The Research Packet For

THE SNAP TASK FORCE

Meeting of April 15, 2021

Prepared by the staff of Food Bank For New York City
39 Broadway, 10th Fl.
New York NY 10006
Tel: 212.566.7855
Fax: 212.566.1463
www.foodbanknyc.org
SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SNAP) TASK FORCE

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I. United States Department of Agriculture

USDA: USDA Increases Emergency SNAP Benefits for 25 million Americans; Ensures COVID-19 Relief Reaches Those Struggling the Most


WASHINGTON, April 1, 2021 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) today took action to provide $1 billion per month in additional food assistance to an estimated 25 million people in very low-income households that are participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and struggling to put food on the table due to the pandemic.

Starting this month, households that had not received at least $95 per month in increased benefits through emergency allotments during the pandemic – because they were already at or close to receiving the current maximum benefit – will now be eligible to receive additional benefits. Benefit levels will remain unchanged for households that have been receiving increased payments of at least $95 per month. States may need a few weeks to update their systems and get the additional benefits to participants.

“The emergency SNAP increases authorized by Congress last year were not being distributed equitably, and the poorest households – who have the least ability to absorb the economic shocks brought about by COVID – received little to no emergency benefit increases,” said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. “As part of President Biden’s commitment to deliver economic relief, and ensure every family can afford to put food on the table, today’s actions will provide much-needed support for those who need it most.”

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act authorized emergency allotments to SNAP households to help address temporary food needs during the pandemic. Since the start of the pandemic, USDA has issued about $29 billion in additional benefits, to bring all SNAP households up to the maximum benefit for their household size. Unfortunately, households already at the maximum SNAP benefit received no additional support. Among households that received little to no benefit increase, about 40% have children, 20% include someone who is elderly and 15% include someone who is disabled.

On Jan. 22, President Biden, issued his Executive Order on Economic Relief Related to the COVID-19 Pandemic, directing all federal agencies to consider administrative actions to better address the current economic crisis resulting from the pandemic. At that time,
the White House called on USDA to consider allowing larger Emergency Allotments for the lowest income SNAP households.

**USDA: Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer Program (P-EBT) Approval of New York’s State Plan for School Children**


The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (P.L. 116-127; the Act) as amended by the Continuing Appropriations Act, 2021 and Other Extensions Act (P.L 116-159) and the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 (P.L. 116-260) authorized the continuation of a temporary assistance program for households with children affected by school closures during the public health emergency that was declared on January 27, 2020. Pursuant to the authority granted under Section 1101 of the Act, FNS approves New York’s enclosed plan to operate P-EBT for school children.

Summary of State’s Plan The New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance and the New York State Education Department will issue P-EBT benefits through the State’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) EBT card system to current SNAP households and non-SNAP households with eligible children. The State’s plan covers the months of September 2020 through June 2021. In addition, New York has or will: • issue benefits for the months of September through March in a single distribution, likely in June, • issue benefits for April through June in July through September, • for New York City public schools: use counts of in-person and virtual learning days for each month, provided by the New York Department of Education for New York City public schools, to set P-EBT benefits at the student level.

Finally, the State will identify risks for improper payments and ensure a high level of integrity.

Estimated Caseload and Value of P-EBT Benefits The State will calculate monthly benefits for each eligible child in the household equal to the daily reimbursement for a free breakfast, lunch, and snack multiplied by the number of benefit days calculated as described in the State’s plan. New York estimates that it will issue $2.2 billion to approximately 2.2 million children for school closures and reductions in attendance and hours extending from September 2020 through June 2021.
WASHINGTON, March 24, 2021 — Statement from Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack regarding the D.C. Circuit Court’s decision to allow USDA to withdraw its appeal on the previously vacated final rule, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program: Requirements for Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (84 FR 66782).

"We are pleased to finally put to rest a policy that would have restricted the ability of states to provide nutrition assistance to able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs) during times of high unemployment. The rule would have penalized individuals who were unable to find consistent income, when many low wage jobs have variable hours, and limited to no sick leave. Groups with typically higher unemployment, including rural Americans, Black, Indigenous, Hispanic and People of Color, and those with less than a high school education would have been disproportionally harmed by this cruel policy."

Under normal circumstances, adults who are age 18-49, able to work, and do not have dependents are not able to receive SNAP benefits for more than 3 months within a 3 year period unless they are working, enrolled in a work program, or participating in some combination of those two for 80 hours each month. The vacated rule limited states’ ability to request waivers of the time limit to certain restricted conditions. The time limit is currently suspended due to the COVID-19 public health emergency. USDA plans to publish a notice in the Federal Register to confirm its return to long-standing regulations that existed prior to the publishing of this rule.

