The Research Packet For

THE SNAP TASK FORCE

Meeting of January 21, 2021

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# SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SNAP) TASK FORCE

## Contents

I. United States Department of Agriculture

- USDA: SNAP – Temporary Increase in Maximum Allotments due to COVID-19
- USDA Announces Continuation of the Farmers to Families Food Box Program, Fifth Round of Purchase
- USDA Approves Maine to Accept SNAP Benefits Online
- USDA: Make Every Bite Count: USDA, HHS Release Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2020-2025
- USDA Expands Access to Online Shopping in SNAP, Invests in Future WIC Opportunities
- USDA: Memorandum: Pandemic EBT – State Plans for School Year 2020-2021

II. New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance

- Monthly Caseload Statistics – October 2020

III. New York City Human Resources Administration

- Policy Bulletin #20-67-ELI- CA and SNAP Recertification Periods Extension
- Policy Bulletin #20-70-ELI- SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SNAP) STUDENT ELIGIBILITY

IV. Reports, News and Notable Items

- Food Research & Action Center
- Food Research & Action Center

V. Other Items

- HRA Mediations Liaison Update
- HRA Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) Cards
I. United States Department of Agriculture

**USDA : SNAP –Temporary Increase in Maximum Allotments due to COVID-19**


The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, signed by President Donald J. Trump on December 28, 2020, increases Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits by raising maximum allotments to 15 percent of the June 2020 value of the Thrifty Food Plan (TFP). This memorandum provides the revised maximum SNAP allotment amounts by household size for the 48 States and D.C., Alaska, Hawaii, Guam and the Virgin Islands. Maximum allotments will increase for the 48 States and D.C., Alaska, Hawaii, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. For a family of four receiving a maximum allotment in the 48 States and D.C., benefits will be $782, an increase of $102. Maximum allotments for a family of four will increase to a range of $963 to $1,495 in Alaska, to $1,440 in Hawaii, to $1,153 in Guam, and to $1,005 in the U.S. Virgin Islands. The minimum benefit for the 48 States and D.C. will increase by $3 to $19 and will increase in Alaska, Guam, Hawaii, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Attached are FY 2021 maximum allotments for each household size for the 48 contiguous States and D.C., Alaska, Hawaii, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands from January 1, 2021 through June 30, 2021. The legislation requires that the increased maximum allotments take effect beginning on January 1, 2021, and remain for each subsequent month through June 30, 2021. On July 1, 2021, State agencies will revert to the FY 2021 benefit allotments included in the memo issued on July 29, 2020.
USDA Announces Continuation of the Farmers to Families Food Box Program, Fifth Round of Purchase


(Washington, D.C., January 4, 2021) – U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue announced the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will purchase an additional $1.5 billion worth of food for nationwide distribution through the Farmers to Families Food Box Program. In total, USDA has distributed more than 132 million food boxes in support of American farmers and families affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Background:
The additional funding for the program was included in the COVID-19 relief package as part of the Consolidated Appropriations Act passed Dec. 21, 2020. In this fifth round of purchases, USDA will again purchase combination boxes to ensure all involved recipient organizations have access to fresh produce, dairy products, fluid milk and meat products, and seafood products will also be included in this round.
**USDA Approves Maine to Accept SNAP Benefits Online**


**USDA is expanding access to innovative online food purchase program**

*Washington, D.C., December 31, 2020* – U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue today announced approval of a request from Maine to provide online purchasing of food to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) households. This approval will allow Maine to expedite the implementation of online purchasing with currently authorized SNAP online retailers with a target start date to be announced at a later time. Maine’s SNAP participation is more than 144,000 individuals, more than 78,000 households, and totals $204 million annually in federal benefits. This announcement further demonstrates President Trump’s whole of America approach to fighting the coronavirus pandemic by ensuring those affected are fed.

