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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New Mexico to feed 245,000 vulnerable children affected by COVID-19 school closures

$97.8 million in additional food benefits

SANTA FE – New Mexico families will receive more than $97 million in additional food benefits – enough to feed about 245,000 vulnerable children -- following federal approval of a Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer Program.

The New Mexico Human Services Department and the Public Education Department submitted the request jointly to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards are used like debit cards to buy groceries. Pandemic-EBT assistance will be deposited directly to existing EBT cards for families already receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits.

New Mexico households with children who receive free or reduced-price meals will receive benefits of $5.70 per child, per day for the 70-day period from March 16, 2020 when public schools were closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, through June 19, 2020. New Mexico households can receive Pandemic-EBT as well as continue to receive food distributions from their child's school site.

March, April, and May benefits will be issued in mid to late May, and Pandemic-EBT benefits will continue to be issued through June 19, the average date of normal public school closures.

The program will also benefit families that did not previously qualify for free or reduced-price meals but may now qualify due to changes in their household's circumstances as a result of the restrictions implemented for non-essential businesses because of the COVID-19 response. Those families should contact their school district food service office to apply for benefits. If determined eligible, their children will receive Pandemic-EBT, and the benefit will be issued for the month determined eligible through June.

The Human Services Department provides services and benefits to more than 1 million New Mexicans through several programs including: the Medicaid Program, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Child Support Program, and several Behavioral Health Services.

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