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Human Services Says P-EBT Cards Will Be Ready in August; Eviction Moratorium Extended; Social Security Checks Slowly Going Out

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The Dept. of Human Services said Monday it will start issuing Coronavirus Pandemic EBT cards (P-EBT) in August, after announcing in June that it had received federal approval to provide 13,000 children territory-wide with food assistance, and \$4.6 million in monetary assistance.

Some residents have complained to the Consortium that they continue to struggle to make ends meet while they wait on D.H.S. to get moving on issuance.

During the Bryan administration's coronavirus press briefing on Monday, D.H.S. Commissioner Kimberly Causey-Gomez said the department faced setbacks she said were similar to those faced by the Department of Finance and Social Security.

"We've encountered issues in getting that list clean and accurate to mail things out," Ms. Causey-Gomez said. "The list involves all public school students who are currently in households receiving SNAP benefits" as well as those without SNAP benefits.

"We've been working with the Department of Education closely to figure out how to address the issue with the mailing addresses. We want to make sure they go to the correct households and the correct people without any delays. This will be done in August, and we will make sure that we continue to work with the Dept. of Education to resolve all of the issues quickly," she said.

Who will receive P-EBT, how will they receive it, and how should it be used?

1. Each student enrolled in VI public schools and private schools who participates in the School Lunch program will receive a one-time benefit of \$379.00.
2. The benefit amount, determined by the federal agencies, will be placed on an EBT card and issued to the adult identified by the school as the parent or guardian for that student.
3. A parent or guardian responsible for more than one eligible student in their household will receive the total amount for all eligible students on the same card. (Ex. Three students in a household multiplied by \$379 equals a total benefit amount of \$1,137.00.)
4. P-EBT benefits for eligible students whose families currently receive SNAP will be loaded to the household's existing EBT card.
5. P-EBT benefits for eligible students not currently receiving SNAP will be mailed to the parent or guardian's address provided to DHS by the school.

Eviction moratorium 1-month extension

Governor Bryan earlier this month expressed hesitancy on extending an eviction moratorium that was set to expire July 27, and even said Senator Marvin Blyden, [who had called on the governor to extend the lifeline to renters](#), was playing politics during an election year.

On Monday, however, Mr. Bryan said he would extend the moratorium for one month, albeit with conditions. His extension comes a day after [it was revealed](#) that the Republican Party's latest stimulus bill includes a moratorium extension for renters.

Mr. Bryan's extension is for tenants who are making a good-faith effort to pay their rent, and are less than 60 days behind in payments. If payments exceed 60 days, the tenant will have to negotiate terms with the landlord for payments, the governor said.

"Just like all our tenants in the Virgin Islands, the landlords also have obligations," Mr. Bryan said.

Social Security checks

"We have begun mailing the checks to those recipients whose addresses were able to be verified, and we are working on a distribution process for those addresses that have not," Mr. Bryan said of some \$7.8 million in Social Security funds that have been at the Bureau of Internal Revenue. B.I.R. has been struggling to verify addresses, and as a result distribution of checks has slowed.

Mr. Bryan said the administration has been contemplating a delivery system that would see Social Security recipients who after a certain time period had not received a check, calling a hotline to verify identity. B.I.R. would then inform the recipient of a safe time to pick up the check, "making sure we don't have a glut of people coming to the IBR at this time," Mr. Bryan said.