Please refer to see the states in which these retailers are operating. With these states, more than 90% of all households receiving SNAP will have access to online purchasing.  
https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/online-purchasing-pilot

**USDA: Make Every Bite Count: USDA, HHS Release Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2020-2025**


*WASHINGTON, DC, December 29, 2020* – Nutrition in America took a major step forward today with the publication of Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2020-2025. Jointly published by the U.S. Departments of Agriculture (USDA) and Health and Human Services (HHS) every five years, the guidelines provide science-based recommendations designed to foster healthy dietary patterns for Americans of all ages – from birth through older adults. Importantly, this edition expands the guidance, for the first time including recommended healthy dietary patterns for infants and toddlers.

“At USDA and HHS, we work to serve the American people – to help every American thrive and live healthier lives through access to healthy foods and providing nutrition recommendations,” said U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue. “With the release of the dietary guidelines, we have taken the very important step to provide nutrition guidance that can help all Americans lead healthier lives by making every bite count.”

Dietary Guidelines for Americans : https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov/
USDA Expands Access to Online Shopping in SNAP, Invests in Future WIC Opportunities

https://www.fns.usda.gov/news-item/fns-001820

WASHINGTON, November 2, 2020 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture continues making great strides in bringing the online shopping experience to more of its program participants. USDA’s Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is working rapidly to expand capacity in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Online Purchasing Pilot — having grown the program exponentially over the past few months. And now the agency is investing in the future of online ordering in its Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), as well.

“Online ordering is – and will continue to be – an important tool for increasing food access in communities across America,” said Deputy Under Secretary of USDA’s Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services Brandon Lipps. “USDA is working quickly to provide more SNAP participants with the opportunity to shop for food in the same way many Americans do – online. And now we have set our sights on bringing similar innovation to WIC, continuing our commitment to best serve those who rely on our programs.”

Over the past few months, USDA has rapidly expanded SNAP online purchasing to 47 states (including D.C.) – home to more than 97% of SNAP participants. In September 2020, over 1,000,000 SNAP households shopped online. Expansion of the pilot means more SNAP households can now shop for groceries in the same way many non-SNAP households do – online. This helps protect SNAP participants – including the elderly and disabled – from unnecessary exposure to COVID-19. For the latest list of states and retailers currently accepting online SNAP purchases as well as additional background on the pilot, please refer to the SNAP online purchasing website.

WIC Online Debut

For the first time ever, FNS is investing in new and innovative ways to move toward allowing WIC participants to use their benefits to shop for groceries online. FNS awarded the Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition, based in Omaha, Nebraska, $2.5

USDA: Memorandum: Pandemic EBT – State Plans for School Year 2020-2021

https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/resource-files/P-EBT-Cover-Memo-Schools.pdf

The Continuing Appropriations Act, 2021 and Other Extensions Act (P.L. 116-159) extends Pandemic EBT (P-EBT) through the end of September, 2021. That means that P-EBT is now available for all of school year (SY) 2020-2021.
The Act also makes several significant changes to P-EBT. These include:

• expanding P-EBT to cover certain children in childcare,

• provisions to simplify State administration of the program,

• providing full administrative funding, and

• making P-EBT available to eligible children in Puerto Rico, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

To facilitate the development of State plans for SY 2020-2021, USDA created a new plan template and a set of Q&As. Both are now available on USDA’s P-EBT website. Please note that this memo, the P-EBT plan template, and the Q&As only address the development and approval of P-EBT plans for school children. At this time, USDA is not accepting State plans to issue P-EBT benefits for children in childcare. The extension of P-EBT to childcare raises several complex operational issues. USDA is working to resolve those issues now and will issue childcare-specific materials as soon as possible.

II. New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance


January 15, 2021

On December 27, 2020, the federal Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 was signed into law. This Act includes provisions which affect multiple public assistance programs, including temporary increases to the Thrifty Food Plan amounts, issuance of additional Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation benefits, temporary changes to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) student eligibility rules and the issuance of 2020 Recovery Rebate Payments.

