans, increase food supply at food banks and streamline nutrition assistance for new mothers and children

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Governor Steve Bullock today announced that in the coming days and weeks, he will extend federal food assistance to more than 100,000 Montanans, increase food supplies at emergency food pantries and food banks, and streamline nutrition assistance for new mothers and children. All of these changes are made available through flexibility and funding provided in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and will be implemented by the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services.

"Montana families are already doing everything they can to make ends meet," Governor Bullock said. **"But hardworking Montana families have been forced to take on even greater challenges during the COVID-19 public health emergency. As we continue to do everything possible to protect Montanans from the spread of this virus, making sure children and families in our state don't go hungry is a crucial priority."**

The state will double its supply of food commodities from the federal government that will be provided at no cost to people in need of short-term hunger relief through food pantries, food banks, soup kitchens, tribal partners, and senior centers. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) makes commodity foods available to states for distribution to low-income people through emergency food providers.

Governor Bullock is also using new flexibility through the CARES Act to allow SNAP participants in Montana to continue receiving assistance for at least 6 months and to waive the three-month time-limit that applies to certain SNAP recipients. Families will not have to reapply during the emergency – their benefits will be automatically renewed. Additionally, Governor Bullock is requesting from the USDA the maximum food assistance available for families eligible for SNAP in April and May. These changes are expected to help more than 100,000 Montanans.

Montanans who receive food assistance from SNAP can check their balance online 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by opening an account at apply.mt.gov. Clients can also check their benefits by calling 1-866-850-1556.

Finally, the state is making it easier for new mothers and those caring for young children to access the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) by providing services over the phone, and more flexibility in purchasing WIC foods at the store. Local clinics can be found through an easy search at www.signupwic.com. More information may be found at www.wic.mt.gov or by calling 1-800-433-4298.

Current WIC recipients can easily check their benefits by using the WICShopper application, calling the number on the back of their card, or asking their clinic staff or store staff to provide them a benefit balance.

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