



Press Contact:

Ryan Nugent
Director of Communications
Ryan.nugent@dhs.vi.gov
Phone: (340) 718-2980

PRESS RELEASE

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DHS ANNOUNCES PANDEMIC ELECTRONIC BENEFIT TRANSFER (P-EBT) FOR CHILDREN IN SCHOOLS DURING SCHOOL YEAR 2021-2022

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS – The VI Department of Human Services (DHS) today announced that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) has approved the Virgin Islands School Year 2021-2022 Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) Territorial Plan for School Children. As a result of the FNS approval, DHS will begin issuing P-EBT benefits to eligible school children on Monday, August 22, 2022.

What is P-EBT?

P-EBT, an abbreviation for Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer, is a benefit that basically provides food assistance via an Electronic Benefit Card that can be used in participating grocery stores and convenience stores for food items. Unlike regular SNAP, which is renewable based on eligibility, P-EBT is a one-time benefit issuance for a particular School Year.

P-EBT was funded by the Family First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) as amended by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). Benefits are available for all Virgin Islands SNAP and non-SNAP households with children who were enrolled in locally registered public and private schools, grades (K – 12) who have temporarily lost access to free meals due to pandemic-related public and private school closures or due to Covid related absences. Only children who were enrolled in schools which participate in the National School Lunch Program will be eligible for P-EBT.

Commissioner Kimberley Causey-Gomez stated, “I am very pleased that DHS will have another opportunity to issue a new round of P-EBT to assist our children and families during this time where food prices have escalated. Since 2020, DHS has issued over \$29 million in P-EBT benefits to over 17,000 children in the Virgin Islands. I commend the diligent staff of the Division of Family Assistance who have once again gained approval of our V.I. P-EBT Plan from FNS.”

Who is eligible for School Year 2021-2022 P-EBT?

School-Age Children

- a. All students (K through Grade 12) who were enrolled in USVI public and private schools for the school year 2020- 2021 and participated in the National School Lunch Program.
- b. Students who attended school in the following learning mode: Full Virtual or Hybrid- Mix of Virtual and In-Person.

- c. There is no application process. The Virgin Islands Department of Education and eligible private or parochial schools provided DHS the names of students enrolled for the 2021-2022 school year.

How will the School Year 2021-2022 P-EBT be issued and how much will you receive?

1. For eligible children who currently receive Regular SNAP, benefits will be loaded on the household's existing EBT card.
2. For eligible children who **do not** receive SNAP but were issued a card for P-EBT in the past rounds, their P-EBT benefits will be automatically loaded to those cards.
3. If you lost or damaged your P-EBT Card, contact the P-EBT hotline at (340) 772-7120, email pebt@dhs.vi.gov or come to the DFA Issuance Offices located at Knud Hansen Complex (St. Thomas) or DHS Mars Hill to pick up a card. Picture IDs are required.
4. **For new, eligible Non-SNAP Children:** New P-EBT Cards will be mailed to the addresses provided by the parents or guardians to
 - a. The card will be issued in the student's name. Households with more than one eligible student will receive multiple cards.
 - b. Instructions will be provided on how to set-up and utilize the card to access their benefits.
5. DHS will issue monthly P-EBT benefits for SNAP and Non-SNAP school children beginning *August 22, 2022. The schedule is to issue 2 months of P-EBT benefits per day.*

<i>Process Day</i>	<i>Description</i>
<i>August 22, 2022</i>	<i>Issue August and September 2021 benefits</i>
<i>August 23, 2022</i>	<i>Issue October and November 2021 benefits</i>
<i>August 24, 2022</i>	<i>Issue December 2021 and January 2022 benefits</i>
<i>August 25, 2022</i>	<i>Issue February 2022 and March 2022 benefits</i>
<i>August 26, 2022</i>	<i>Issue April 2022 and May 2022 benefits</i>

6. The Virgin Islands has a Standard P-EBT Benefit of \$8.28 per day. For a Full Virtual Month Learning Mode, Children will be issued 17 days x \$8.28 or \$140.76 per month. For a Hybrid (Virtual and In-Person) Learning Mode, Children will receive \$8.28 per Virtual day in each month. **Note: DHS received the specific information from each private/parochial school and the V.I. Department of Education to determine the benefits each child will receive for School Year 2021-2022 P-EBT.**
7. **Please note that the amounts being issued to children for school year (2021-2022) may be less than the previous school year (2020-2021) because some children attended school in person for a longer period.**

8. Friendly Reminder

- **P-EBT benefits can only be used to purchase food items at the stores of authorized SNAP retailers.**
- **P-EBT benefits are not transferrable! You must destroy the card if you do not want the benefits.**

For more information about P-EBT, visit the DHS website at www.dhs.gov.vi or families may call the P-EBT Customer Service Number (340)772-7120 or email pebt@dhs.vi.gov with the subject P-EBT.

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.

For more information on COVID-19, please visit our website, covid19usvi.com, or text COVID19USVI to 888777. To report a suspected COVID-19 case, call (340) 712-6299 or (340) 776-1519.

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

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The Bryan-Roach Administration is investing in the Territory's people, infrastructure, and future through transparency, stabilizing the economy, restoring trust in the government, and ensuring that recovery projects are completed as quickly as possible. Visit transparency.vi.gov.

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