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## D.H.S. Announces Submission of Plan for Third Pandemic EBT Benefits for Virgin Islands Families; Approval Pending

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**Customers paying for items at Plaza Extra East, on the Island of St. Croix By. VI CONSORTIUM**

The VI Department of Human Services announced today the pending approval of a state plan it submitted to the federal Food & Nutrition Service Agency (FNS) for a third round of food assistance through the Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer (P-EBT) to current Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) households and non-SNAP households.

These benefits already positively impacted over 13,000 kids 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, the sprawling department said.

As the pandemic continues and the ability to attend school continues to be interrupted, the federal government has expanded and extended these benefits, D.H.S. said. This third issuance of P-EBT will also be extended to current SNAP families with children under six years of age. SNAP families do not need to contact local SNAP offices to receive these benefits as they will automatically be added to their accounts.

Not only will this third issuance cover more students, P-EBT benefits will cover the entire 2020 / 2021 school year from August 2020 through September 2021. Additionally, the DHS Division of Family Assistance anticipates a summer issuance of P-EBT benefits to positively impact food and nutrition needs when school is out.

D.H.S. said it has been working with FNS since March 2020 to secure assistance for the territory. Once this plan has been approved by FNS, DHS will provide a detailed plan for how and when those benefits will roll out, according to the release.

Who will receive P-EBT, how will they receive it?

1. All students (K-5 through Grade 12) currently enrolled in USVI public schools and private schools that participate in the School Lunch Program
2. Existing eligible SNAP client's P-EBT benefits will be applied to their current SNAP cards by the end of the month.
3. Existing P-EBT recipients will have the third round of benefits added to their current card.
4. Existing eligible SNAP clients who have children ages 6 years and under will receive P-EBT benefits this round.
5. For new, eligible non-SNAP clients, 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.
6. 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.
7. For eligible students who do not currently receive SNAP but were issued a card for P-EBT 1 & 2, the benefits will automatically be loaded to those cards.
8. For eligible students who currently receive SNAP, their benefits will be loaded on the household's existing EBT card.
9. P-EBT benefits can be used to purchase food items at the stores of authorized SNAP retailers.
10. P-EBT benefits are not transferable! You must destroy the card if you do not want the benefits.

For new P-EBT Students:

1. The card will be issued in the student's name. Households with more than one eligible student will receive multiple cards.
2. For eligible new students who do not currently receive SNAP, the cards will be mailed to the household based on the address provided by the schools.
3. Instructions will be provided on how to set-up and utilize the card to access their benefits.

4. Eligible, new students who currently receive SNAP will have their benefits loaded on the household's existing EBT card.

### **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.