The purpose of this GIS is to communicate these changes and provide guidance to local social services districts (districts) on how these changes may affect eligibility for Temporary Assistance (TA), SNAP and the Home Energy Assistance Program ( HEAP).

Thrifty Food Plan Increase The Act increases SNAP benefits by raising maximum allotments to 15 percent of the June 2020 value of the Thrifty Food Plan (TFP). These increased SNAP allotments will be in effect from January 1, 2021 until June 30, 2021. The Act also increases the minimum monthly SNAP allotment for households of one or two
from $16 to $19. The legislation requires that the increased maximum SNAP allotments take effect beginning on January 1, 2021, and remain for each subsequent month through June 30, 2021. On July 1, when calculating SNAP overpayment claims, the 15% increase is excluded from any and all SNAP overpayment calculations. Claims should continue to be calculated based on the October 1, 2020, benefit tables (that is the maximum amounts that went into effect on October 1, 2020; see the chart on page 2 of GIS 20 TA/DC087).

Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation
Payments The legislation extends the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation payments (FPUC). These payments will be issued by the New York State Department of Labor and will provide an additional $300 in federally funded dollars each week to the Unemployment Insurance Benefit (UIB) of each eligible worker. These payments are treated differently than those discussed in the previously issued guidance as described in 20 TA/DC035. For SNAP, the $300 payments are excluded (not to be counted) as income, and are also disregarded as a resource when determining eligibility and calculating benefits for SNAP. If received retroactively, these payments are already excluded as income for SNAP and therefore are not subject to the lump sum provisions. For TA, the $300 FPUC payments are excluded as income and disregarded as a resource when determining eligibility for both emergency and ongoing TA. This includes Family Assistance (FA), Safety Net Assistance (SNA), Emergency Assistance to Needy Families with Children (EAF), Emergency Safety Net Assistance (ESNA) and Emergency Assistance for Adults (EAA). For TA applicants or recipients who are receiving UIB, the FPUC payments must be excluded from the budget. A note should be made in the case record regarding the individual’s receipt of these payments. These payments, if received retroactively, are excluded as income and therefore are not subject to the lump sum provisions.

For HEAP purposes, FPUC payments provided to individuals and families will be excluded as countable income for HEAP eligibility and benefit determinations and must not be counted in the HEAP budget. These payments will be excluded from the HEAP household’s income when determining eligibility for Regular HEAP, Emergency, Heating Equipment Repair and Replacement (HERR), Heating Equipment Clean and Tune (C+T) and cooling assistance benefits.

Student Eligibility To participate in SNAP, a student enrolled at least half time in an institution of higher education must either be working an average of 20 hours per week or meet one of the exemption criteria listed in 7 CFR 273.5 (b). One exemption is participation in a state or federally-financed work study program (funded in full or in part under Title IV-C of the Higher Education Act of 1965 as amended) during the regular school year. The student needs to anticipate working during the time of attendance at the institution. The legislation temporarily amends the student eligibility rules by amending the allowable exemptions to the work rule in two additional ways: •
A student is eligible if he or she is eligible to participate in state or federal work-study, regardless if the student is actively employed or participating in work-study; and, Any student that has an "expected family contribution" of $0, according to Part F of Title IV of the Higher Education Act (which authorizes the major federal student financial aid programs) may participate in SNAP if otherwise eligible.

2020 Recovery Rebate Payments for Individuals The legislation authorizes $600 rebate payments to eligible individuals, including children—similar to those authorized under the CARES Act Section 2201. For SNAP, these rebates are excluded from consideration as income in the month of receipt and as a resource for 12 months following receipt for SNAP purposes. A household would not be considered to have exceeded the income limit due to these payments because they are excluded, but receipt of these payments could affect a household’s eligibility after 12 months if the payments cause the household to exceed the resource limit. For TA, any of these federally funded stimulus rebates paid directly to individuals related to the 2020 coronavirus pandemic must be excluded as income for initial and recurring TA eligibility.

