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## MEMORANDUM

TO: School Meals Determining Officials, Business Managers, Food Service Directors  
FROM: Rosie Krueger, State Director of Child Nutrition Programs  
SUBJECT: Processing Free and Reduced Meal Approvals & P-EBT Benefits  
DATE: April 14, 2020

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### Purpose

The Vermont Agency of Education (AOE) and Department for Children and Families (DCF) are working to implement Pandemic-EBT benefits, as allowed by the Families First Coronavirus Response Act. These benefits are available to all households of children qualifying for free and reduced price school meals, including all households of students attending Community Eligibility and Provision 2 schools. During the week of April 6, 2020, the AOE collected from all School Food Authorities (SFAs) information about students who qualified for free and reduced price school meals. This information has been transmitted to the DCF to implement the benefit.

This was a one-time data collection. However, households who qualify for free and reduced meals between now and the end of the school year are also eligible for these benefits. These include families who qualify for free and reduced meals by submitting an application, as well as families who qualify because their children appeared on the Direct Certification list. This memo outlines what procedures the determining officials for each SFA need to follow to ensure that these households receive P-EBT benefits.

### Households Submitting Applications

Households may continue to submit applications for free and reduced price school meals until the end of the school year. Many households may be newly eligible due to job loss or other economic difficulties resulting from COVID-19. Applications should be reviewed and processed as usual, following the requirements laid out in the [USDA Eligibility Manual](#). When a household qualifies for free and reduced price meals based on the new application, please add the [P-EBT text below](#) to the approval letter and send the letter to the household. A copy of the letter should also be sent to:

DCF - Economic Service Division  
Attn: Nicole Tousignant  
280 State Drive  
Waterbury, VT 05671-1500

DCF will use this letter to qualify the household for P-EBT benefits.

Updated 5/8/20: Please make sure the student's birth date is included on the letter sent to DCF.

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## Directly Certified Students

DCF will continue to provide AOE with a monthly direct certification list of students who are directly certified because they are receiving 3SquaresVT or ReachUp benefits. However, DCF cannot assume that these households will automatically also qualify for P-EBT benefits because these children only qualify for P-EBT benefits if they are enrolled in schools participating in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program. AOE will continue to provide the direct certification list to public schools through edFusion, and to independent schools participating in the school meals programs via direct requests. The new list will be available around the 20<sup>th</sup> of each month, and an email will be sent to food service managers, business managers, and data reporting managers when the new list is available.

School Food Authorities should continue to obtain the direct certification list and approve those households for free school meals. SFAs may also continue to directly certify students based on foster, homeless, migrant or Head Start participation, where applicable. When a household qualifies for free and reduced price meals based on direct certification, please add the P-EBT text below to the notification of pre-approval for school meals letter and send the letter to the household. A copy of the letter should also be sent to:

DCF - Economic Service Division  
Attn: Nicole Tousignant  
280 State Drive  
Waterbury, VT 05671-1500

DCF will use this letter to qualify the household for P-EBT benefits.

## New P-EBT Text to Add to Approval Letters

Please add the following text to the approval and notice of pre-approval letters for the remainder of the school year:

*For the remainder of the school year, free meals are available to all children 18 and under. [Insert details about how families can access meals in your area]. Eligibility for free and reduced price school meals also qualifies your household to receive Pandemic-EBT benefits. A copy of this approval letter is being sent to the Department for Children and Families, and they will issue these benefits to you directly. For any questions about P-EBT, contact the Department for Children and Families Benefit Service Center at 1-800-479-6151.*

## Use of Electronic Free and Reduced Applications

Some SFAs have implemented electronic free and reduced meal applications as a result of COVID-19. While we strongly encourage the use of electronic applications, the state agency must review and approve the use of these applications to ensure that they contain all of the required components. If you would like approval to use an electronic application, please email [mary.krueger@vermont.gov](mailto:mary.krueger@vermont.gov). You may review the Agency's [webpage for households on how to apply for free and reduced meals](#) for links to electronic applications in use around the state.