II. New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance

General Information System (GIS) Message: COVID-19 April 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 all Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipient households that received benefits for the month of April 2021. The emergency 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) memorandums of March 20, 2020 and April 1, 2021.

From March 2020 through March 2021, the EA supplemental SNAP benefits were issued only to SNAP households that did not or receive the maximum benefit for the household’s size. Beginning in April 2021, all households, including those already receiving the maximum benefit for the household’s size, and households that formerly would have received a monthly supplement of less than $95, will receive a supplement of at least $95. For households receiving supplements greater than $95, this policy change will not affect the supplement they receive. For households receiving supplements greater than $95, the supplement will continue to be the difference between the amount of SNAP benefits the household received for the month and the current maximum benefit amount for the household’s size.

For households that receive a combined issuance for March and April, this new supplementation policy will only affect the April portion of the SNAP benefit. The March portion of the grant will be supplemented in accordance with the supplementation-to-the-maximum policy that was in effect for March.

This new supplementation policy only affects SNAP benefits for April 2021 and any future months for which EA supplemental benefits are to be issued. It is not retroactive and does not affect any months prior to April 2021. 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 September 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>

New York City The EA supplements will be issued in ten cohorts, based on the case toe-digit, from April 17th – April 23rd, and from April 24th – April 30th. 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.
General Information System (GIS)

Message: COVID-19 TA Waiver Extension Dates and SNAP Interview Waiver Extensions


In response to the outbreak of COVID-19 and the declaration of a State disaster emergency (Executive Order 202, March 7, 2020), the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) released a series of policy documents which advised social services districts (districts) of immediate measures that could be taken to simplify and streamline program administration and protect the health and safety of clients and staff. These measures, which are set to expire on March 31, 2021, have been extended through June 30, 2021.

The purpose of this GIS is to inform social services districts (districts) about the availability of the following waivers through close of business June 30, 2021, and to remind the districts about the guidance governing their application.

- Allowing TA eligibility interviews to be conducted by phone;
- Allowing TA recertification interviews to be conducted by phone;
- Allowing drug/alcohol and domestic violence screenings to be conducted over the phone;
- Extending domestic violence waivers;
- Enabling districts with local procedures or other processes that require frequent contact with individuals experiencing homelessness and residing in emergency housing to conduct these contacts via phone, with reduced frequency, as appropriate for the population;
- Allowing temporary modifications to previously approved Case Supervisor Review (CSR) plans; and,
- Adjusting interview requirements for households applying for SNAP at initial application and recertification.

Waiver of SNAP regulatory requirements for telephonic signatures:

Currently, federal regulations at 7 CFR 273.2(c)(viii)(B), and (C) provide as set forth below: • 7 CFR 273.2(c)(7)(viii)(B) requires that, to constitute a valid telephonic signature for SNAP, the district’s telephonic signature system must make an audio recording of the household’s verbal assent and a summary of the information to which the household assents. An example of a telephonic signature is a recording of “Yes” or “No”, “I agree” or “I do not agree”, or otherwise clearly indicating agreement or disagreement during an interview over the telephone. • 7 CFR 273.2(c)(7)(viii)(C) requires that a telephonic signature system must provide for linkage from the audio file of the recorded verbal assent to the SNAP application so that the district has ready access to the household’s entire case file. The Continuing Appropriations Act of 2021 and Other Extensions Act extended the waivers to the requirements of 7 CFR
273.2(c)(viii)(B) and (C). Until close of business June 30, 2021 districts will be permitted to accept TA, SNAP, or MA on a TA case applications and signatures over the telephone.

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

Monthly Caseload Statistics – January 2021


III. Reports, News and Notable Items
Food Research & Action Center (FRAC)

FOOD RESEARCH & ACTION CENTER APPLAUDS USDA FOR INCREASING EMERGENCY SNAP BENEFITS, PROVIDING MILLIONS WITH ADDITIONAL RELIEF DURING COVID-19
https://frac.org/news/fracapplaudsusdafor1bsnapemergencyincrease

Statement attributable to Luis Guardia, President, Food Research & Action Center (FRAC)

WASHINGTON, April 2, 2021 — The Food Research & Action Center (FRAC) is pleased that the Biden administration has heeded our recommendation to expand Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Emergency Allotments during COVID-19. We applaud the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) for taking action to improve food relief by providing $1 billion per month in additional food assistance to SNAP participants, making the program more equitable for low-income households in need during the pandemic.

