NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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243,000 NM children to get extended P-EBT benefits

State to issue $45.25 million for benefits through Sept. 30

SANTA FE – New Mexico families will receive more than $45 million in additional food benefits – enough to feed almost 244,000 vulnerable children – following federal approval of the state's amended Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer Program for August and September.

"The Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer program is an important way to ensure that children will get the nutrition they need, especially when students are studying remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic," said New Mexico Human Services Sec. David R. Scrase, M.D. "We are working hard with the Public Education Department to get these benefits out to the right families as quickly as possible."

The benefit will be added to existing P-EBT cards for about two-thirds of recipients, and they can expect to see the money in early October. Others who qualify for the new benefit but don't have an existing P-EBT card will be issued one with the new benefit, a process that could take several weeks.

The retroactive benefit for an estimated 243,661 children who qualify for free or reduced-price meals is meant to offset meals missed because their schools were in the remote learning mode in August and September. New Mexico households with children who receive free or reduced-price meals will receive benefits of $5.86 per child per day for the period their individual school site was 100 percent virtual until the day their school site instituted a hybrid model.

"My administration will continue to work as hard as we can to ensure New Mexicans have every available resource during this public health crisis," said Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham. "Food benefits are a lifeline. The state of New Mexico will continue to deliver as much as we can for children and working families all across the state."

New Mexico's Human Services and Public Education departments worked closely to identify eligible students and manage and distribute the benefits.

The P-EBT program was authorized by the federal Families First Coronavirus Response Act to provide assistance to families with children who are eligible for free or reduced-price school meals.

This is the second round of benefits for qualifying New Mexico children: The state distributed more than $104 million in May to families of almost 350,000 children for meals missed from March 16, when schools closed due to the pandemic, until June 19.

The New Mexico Human Services Department and the Public Education Department submitted the request jointly to the U.S. Department of Agriculture and were the only state in the Southwest Region to do so.

Per the USDA guidelines, if qualifying students don't have access to school meals for five days straight, they are eligible.

The Human Services Department has two hotlines for individuals to inquire about the status of their P-EBT benefits. The Human Services Department Customer Service Center is 1-800-283-4465 or they can call the P-EBT Hotline at 505-660-4822.

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