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# PRESS RELEASE

## USVI Department of Human Services Announces Federal Approval of Third Issuance of Pandemic EBT

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**U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS:** The VI Department of Human Services (DHS) today announced that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) approved the VI Plan to issue Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer (P-EBT) to children of current Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) households and non-SNAP households. This third round of P-EBT financial nutrition assistance will cover meals that were missed from October 2020 through May 2021 because of the closure of private and public schools, which participate in the National School Lunch Program. Eligible children must have received 100% virtual or hybrid (a mix of in-person and virtual) school instruction as a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic. **Note:** Children will **not** be eligible to receive P-EBT for any of the days enrolled in In-person school instruction. Children who are usually Home Schooled are also **not** eligible for P-EBT.

“The VI Department of Human Services is collaborating more than ever before to build a stronger Virgin Islands that better supports and brings hope to our territory’s children, youth and families,” said Human Services Commissioner Kimberley Causey-Gomez.

“Our partnership with the VI Department of Education and the territory’s private schools has remained critical to ensuring all Virgin Islands children eligible for P-EBT benefits receive them and that our children receive the nutrition they need to grow and learn. These benefits already positively impacted over 13,000 children in the first and second rounds of issuance and are slated to provide over 17,000 children across the Territory with assistance in this third issuance. We appreciate this partnership to reach children and families who are economically impacted most because of the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Commissioner Causey-Gomez. “Children must have their basic needs met, including food, to be ready to learn, and many Virgin Islands families rely on free or reduced-priced school meals when schools are open. We’re appreciative that the VIDHS is a strong partner in making sure our children have every opportunity for

high-quality nutrition during this unprecedented time. Thank you to all the hardworking staff that made this possible,” ended Commissioner Causey-Gomez.

### Supplemental and New P-EBT Benefits

As a result of President Biden’s January 2021 executive order, a retroactive Supplemental payment, also known as a Snack Benefit, will be issued to clients who received P-EBT benefits for the months of August and/or September. In this third issuance of P-EBT, the federal government has also awarded funding for the states and territories to issue P-EBT to children in SNAP Households who were under age 6 on October 1, 2020. This benefit is known as Child Care P-EBT, but unfortunately, it is *ONLY* applicable to eligible households who receive SNAP and the children are under 6 and are not receiving School Age P-EBT.

An estimated payment distribution schedule has been established in collaboration with FNS, beginning with October 2020 benefit payments. Benefits will be issued incrementally in accordance with the following timeline:

Benefit Month	Estimated Benefit Availability (2021)
October 2020	Week of July 5 – July 10
November & December 2020	Week of July 12 – 17
January & February 2021	Week of July 19 – 24
March & April 2021	Week of July 26 - 31
May 2021 & August/September 2020 Snack Benefit	Week of August 2 - 7
<i>*Child Care Benefit October 2020 – May 2021</i>	Week of August 9 - 14

### Who is eligible for Round 3 of P-EBT, and how will it be issued?

#### 1. School-Age Children

- a. All students (K-5 through Grade 12) currently enrolled in USVI public schools and private schools that participate in the National School Lunch Program.
- b. For eligible children **who currently receive SNAP**, their benefits will be loaded on the household’s existing EBT card.
- c. For eligible children who **do not currently receive SNAP** but were issued a card for P-EBT 1 & 2, the third round of benefits will automatically be loaded to those cards.
- d. Existing P-EBT recipients who received benefits in August/September will have a supplemental issuance of \$1.13 a day for eligible days in August/September

**2. Current eligible SNAP families with children under six (6) years of age**

- a. SNAP families do not need to contact local SNAP offices to receive these benefits as they will automatically be added to their household's existing EBT card.
- b. A one-time payment will be applied to children in this category the week of August 9-14, 2021.
- c. SNAP families with children six (6) years of age transitioning to a public or private school will **not** receive two issuances. The current benefits issuance system will be cross-checking accounts monthly to prevent double payment during these transitional periods.

**For new, eligible Non-SNAP children:**

1. Cards will be mailed to the addresses provided by parents and guardians to the respective schools. Families are asked to contact their schools if they think their recorded information may be incorrect.
  - a. The card will be issued in the student's name. Households with more than one eligible student will receive multiple cards.
  - b. Instructions will be provided on how to set-up and utilize the card to access their benefits.
2. There is no application process. The Virgin Islands Department of Education and eligible private schools provided DHS the names of students (based on their communications to families and their school-based requirements) enrolled for the 2020– 2021 school year.
3. P-EBT benefits can be used to purchase food items at the stores of authorized SNAP retailers.
4. P-EBT benefits are not transferable! You must destroy the card if you do not want the benefits.

**How much will children receive?**

The monthly benefit amount per child is dependent on the school's in-person status and specific distance learning schedules.

1. Eligible public & private schools with 100% virtual participation will receive an average of \$143.46 a month (per child).
2. Students who attended school 100% in-person from October 2020 – May 2021 are **not** eligible for P-EBT benefits.

### **Saturday SNAP Issuance Office Hours for P-EBT**

The SNAP Issuance office will hold two (2) Saturday office hours to assist parents who have lost or misplaced their original P-EBT cards on July 3 and July 10, 2021.

### **What is P-EBT?**

P-EBT, an abbreviation for Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer, is an additional benefit that basically provides food assistance via an Electronic Benefit Card that can be used in participating grocery stores and convenience stores for food items. Unlike SNAP, which is renewable based on eligibility, P-EBT is a one-time benefit issuance.

P-EBT was funded by the federal Families First Coronavirus Response Act. Benefits are available for all Virgin Islands SNAP and non-SNAP households with children who were enrolled in locally registered public and private schools, grades (K – 12) who have temporarily lost access to free or reduced-price school meals due to pandemic-related public and private school closures.

**For more information about P-EBT, visit the DHS website at [www.dhs.gov.vi](http://www.dhs.gov.vi) or families may call the P-EBT Customer Service number (340)772-7120 or email [pebt@dhs.vi.gov](mailto:pebt@dhs.vi.gov) with the subject P-EBT.**

*The Department of Human Services (VIDHS) exists to provide social services to members in our community with diverse needs. In times of national uncertainty and hardship we act as a safety-net and exist to inspire hope and empower change through non-judgmental, quality delivery of needed services and resources. Please visit the Department of Human Services website, [www.dhs.gov.vi](http://www.dhs.gov.vi) for more information.*

For more information on COVID-19, please visit our website, [covid19usvi.com](http://covid19usvi.com), or text COVID19USVI to 888777. To report a suspected COVID-19 case, call (340) 712-6299 or (340) 776-1519.

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