

WSR 22-24-057

EMERGENCY RULES

DEPARTMENT OF

SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES

(Economic Services Administration)

[Filed December 1, 2022, 11:48 a.m., effective December 1, 2022, 11:48 a.m.]

Effective Date of Rule: Immediately upon filing.

Purpose: The department is adopting WAC 388-439-0005 What is the pandemic EBT program?, 388-439-0015 General information about pandemic EBT benefits, 388-439-0020 Eligibility for pandemic EBT benefits for children under age six, and 388-439-0025 Eligibility for pandemic EBT benefits during the 2022 summer period.

Emergency adoption of these rules supports implementation of the pandemic EBT (P-EBT) program for eligible children who do not have access to regular free or reduced-price school meals or child care meals due to limited onsite learning or attendance in any school year in which there is a federal public health emergency designation (as allowed under Section 1101 of H.R. 6201, Families First Coronavirus Response Act, as amended by Section 1108 of H.R. 1319, American Rescue Plan Act of 2021).

Citation of Rules Affected by this Order: New WAC 388-439-0005, 388-439-0015, 388-439-0020, and 388-439-0025.

Statutory Authority for Adoption: RCW 74.04.050, 74.04.055, 74.04.057, 74.04.500, 74.04.510, 74.08.090, and 74.08A.120.

Other Authority: H.R. 6201, 8337, 133, 1319.

Under RCW 34.05.350 the agency for good cause finds that immediate adoption, amendment, or repeal of a rule is necessary for the preservation of the public health, safety, or general welfare, and that observing the time requirements of notice and opportunity to comment upon adoption of a permanent rule would be contrary to the public interest; and that state or federal law or federal rule or a federal deadline for state receipt of federal funds requires immediate adoption of a rule.

Reasons for this Finding: Emergency adoption of these rules is necessary to support implementation of the P-EBT program which protects the health, safety, and general welfare of Washington residents by supporting access to public assistance. The department filed a CR-101 preproposal under WSR 21-23-108.

Number of Sections Adopted in Order to Comply with Federal Statute: New 4, Amended 0, Repealed 0; Federal Rules or Standards: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0; or Recently Enacted State Statutes: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0.

Number of Sections Adopted at the Request of a Nongovernmental Entity: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0.

Number of Sections Adopted on the Agency's own Initiative: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0.

Number of Sections Adopted in Order to Clarify, Streamline, or Reform Agency Procedures: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0.

Number of Sections Adopted using Negotiated Rule Making: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0; Pilot Rule Making: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0; or Other Alternative Rule Making: New 4, Amended 0, Repealed 0.

Date Adopted: December 1, 2022.

Katherine I. Vasquez
Rules Coordinator

SHS-4858.9

Chapter 388-439 WAC
PANDEMIC EBT (P-EBT) PROGRAM

NEW SECTION

WAC 388-439-0005 What is the pandemic EBT program? (1) The pandemic electronic benefits transfer (P-EBT) program is a federally funded nutrition program administered by the department of social and health services (department) and provides food benefits to eligible children who do not have access to meals at a covered childcare center or free or reduced-price school meals due to the COVID-19 public health emergency.

(2) The following definitions apply to this program:

(a) "Benefit level" means the P-EBT benefit amount provided to an eligible child;

(b) "Direct certification" means a determination that a child is eligible for free or reduced-priced school meals without further application to the national school lunch program due to:

(i) Receiving a benefit from a federal-means tested assistance program, including the supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP), temporary assistance for needy families (TANF), food distribution program on Indian reservations (FDPIR), some medicaid programs; or

(ii) Other source eligible categories, including children in foster care, children experiencing homelessness, students enrolled in the migrant education program, and children enrolled in head start or the early childhood education and assistance program (ECEAP);

(c) "Eligible student" means a child or student, regardless of age, who would have access to free or reduced-price school meals through the national school lunch program (NSLP) and school breakfast program (SBP) during the school year, who is:

(i) Enrolled in a school or registered in a program in Washington state that normally participates in the NSLP;

(ii) Attending a school that has been closed or has reduced attendance or hours for five or more consecutive days during the school year due to the COVID-19 public health emergency designation; and

(iii) Determined by the school to be eligible for free or reduced-priced school meals or attends a school that operates the community eligibility provision or the provision 2 lunch and breakfast program. Students are identified as eligible for free or reduced-price school meals using direct certification or free or reduced-price school meals application;

(d) "Free or reduced-price school meals" means meals provided to students qualified as eligible by the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act;

(e) "Meal service" means the typical meals (SBP and NSLP) served when school is in session and consumed onsite as part of the school day. Meal service includes both breakfast and lunch.

(f) "Operating days" are days a school regularly operates, excluding weekends, breaks, and holidays;

(g) "P-EBT card" means the unique electronic benefit transfer (EBT) card that accesses P-EBT food benefits issued to eligible students or children under age six;

(h) "Public health emergency" means a federal declaration of a public health emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic as issued by the secretary of health and human services;

(i) "School" means any public or nonprofit private schools, charter schools, and tribal compact schools within the state of Washington;

(j) "School closure" means that the school was closed for in-person or remote learning with no meal service available to students enrolled in the school;

(k) "Summer period" means the months between the end of the school year and the start of the next school year during which there was a public health emergency.