Emergency Allotments to SNAP Households

The purpose of this GIS is to advise social services districts (districts) that Emergency Allotments (EA) will be issued to some Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipient households that received benefits for the month of January 2021. The allotments were authorized by the Families First Coronavirus Response Act of 2020 and are being issued in accordance with the terms of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) memorandum of March 20, 2020.

Only SNAP households that did not receive the maximum benefit for the size of the household for January are eligible for the EA supplement. This includes households that received a pro-rated, partial issuance for January.

SNAP Households that received the maximum benefit, based on their household’s size, for January are not eligible for an EA supplement

Below is a chart of the maximum monthly benefits by household size. Please Note: The maximum allotments listed below reflect the updated SNAP standards, that temporarily
are in effect between January 1, 2021 and June 30, 2021.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOUSEHOLD SIZE</th>
<th>MAXIMUM ALLOTMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>$234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>$430</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>$616</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>$782</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>$929</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>$1,114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>$1,232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>$1,408</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For each additional member</td>
<td>+$176</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please Note: Only EA supplements will be automatically issued by OTDA. Districts must continue to process cases and issue regular SNAP benefits for January as usual.

The mass issuance of EA supplements for January 2021 will be issued on staggered schedules as described below.

New York City The EA supplements will be issued in ten cohorts, based on the case toe-digit, on 1/15, from 1/19 through 1/22, and from 1/25 through 1/29. Benefits will be available the next day following issuance. The supplement will be issued using Payment Type Codes 20 and 22, and a unique authorization number.

Rest of State Supplements will be authorized on a staggered basis to all districts outside of NYC as follows:
- January 11, 2021 – January 14, 2021
- January 18, 2021 – January 21, 2021

Eligible cases will be in pending status on January 11-14 and January 18-21. These transactions may be cancelled, but they cannot be modified. The mass-authorized supplemental SNAP benefits will be available to recipients in EBT after midnight on the day after authorization.

Monthly Caseload Statistics – October 2020
III. New York City Human Resources Administration

Policy Bulletin #20-67-ELI - CA and SNAP Recertification Periods Extension

November 02, 2020  The purpose of this policy bulletin is to inform Job Center, HIV/AIDS Service Administration (HASA) Center and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Center staff about the extensions of recertification periods for a certain identified Cash Assistance (CA) and SNAP cases. This policy bulletin is informational for all other staff. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the monthly CA and SNAP recertifications average for cases with recertification periods expiring in December 2020 through March 2021 is significantly higher than the pre-pandemic monthly average. The federal government has given the Human Resources Administration (HRA) the permission to extend CA and SNAP recertification periods for up to six months in order to smooth out the recertification workload. The first extension will impact randomly selected CA and SNAP cases with recertification periods expiring in December 2020 with the exception of those previously extended.  

Note: CA cases that are newly accepted and in their four-month recertification period and SNAP cases that are eligible to recertify through the Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS) process are not eligible for extension. Recertification notices (Z88 for SNAP
and W-908T for CA) will be sent only to CA and SNAP participants that will need to recertify for the period ending December 31, 2020. Those participants whose cases’ recertification periods are extended will not receive their notices until prior to their new recertification period. This will eliminate a confusion, inquires, and unnecessary traffic into the open centers.

**Policy Bulletin #20-69-ELI- SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SNAP) INTERVIEW AND PROCESSING DESK GUIDE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

November 06, 2020, Revision to the Original Policy Bulletin:

This policy bulletin has been revised to make changes to reflect that effective October 1, 2020 that only some SNAP applicants’ participants have to be interviewed by staff who will be calling them for their interview.

Also, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Interview and Processing Desk Guide During the Covid-19 Pandemic (FIA-1227b [E]) form was revised to include ESNAP processing guidelines and criteria.

