

218-RICR-20-00-10

TITLE 218 - RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

CHAPTER 20 - INDIVIDUAL AND FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAMS

SUBCHAPTER 00 - N/A

PART 10 - SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM RULES AND REGULATIONS DUE TO COVID-19

10.1 Authority

10.1.1 COVID-19 Virus and the National State of Emergency

- A. Prior to the implementation of any new procedure under this regulation, the Director of the Department of Human Services (DHS) shall seek federal waivers or approval, when required, from the Federal agencies that provide funding and oversight for the programs the DHS administers. The Director shall also consider any guidance by these Federal agencies, when available, when implementing new procedures.
- B. Upon withdrawal of the R.I. State of Emergency, as it relates to COVID-19, these new procedures shall lapse after three business days from the withdrawal of the State of Emergency for Rhode Island, unless otherwise stated.

10.2 Telephonic Signature for Application and Recertification

- A. Due to decreased staff and office closures affected by the COVID-19 crisis, the DHS shall temporarily suspend all face to face interviews and require households to complete a telephonic interview. Telephonic signatures will be accepted during the telephonic interview for all applications and recertifications without the provision that a copy of the application be sent to the household.
 - 1. In lieu of providing a completed application to the household required for telephonic signatures, the worker will read and summarize the application information, including the applicant's rights and responsibilities, to which the household provides a recorded verbal assent establishing the date of application.
 - 2. The DHS worker will document in the applicant's case file that the information was reviewed and agreed to.
 - 3. These procedures shall remain effective through May 31, 2020 the last day of the month following the month when the state of emergency is declared to have ended.

10.3 Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) Benefits

A. The Families First Coronavirus Response Act provides the Department with the authority to establish temporary emergency standards of eligibility and benefit allotments for SNAP and non-SNAP families with school-age children who have temporarily lost access to free or reduced-price school meals due to pandemic-related school closures.

B. The household benefit allotment has been determined by the USDA FNS and is the equivalent to the daily reimbursement for free school meals. In Rhode Island, the reimbursement rate is five dollars and seventy cents (\$5.70) per child per day of school closure in that month.

1. These new procedures shall continue until the end of the regularly scheduled school year.

C. Eligibility for P-EBT

1. Households affected by this public health emergency declaration are eligible for P-EBT when:

a. an eligible child, who if not for the closure of their school during the public health emergency due to concerns about a COVID-19 outbreak, would receive free or reduced-price school meals under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act, as amended; and

b. the child's school or district or has been closed for at least five (5) consecutive days during a public health emergency declaration and due to concerns about a COVID-19 outbreak.

D. Verification of Eligibility:

1. Households containing children eligible for free or reduced-price school meals shall be identified utilizing Rhode Island's direct certification match conducted at the state level using data from the Rhode Island Department of Education's (RIDE) Student Database system and DHS's SNAP database.

E. Issuance of P-EBT

1. The DHS shall use data match information to issue supplemental benefits (P-EBT) on an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card for SNAP recipients and a P-EBT card for non-SNAP recipients..

2. P-EBT benefits will automatically be added to the EBT card according to current processing methods, but in an allotment separate from the regular monthly issuance.

3. Any P-EBT benefits that remain unused on the EBT account for a period of one (1) year will be permanently removed from the account and returned to the FNS.

10.4 Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) Cards (See 218-RICR-20-00-1 §1.16)

10.4.1 Lost, Stolen or Damaged EBT Cards

- A. During the COVID-19 crisis, the Department will waive some requirements concerning the replacement of lost, stolen or damaged EBT cards.
- B. Cardholders who have previously requested five (5) or more replacement EBT cards within a twelve (12) month period will be allowed to request a new replacement card. The required contact with the Department to clarify the reason(s) for excessive replacements, will be temporarily waived during the COVID-19 crisis.
 1. Replacement cards are counted according to those issued collectively within a case, not according to those issued per individual(s).

10.5 Overpayment and Recoupment of SNAP Benefits (See 218-RICR-20-00-1 § 1.17.1)

- A. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the National Emergency, the DHS will temporarily suspend the collection of active recoupment of SNAP overpayments and will delay the collection action on new recoupments. This will allow SNAP recipients to temporarily receive their full benefit amount. The suspension will be in place until May 31, 2020 and may be extended based upon the needs of Rhode Island and the approval of FNS.-
 1. Households will still be liable for their outstanding debts;
 2. Households will not be required to repay during this temporary period and will not be considered delinquent for lack of payment by the due date established via the repayment agreement; and
 3. Households with newly identified overpayments will also be liable, but their collection activity and delinquency determinations will not resume until the end of the waiver period.

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