


## MEMORANDUM

TO: Superintendents, Independent Heads of Schools Participating in the National School Lunch Program, Business Managers, Food Service Directors, Data Reporting Managers

FROM: Dan French, Secretary 

SUBJECT: Student and Household Information Needed for P-EBT Implementation

DATE: April 3, 2020

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### Purpose

This memo outlines an important and urgent request for partnership from all Supervisory Unions/School Districts and Independent Schools operating the National School Lunch Program. Certain student information must be submitted to the AOE by close of business on Friday, April 10, 2020, in order to ensure that the state is able to distribute approximately \$14 million in federal assistance to vulnerable Vermont households struggling because of the COVID-19 outbreak. AOE will be using business managers as the primary point of contact to coordinate this work, although the business manager will likely further delegate some or all of the work to other staff including food service staff, determining officials, registrars, administrative assistants and data reporting managers. This memo outlines the request, how the data should be supplied, and who to contact for more information.

### Background

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act of 2020 allows states to issue Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) to households with children who would have been eligible for free or reduced price school meals under the National School Lunch Act, if not for a school closure. The benefit totals about \$25-\$30 per child per week of school closure, for approximately \$14 million in federal funds to assist Vermonters. The state must make this benefit available to all households eligible for free and reduced meal benefits, or it cannot be made available at all.

The Agency of Education has been activated by the State Emergency Operations Center to support the Agency of Human Services' Department of Children and Families (DCF) in getting these benefits to families. We will need your help to do this, because the P-EBT issuing process requires student name, student date of birth, head of household name, and household contact information, and the AOE does not maintain the household name and contact information on file. This means we will be requesting that Supervisory Unions/School Districts and Independent Schools operating the National School Lunch Program help supply that information, so that DCF can issue these benefits to households.

We have a compressed timeline, as every week delays the issuance of these critical benefits.

Therefore, AOE is requesting that SUs/SDs and Independent Schools operating the National School Lunch Program supply the requested information by **close of business on Friday, April 10, 2020**. The AOE recognizes that this is a very short turnaround, during a time when schools may already be struggling to manage data due to the many pressures related to COVID-19. If you are having difficulty complying with the timeline or accessing the data, please alert the AOE as soon as possible so we can work with you to resolve the issue. Delay from even one SU/SD or independent school will delay or even jeopardize issuance of benefits for all eligible Vermont households.

### **Information Requested**

The Agency of Education has prepared a template to supply the requested information. The template includes child name, child date of birth, head of household name, household address and household phone number. The required information must be reported for every student who qualifies for free or reduced meals, and every student who has access to free meals at a CEP or Provision 2 school. This will include Pre-K students if they have access to the school meals program. The Head of Household should be the primary point of contact that is on file for that student. The information for every student with access to the school meals program in the School Food Authority (SU/SD for public schools) should be combined into one file to provide to the AOE.

For schools with electronic Point of Sale (POS) systems in use for the school meals program, the AOE recommends exporting the information from the POS system. These systems are usually web-based, so may be more easily accessed by staff members working from home. The most common POS systems in use in the state should all have this functionality. In Mosaic and Nutrikids, an export report can be built which includes all of the required fields, if this information has been entered into the POS. In PowerSchool, the administrator should be able to run a report that contains the required information. In RenWeb, the National School Lunch Worksheet Day Attendance report can be customized to include this information.

If the information is contained in the POS system, but not available through an exported report, AOE suggests contacting the vendor to request an extract of the data. If there is no electronic POS system, the AOE recommends exporting the information from the Student Information System. If there is no electronic POS and the student information system does not contain up-to-date free and reduced eligibility status, that information may need to be gathered from the manual roster.

### **How to Provide the Data to AOE**

Please consult [Pandemic Emergency EBT \(P-EBT\) Collection Secure File Transfer Instructions](#) for step-by-step instructions for how to set up your data file and submit it to AOE.