ESNAP Screening All SNAP applications must be screened for ESNAP. ACCESS HRA will use the information on the application to screen initially for ESNAP processing. Interview Required Situations – Applications and Recertifications

Under the approved USDA-FNS waiver, and subsequent CR, only some applications and recertifications will require an interview. An interview will be required for an application when:

- The applicant’s identity is not verified (including no validation of the submitted Social Security Number [SSN]), not all of the mandatory verification documents are provided, but the applicant did screen eligible for ESNAP processing.
- The applicant’s identity is not verified, not all of the mandatory verification documents are provided, and the applicant screens as ineligible for ESNAP

**An interview will be required for a recertification when:**

- The participant’s identity is not verified (including no validation of the submitted Social Security Number [SSN]), or other proof of identity is available in the case record.
- Not all mandatory verification is available in the case record or provided with the submission. Initial Outreach – Interview – successful For these scenarios, staff will attempt to contact the applicant/participant within 4-7 business days of the application/recertification submission. If the outreach is successful, the interview will be conducted, and a deferral will be made as necessary

If the outreach attempt is unsuccessful, staff must leave a voicemail (if available) letting the applicant/participant know we will call them back and providing the
applicant/participant with SNAP rescheduling unit phone number (718-722-4924). They must also provide a courtesy call back right after ending that call.

Staff must go through the SPOS Application/Recertification Interview activity indicating what eligibility factors still need verification and in the Print Forms Data window, check the box for interview attempted and print the You Must Submit Documents For Your SNAP Case! (FIA-1146) form. Staff must also generate the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Notice of Required Telephone Interview (FIA-1152d) that has been modified for COVID-19 by printing it in the Print Forms window. This notice lets the applicant/participant know that we will attempt to call them again. It also advises them that if we have the wrong number, the applicant/participant should update it on ACCESS HRA. The FIA-1152d has also been revised to include the SNAP rescheduling unit phone number.

Policy Bulletin #20-70-ELI- SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SNAP) STUDENT ELIGIBILITY

November 10, 2020 This policy bulletin has been revised to inform Job Center, HIV/AIDS Services Administration (HASA) and Non-Cash Assistance (NCA) Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Center staff that the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) has expanded the SNAP student eligibility criteria to include students attending a State University of New York (SUNY) or City University of New York (CUNY) comprehensive college, technology college or community college who are enrolled at least half-time in a qualified Career and Technical Education (CTE) program.

Students attending an Educational Opportunity Center (EOC) in New York State and who are enrolled at least half-time in a career and technical education program, remedial courses, basic adult education, literacy, or English as a second language will also meet the SNAP student eligibility criteria.

OTDA has developed the SUNY/CUNY/EOC Student Verification of Enrolment (LDSS-5172) which staff will provide to students who have not already obtained one directly from their college. These students should be asked to give the LDSS-5172 to their college admission office to be completed. The completed LDSS-5172 should then be returned to the agency. Staff must review the responses on the completed LDSS-5172 to determine if the student is currently enrolled in a qualified program.

IV. Reports, News and Notable Items

Food Research & Action Center
Topic: Food Over Fear: Opportunities to Address Hunger Among Immigrant Families

Description: Join FRAC, the National Immigration Law Center, and state anti-hunger partners for a webinar focused on the work that will be necessary to meet the food and nutrition needs of immigrant families in 2021 and beyond. During this webinar, we will highlight research on why eligible immigrant families are forgoing programs and opportunities to help address hunger among immigrant communities; provide updates on COVID-19 relief provisions that can help support immigration family nutrition; and spotlight priorities to push with the Biden administration and new Congress to ensure that all families have access to programs for which they are eligible.