FRAC is committed to continuing our work with USDA, state lawmakers, and advocates on implementing this critical investment so that families can begin receiving increased benefits expeditiously to help limit the depth and duration of food hardship and economic disruption due to COVID-19.

This news comes on the heels of additional benefits coming soon to Pennsylvania SNAP households. Attorneys secured an important victory when the Biden administration abandoned the Trump administration’s opposition to Families First SNAP Emergency Assistance going to the lowest income households already at the maximum benefit levels.

Hunger in this country has spiked dramatically as a result of the public health and economic fallout of COVID-19 and things would be far worse if not for SNAP.

Expansion and investment of this critical program will improve the nutrition, health, and well-being of households while getting our economy moving.

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP)

Reversing Trump Policy, Biden Administration Includes Lowest-Income Households in Emergency SNAP Benefits

https://www.cbpp.org/blog/reversing-trump-policy-biden-administration-includes-lowest-income-households-in-emergency
The Agriculture Department (USDA) has announced a new policy that will provide $1 billion a month in additional SNAP benefits to 25 million of the lowest-income SNAP participants, who have been partly or entirely left out of these emergency benefits over the past year due to a Trump Administration policy. Beginning this month, all SNAP households will receive at least $95 a month in emergency allotments. (It may take a few weeks for states to implement the change.) About 40 percent of the households affected by the change include children, 20 percent have elderly members, and 15 percent include someone who has a disability, according to USDA.

Together with the 15 percent across-the-board benefit increase enacted in December and extended by the American Rescue Plan, the new policy will help many of the lowest-income households afford food at a time of severe food hardship.

By definition, the households left out were those with the lowest incomes. Households receive the maximum benefit because they have no disposable income available to purchase food under the SNAP benefit calculation rules. (SNAP households are expected to spend 30 percent of their net income on food; SNAP makes up the difference between the household’s contribution and the maximum benefit). Many other low-income households got only small emergency allotments because their regular benefits were already close to the maximum due to their low disposable income.

To be sure, the emergency allotments have provided economic stimulus and alleviated hardship for the households receiving them. But the Trump Administration’s upside-down approach of largely or entirely excluding households with the lowest incomes was inconsistent with SNAP’s purpose and weakened this measure’s effectiveness.

Community Legal Services of Philadelphia and the law firm of Morgan Lewis sued USDA last year on behalf of low-income Pennsylvanians left out of emergency allotments. The court ruled in their favor last September, but the Trump Administration appealed the ruling and threatened to require Pennsylvania to repay the federal government if the case were reversed in the appeals process. In January, President Biden issued an executive order directing USDA to consider issuing new guidance to provide emergency allotments to the lowest-income households. Last week, USDA ended its appeal in the Pennsylvania case and agreed to issue updated guidance for all states. USDA’s state-by-state estimates of the benefits under the new policy are available here.
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, Sharon Russell and Jacqueline Jackson with a copy to Yama Phillips. **Please remove Courtney Herbert.** As always Ms. Torres can be notified if mediations exceed the protocol.

Arlene Henry: henrya@hra.nyc.gov
Amina Serrar: serrara@hra.nyc.gov
Sharon Russell: russellsh@hra.nyc.gov
Erica Smith: smither@hra.nyc.gov
Juanita Harris: harrisju@hra.nyc.gov
Jacqueline Jackson: jacksonjacq@hra.nyc.gov
Yama Phillips: phillipsy@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)**

**FOOD BANK’S FREE TAX FILING SERVICE IS BACK!**
MINIMAL CONTACT DROP-OFF LOCATIONS & 100% ONLINE SERVICES AVAILABLE FOR YOUR SAFETY AND CONVENIENCE
[https://www.foodbanknyc.org/taxhelp/](https://www.foodbanknyc.org/taxhelp/)

**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/](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.

**HRA Info Line: 718-557-1399**
**P-EBT**
NYS OTDA P-EBT HELPLINE **-1-833-452-0096**
NYS OTDA Email: otda.sm.eisp.PEBT@otda.ny.gov
Community Meals School Free Meals
https://www.schools.nyc.gov/school-life/food/community-meals

NYC Food Delivery Assistance
https://cv19engagementportal.cityofnewyork.us/#/display/5e7555117ad6750216160409