NJ Human Services to Deliver Special Food Assistance Benefits to Children Starting Next Week

Benefits to be Delivered Starting July 8;

Many SNAP Recipients to Also Receive July Benefits Boost

June 30, 2020

(TRENTON) – The New Jersey Department of Human Services today announced that special food assistance benefits will be delivered starting next week to children who normally would have received free or reduced-price school meals if not for COVID-19 school closures.

The Department had anticipated delivery of these benefits in June, but continues to work to finalize information with school districts to ensure eligible students get the special benefits.

Under the plan approved by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, New Jersey Pandemic-EBT (P-EBT) benefits will be provided to recipients of the state's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and non-SNAP households with children who normally receive free or reduced-price school meals.

The majority of Pandemic-EBT eligible families participating in SNAP will receive the benefit on their household's existing Families First card on July 8.

All other Pandemic-EBT eligible households will be mailed a P-EBT card beginning next week and should expect to get their card in the mail starting the week of July 13th. Instructions on how to activate the card and start using benefits will also be included.

Families with more than one child who received free or reduced-price lunch, will receive the benefits for all eligible children in the same card. P-EBT benefits can be used at participating SNAP EBT retailers and online at Amazon, Walmart, ShopRite and The Fresh Grocer.

"We look forward to delivering these important benefits to children throughout New Jersey," Human Services Commissioner Carole Johnson said. "We appreciate the school districts that have worked with us to ensure eligible children receive this important benefit. Our goal in implementing this new program remains clear - no child should ever go hungry."

Each eligible student will receive a one-time $416.10 benefit to help address lost nutritional support during the time that schools were closed during the pandemic. Approximately $208 million in special food assistance benefits is expected to be delivered to more than 500,000 New Jersey children.

Also, many New Jerseyans who receive food assistance through NJSNAP will receive additional benefits in July to help address food needs related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

An additional $37.5 million will be provided to about 223,000 New Jersey households for July.

SNAP supplemental payments were included in the federal Families First Coronavirus Response Act. Human Services has already provided a total of about $143 million in additional NJ SNAP benefits in March, April, May and June to New Jerseyans to help purchase groceries.

"It's critical that we continue to provide as much food assistance as possible to eligible New Jersey households during this difficult time," Commissioner Johnson said. "I continue to thank our state's Congressional delegation for protecting residents as we respond to this pandemic."

The supplemental benefits will be directly loaded to NJ SNAP recipients' Families First EBT cards as part of their regular monthly payment.

NJ SNAP provides food assistance to families with low incomes to help them buy groceries through a benefit card accepted in most food retail stores and farmer's markets. Families can now also use their cards at select online grocery retailers to help maintain social distancing during the pandemic. The program serves about 700,000 New Jerseyans in 356,000 households, with the monthly SNAP benefit based on household size and income.

"Access to additional food assistance is more important than ever as several families and individuals face unprecedented economic and health challenges," Human Services Deputy Commissioner Elisa Neira said. "We're pleased to be able to provide this continued assistance when it's needed most."

Back to top

“We encourage residents who need food assistance to visit and apply for SNAP online at www.NJHelps.org,” said Assistant Commissioner Natasha Johnson, who directs Human Services’ Division of Family Development and oversees the SNAP program. “I also thank the dedicated county Boards of Social Services staff, who have worked tirelessly through this public health crisis.”

Commissioner Johnson also noted that Human Services has continued to work on additional ways to streamline the SNAP application process. As part of this effort, SNAP applicants can now upload the documentation needed for their applications electronically instead of mailing or dropping off documents to the county enrollment offices. Through a new online tool, available on NJOneApp, SNAP applicants can upload documents directly from their phones or computers to submit to the corresponding board of social services to process their application.

Human Services has also taken the following steps to help New Jerseyans access affordable food during the emergency:

- Ensured that everyone whose benefits were up for renewal in March, April, May, June and July were extended for six months, meaning that nobody’s SNAP benefits will expire during these extensions for not completing the renewal.
- Made it easier to apply for SNAP during this emergency by waiving the normally required interview and the hard copy signature on applications, so as to reduce the need for face-to-face interactions.
- Updated our online system to make it easier for SNAP applicants to track their application.
- Launched online grocery ordering for SNAP recipients through Amazon, Walmart, ShopRiteand The Fresh Grocer.

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Mental Health
Addiction Services
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Office for Prevention of Developmental Disabilities
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Office of Contract Policy and Management

Notices

News

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Publications

Back to top

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Back to top