Time: Jan 26, 2021 03:00 PM in Eastern Time (US and Canada)
https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZItfuisqTsoEtSHQ7J5dKU1N0TKKpLnQ0Sr

Food Research & Action Center
https://frac.org/blog/remember-this-december-hunger-is-solvable-with-snap-3

By Ellen Vollinger, Legal/Food Stamp Director

December 23, 2020, Remember this December: Hunger is solvable with SNAP
During the holidays and all year long, millions of individuals and families who struggle against hunger are able to access healthy food with support from the federal nutrition programs. To celebrate the nation’s nutrition safety net, FRAC is releasing a seven-part “Remember This December” series that will highlight the impact of seven important federal nutrition programs. This year, the federal nutrition programs have played a critical role in ensuring people can continue to put food on the table during the twin COVID-19 public health and economic crises.

Below are a few key facts about SNAP:

- **SNAP lifts individuals out of poverty**: While millions of Americans continue to struggle against poverty, SNAP has proven to be an effective anti-hunger and anti-poverty program. In fact, SNAP lifted 2.5 million people out of poverty in 2019, according to the Census Bureau.
- **SNAP has multiple strengths**: In addition to helping reduce poverty and food insecurity, SNAP improves health and general well-being with long-lasting effects and generates economic stability. Each $1 in SNAP benefits during a downturn generates between $1.50 and $1.80 in economic activity.
- **SNAP matters everywhere**: Hunger does not discriminate when it comes to geography. Regardless of whether you live in a metro, small town, or rural area, SNAP is used to put food on tables in your community.
• **SNAP matters to everyone**: SNAP reaches key vulnerable populations — 81% of SNAP households include a child, an elderly person, or a person with disabilities; 86% of all SNAP benefits go to such households.

• **SNAP is critical in times of trouble**: When a natural disaster strikes, SNAP serves as an effective, responsive tool for delivering nutrition assistance to recovering communities. Also, as noted above, the program reacts quickly and robustly to periods of national or local economic distress.

### V. Other Items

**HRA Mediations Liaison Update**

Reminder SNAP Mediation Liaison:

As a result of the COVID 19 emergency, SNAP has had to change the organization of the manner in which cases are processed. As such we have temporarily reassigned the HRA Mediation Liaisons until further notice. Effective immediately, please instruct the CBOs to send all mediations to Arlene Henry, Amina Serrar, Erica Smith, Juanita Harris and Sharon Russell with a copy to Courtney Herbert.

Arlene Henry: henrya@hra.nyc.gov
Amina Serrar: serrarar@hra.nyc.gov
Sharon Russell: russellsh@hra.nyc.gov
Erica Smith: smither@hra.nyc.gov
Juanita Harris: harisju@hra.nyc.gov
Courtney Herbert: herbertc@hra.nyc.gov

**SNAP- NYC Benefit Center**: 1(800) 829 7005, number to call for people that want to apply for SNAP and don’t have access to internet or technology

**SNAP rescheduling unit phone number (718-722-4924)**

**SNAP Training Session provided by Food Bank for New York City**

**Basic SNAP Eligibility Training**

**Date**: January 26, 2021
**Time**: 10:30 am - 1:30 pm
**Location**: Cisco Webex

**Link to register:**
[https://foodbanknyc.webex.com/foodbanknyc/onstage/g.php?MTID=e7a0da0eb77f3279d6d0964940dba812](https://foodbanknyc.webex.com/foodbanknyc/onstage/g.php?MTID=e7a0da0eb77f3279d6d0964940dba812)
HRA Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) Cards

EBT replacement cards can be requested by calling the State OTDA at 888.328-6399. For anyone having difficulty accessing a replacement card by phone, cards can also be requested by setting up an online EBT account at https://www.connectebt.com/. Clients can use this account to request a replacement card, check card balance, review transaction history, change a PIN, and more.

P-EBT
NYS OTDA P-EBT HELPLINE -1-833-452-0096
NYS OTDA Email: otda.sm.eisp.PEBT@otda.ny.gov
OTDA FAQs: https://otda.ny.gov/SNAP-COVID-19/Frequently-Asked-Questions-Pandemic-EBT.asp#header