### **Special Instructions for CEP, Provision 2, and Non-Pricing Programs**

Children attending schools participating in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), Provision 2, or Non-Pricing Programs receive free meals when school is in operation. Therefore, all of these children are eligible to receive the P-EBT benefit, regardless of their household's

economic status. These schools should submit their complete enrollment list, including any PreK children who have access to the school meals programs at the school.

## **Independent Schools operating the National School Lunch Program**

Students at Independent Schools who participate in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) as a site under a Public SU/SD School Food Authority should be reported by the Public SU/SD. This may take some coordination between the two entities to get the most up-to-date household information. Independent Schools who participate in the National School Lunch Program as their own School Food Authority will need to report their own data.

Four independent schools participating in the NSLP did not have existing electronic file transfer access. The AOE has set up electronic file transfer access for these schools for this purpose and is reaching out directly to those schools about how to use these tools.

## **Who to Contact for Help**

For all questions about P-EBT and what data needs to be collected, please contact one of the following members of the AOE's Child Nutrition Team: [Ailynne Adams](#), [Jen Hutchinson](#), [Denise Blankenship](#), or [Michael Carr](#). For questions about using the template provided by the AOE or how to use the Electronic File Transfer, please contact [Andrew McAvoy](#).

To ensure that everyone is able to submit the requested information on time, members of the Child Nutrition Team will be contacting business managers early in the week of April 6, 2020, to verify that this memo has been received and the SU/SD or Independent School participating in the NSLP will be able to comply by the deadline. If you have any concerns about meeting the deadline, please alert the Child Nutrition Team as soon as possible so that we may help you resolve the issues.

For questions about P-EBT, schools may contact Nicole Tousignant from DCF at (802) 461-9322. Households with questions about P-EBT should be referred to the DCF benefit service center at 1-800-479-6151.

Please do not email any identifying student information directly to AOE staff members as it will not be secure. If you will need to email any identifying information, please contact the staff member to request that they initiate a secure email chain with you.

## **Question and Answer**

### **We are offering meals to children during the school closure – do we still need to supply the information?**

Yes. Households are eligible for this benefit even when the school is also offering free meals to children during the unexpected school closure through other child nutrition programs (SFSP, SSO, CACFP). The benefits are not exclusive of each other.

### **The required information is at a school building and a staff member will need to go to the building to access it. Is this allowed under the Stay Home, Stay Safe order?**

Yes. This activity is allowed under section 6(q) of Addendum 6 which speaks to the maintenance of services for economically disadvantaged populations. As outlined in the Stay Home, Stay Safe order, staff members who need to go to the building for this activity should follow all other guidance to reduce the spread of COVID-19, including maintaining 6' of distance from other people, washing hands, disinfecting services, staying home when sick, and avoiding any unnecessary trips.

**Can households who submit a meals application later this year receive the benefit?**

AOE will be conducting one round of data collection for DCF. However, DCF will make an application process available for families who apply and qualify for free and reduced meals after the data collection has taken place. AOE Child Nutrition Programs will supply template language that alerts families to this process that schools should add to the household approval letter sent if any new households qualify after April 10th. You may encourage families to submit a new application if they may be newly eligible in order to receive this benefit.

**Are Schools allowed to share this information with AOE and DCF?**

Yes. Section 1101(e) of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act allows State educational agencies and school food authorities administering a school lunch program under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act to release to appropriate officials administering the P-EBT program the necessary information to implement the program.

**How will households receive the benefit?**

Once AOE provides the information to DCF, DCF will provide the benefits to households on a monthly basis via an electronic benefit card. Households who already participate in 3SquaresVT will have this additional benefit loaded onto their existing EBT card. DCF will mail a new EBT card and a letter explaining the program to all other eligible households. If households have questions regarding the benefits, they should contact the DCF benefit service center directly at 1-800-479-6151. The exact benefit amount is still pending from USDA, but it will be between \$6-\$7 per student, per week day for the remainder of the school year.