



For Immediate Release

June 12, 2020

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USVI Department of Human Services Announces Federal Approval of Territory-wide Pandemic EBT Plan

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS — On June 10, 2020, the Virgin Islands Department of Human Services (DHS) received approval from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) to implement a Pandemic EBT program (P-EBT) to provide food assistance to approximately 15,000 children and deliver over \$5.6 million additional dollars to the Territory.

“We are grateful to our partners at the USDA, FNS Northeast Regional Office (NERO) for working closely with us to offer the P-EBT benefits at this critical time,” said DHS Commissioner Kimberley Causey-Gomez. “With the full support of the Governor, our local team led by Assistant Commissioner Michal Rhymer-Browne and Division of Family Assistance Administrator Natalie Bailey worked tirelessly to craft our plan and partnered with the V.I. Department of Education and eligible local private schools to make P-EBT a reality for our territory.

“The COVID-19 Pandemic has caused high unemployment and an economic downturn in the U.S. Virgin Islands, but DHS is committed to keeping our Virgin Islands children safe, secure, and healthy during these challenging times,” Commissioner Causey-Gomez said. The Commissioner went on to state that DHS is working diligently with their EBT vendor to begin issuing P-EBT benefits in July 2020.

Who will receive P-EBT, how will they receive it, and how should it be used?

1. Each student enrolled in VI public schools and private schools who participates in the School Lunch program will receive a one-time benefit of \$379.00 in July.
2. The benefit amount, determined by the federal agencies, will be placed on an EBT card and issued to the adult identified by the school as the parent or guardian for that student.
3. A parent or guardian responsible for more than one eligible student in their household will receive the total amount for all eligible students on the same card. (Ex. Three students in a household multiplied by \$379 equals a total benefit amount of \$1,137.00.)



4. P-EBT benefits for eligible students whose families currently **receive SNAP** will be loaded to the household's existing EBT card.
5. P-EBT benefits for eligible students **not currently** receiving SNAP will be mailed to the parent or guardian's address provided to DHS by the school.
6. P-EBT users will be provided with instructions on how to set-up and utilize the card to access their benefits.
7. P-EBT benefits can be used to purchase food items at the stores of authorized SNAP retailers.
8. ***P-EBT benefits are not transferable!*** It is critical to shred the card if you do not want the benefits.

DHS will continue to announce information related to P-EBT via their website, local media and their Facebook page. Once P-EBT issuance begins, DHS will activate a 1-800 number for families to call regarding any issues with the P-EBT.

DHS encourages parents or guardians to contact the Department of Education or their private school to update their mailing address and contact information.

In addition to all public schools, the following private schools will be eligible for P-EBT assistance:

- Christian Academy-St. Croix
- Church of God School-St. Croix
- Free Will Baptist Elementary-St. Croix
- Free Will Baptist High-St. Croix
- Reading Rainbow School-St. Croix
- St. Joseph's Catholic School – St. Croix
- St. Mary's Catholic School – St. Croix
- St. Patrick's Catholic School -St. Croix
- St. John Christian School – St. John
- All Saints Cathedral School -St. Thomas
- Bethel Baptist Day School -St. Thomas
- Calvary Christian Academy-St. Thomas
- Faith Alive Christian Academy-St. Thomas
- Moravian School -St. Thomas
- Nisky Moravian School -St. Thomas
- New Testament Academy-St. Thomas



- Saints Peter & Paul Catholic School -St. Thomas
- Tutu Church of God Holiness School -St. Thomas
- Wesleyan Academy -St. Thomas

For more information, please visit the Department of Human Services website, www.dhs.gov.vi or on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/usvidhs>) at US Virgin Islands Department of Human Services.

For more information on Covid19, the new strain of coronavirus, please visit the USVI Department of Health's website, www.doh.vi.gov/coronavirus or text COVID19USVI to 888777.
#COVID19USVI

The Department of Human Services (VIDHS) exists to provide social services to members in our community with diverse needs. In times of national uncertainty and hardship we act as a safety-net and exist to inspire hope and empower change through non-judgmental, quality delivery of needed services and resources. Please visit the Department of Human Services website, www.dhs.gov.vi for more information.

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