

The Virgin Islands Consortium

USDA Approves USVI Plan to Issue Third Round of P-EBT to Current SNAP and Non-SNAP Households

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Staff Consortium **June 24, 2021**



The VI Department of Human Services announced Thursday that the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Services approved the USVI 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, D.H.S. said. Eligible children must have received 100 percent 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, according to D.H.S.

"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 D.H.S. Commissioner Kimberley Causey-Gomez.

She added, "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. 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."

Supplemental and New P-EBT Benefits

As a result of President Joe 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, D.H.S. said. 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 it is only applicable to eligible households who receive SNAP and the children who 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
October 2020
November & December 2020
January & February 2021
March & April 2021
May 2021 & August/September 2020 Snack E
<i>*Child Care Benefit October 2020 – May 20</i>

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

1. School-Age Children

1. All students (K-5 through Grade 12) currently enrolled in USVI public schools and private schools that participate in the National School Lunch Program.
2. For eligible children who currently receive SNAP, their benefits will be loaded on the household's existing EBT card.
3. 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.
4. 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.

1. 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.
2. A one-time payment will be applied to children in this category the week of August 9-14, 2021.
3. 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.

1. The card will be issued in the student's name. Households with more than one eligible student will receive multiple cards.
2. 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