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NEW SECTION

WAC 388-439-0015 General information about pandemic EBT benefits. (1) Pandemic electronic benefit transfer (P-EBT) benefits will be deposited into an account accessible with a debit card called a P-EBT card. A P-EBT card will be issued to each eligible student or child under age six. Each P-EBT card will be:

- (a) Linked to an EBT account for each eligible student or child under age six for P-EBT benefits; and
- (b) Mailed to either:
 - (i) The address on file with the school for the eligible student; or
 - (ii) The address on file with the department for the basic food case for the child under age six.

(2) To use a P-EBT account:

- (a) The P-EBT card can be used by the eligible student or child under age six or responsible household member, such as a parent or caregiver, on behalf of the eligible student or child under age six, to access the benefits in their EBT account;
- (b) A personal identification number (PIN) has to be created that must be used with the P-EBT card to purchase food items;
- (c) P-EBT benefits must be accessed from the P-EBT card of an eligible student or child under age six. P-EBT benefits cannot be transferred to a bank account or issued as a check;
- (d) P-EBT benefits that are not used within 274 days from the last purchase or deposit activity on the eligible child's account will be removed; and
- (e) P-EBT benefits cannot be replaced once redeemed or removed. Families are responsible for keeping the P-EBT card and PIN of an eligible student or child under age six in a safe and secure place.

(3) The purpose of P-EBT benefits is to help low-income families or individuals have a more nutritious diet by providing food benefits to eligible children during the COVID-19 public health emergency.

- (a) P-EBT benefits are used to buy food items for an eligible child (or youth) from a food retailer authorized to accept supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP) benefits by the U.S. department of agriculture food and nutrition service (FNS).

(b) Use P-EBT benefits the same as other food benefits under WAC 388-412-0046 (2)(c).

(c) It is not legal to use P-EBT benefits as described under WAC 388-412-0046 (2)(d).

(d) If people intentionally misuse P-EBT benefits, they may be:

(i) Subject to fines; or

(ii) Subject to legal action, including criminal prosecution. Department of social and health services (DSHS) will cooperate with state, local, and federal prosecuting authorities to prosecute trafficking P-EBT benefits.

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NEW SECTION

WAC 388-439-0020 Eligibility for pandemic EBT benefits for children under age six. (1) To be eligible for federally funded pandemic electronic benefits transfer (P-EBT) benefits for children under age six, a child must be:

(a) A member of a household that received supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP) between October 1, 2021, and June 30, 2022;

(b) Under the age of six.

(2) Children who do not qualify for federally funded P-EBT benefits because they are on state-funded food assistance program (FAP) may be eligible for state-funded P-EBT.

(a) State-funded P-EBT follows the same eligibility rules as subsection (1) of this section, except that the child must be a member of a household that received FAP, instead of SNAP, between October 1, 2021, and June 30, 2022.

(b) State-funded P-EBT benefits are contingent on the availability of state funds.

(3) We calculate a standard benefit level for each month of P-EBT eligibility by:

(a) Using the full daily meal reimbursement rate of seven dollars and ten cents for breakfast, lunch, and snack;

(b) Multiplied by the statewide average operating days of 18 days per month;

(c) Multiplied using a percentage of benefit reimbursement based on statewide child and adult care food program (CACFP) reported meal service prior to the COVID-19 public health emergency compared to the current school year, a 34 percent reduction, as follows:

| Daily Reimbursement Rate | Average Operating Days | Reduction in CACFP Claims | Average Monthly Benefits |
|--------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| \$7.10 | 18 | 34% | \$43 |

(d) P-EBT benefits are issued for each month that the household receives a SNAP or FAP benefit more than zero dollars.

(4) P-EBT benefits are issued for a child under age six for a retroactive period of time as follows:

(a) An initial one-time P-EBT allotment is issued for the months of September 2021 to June 2022;

(b) P-EBT during the summer period benefits are disbursed under WAC 388-439-0025.

(5) Benefits for a child under age six will be placed on a P-EBT card under WAC 388-439-0015.

(6) Issuance of P-EBT benefits beyond September 30, 2022, is subject to U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) approval and the availability of state funds.

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NEW SECTION

WAC 388-439-0025 Eligibility for pandemic EBT benefits during the 2022 summer period. (1) During the summer period of July and August 2022, schools and covered childcare centers will be deemed as closed.

(2) To be eligible for the pandemic electronic benefits transfer (P-EBT) benefit during the summer period after the 2021-2022 school year, prior to August 31, 2022, a child must be:

(a) An eligible student as defined under WAC 388-439-0005(c) in June 2022; or

(b) A child under age six, as defined under WAC 388-439-0020(1), between June 1, 2022, and August 31, 2022.

(3) A child determined eligible in subsection (2) of this section will receive a one-time, lump sum payment of \$391 for the 2022 summer period.

(4) Summer P-EBT benefits for an eligible student or a child under age six will be placed on a P-EBT card under WAC 388-439-0015.

(5) Issuance of summer period benefits beyond September 30, 2022, is subject to U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) approval and the availability of state funds.

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