Media Release

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Households eligible for free or reduced price school meals can get P-EBT benefit

Schools to send out application form next week

JEFFERSON CITY, MO — MO As part of the Families First Act, the Department of Social Services (DSS) will issue to eligible families a one-time Pandemic-Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) benefit for each child in the household who qualifies for free or reduced price school meals in grades pre-kindergarten through 12. The P-EBT benefit helps cover the cost of meals students have eaten at home on school days for the months of March, April, and May. The benefit is placed on an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card families use to buy food. The benefit amount per child can be affected by the months the household is eligible to receive the P-EBT benefit. The amounts per child are $57 for March, $125 for April, and $120 for May, so the maximum benefit per child is $302. Missouri estimates nearly 458,000 students may qualify for the benefit.

Only Food Stamp/SNAP households that received Food Stamp/SNAP benefits in March automatically get a P-EBT benefit of $302 for each eligible child added to their existing EBT card and do not need to apply. Benefits will automatically be loaded to EBT cards this week for around 196,325 students.

All households that did not get a Food Stamp benefit in March must apply and provide income information for March, April, and May to receive the P-EBT benefit for each month the child is eligible. Approximately 137,723 households or 261,675 children could receive P-EBT benefits.

DSS, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), and Missouri school districts are working together to get applications to student households that need to apply for the P-EBT benefit. Those applications forms go out to families next week.

"With Missouri children now learning in their homes, many families are experiencing unplanned increases in household food costs," said **Jennifer Tidball, Acting Director, Department of Social Services**. "I urge families who believe they may qualify and didn't receive March SNAP benefits to apply for the P-EBT benefit. We are grateful for the partnership with DESE and local schools to connect families to this assistance."

"We know how important school meals are to so many Missouri families," said Commissioner of Education Margie Vandeven. "While public schools across the state have served over 5.4 million meals to students while school buildings have been closed, we know there is a need for more assistance and our team stands ready to make that happen."

Households may complete the application sent from the School District online through PrimeroEdge or mail the paper application by June 30, 2020 to DESE, Food and Nutrition Services. DESE will verify the student's eligibility for the free or reduced price school meal program and will send all applications to the DSS, Family Support Division (FSD). FSD will mail an EBT card with the P-EBT benefit and instructions on its use to approved applicants. Applicants who are not approved will receive a letter with contact information, if the citizen disagrees with the decision. For more information on the EBT card, go to **https://mydss.mo.gov/food-assistance/ebt (https://mydss.mo.gov/food-assistance/ebt)**.

Missourians who have questions can use the **DSS Virtual Assistant (https://info.mo.gov/dss/chatbot/)** to get immediate answers to basic questions that are not specific to an individual's case 24 hours a day or can call 855-FSD-INFO or 855-373-4636 Monday through Friday, 6:00 a.m. to 6:30 p.m., and Saturday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. In observance of Memorial Day, the FSD Customer Service Center will be closed Saturday, May 23rd and Monday, May 25th.

The **Missouri Services Navigator (https://mo.servicesnavigator.org/s4s/WhereILive/Council?pageId=1&lockla=true)** has information on over 2,800 programs and services available in the state. Missourians in need of information on Food Stamp, Medicaid, Child Care Subsidy, or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families benefit programs can visit **dss.mo.gov (https://dss.mo.gov/)**. Missourians can also apply for those services 24/7 online by visiting **MyDSS.mo.gov (https://mydss.mo.gov/)**, or sending completed applications and verification documents by email to **FSD.Documents@dss.mo.gov (mailto:FSD.Documents@dss.mo.gov)**, or by fax to 573-526-9400.

The Department of Social Services is committed to the **"Show Me Strong" Recovery Plan (https://showmestrong.mo.gov/)** and serving the needs of Missouri citizens during COVID-19 pandemic. Information regarding the department's response to the pandemic is available online **https://dss.mo.gov/covid-19 (https://dss.mo.gov/covid-19)**.

The mission of the Department of Social Services is to empower Missourians to live safe, healthy, and productive lives. Visit **dss.mo.gov (https://dss.mo.gov/)** to learn more about the Department of Social Services and follow us on **Facebook (https://www.facebook.com/MOSocialServices/)** and **Twitter (https://twitter.com/DSS_Missouri)**.

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