



# **NEWS RELEASE**

## **STATE EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **Michigan is First State to Provide Food to Families Affected by School Closings Caused by COVID-19**

*Families with children who received free, reduced-cost lunches at  
school qualify for new program*

**LANSING, MICH.** Michigan has become the first state in the country to gain federal approval of a program that will provide nutritious food to children who were affected by school closings due to COVID-19.

The Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer Program (P-EBT) provides temporary funding to address emergency food needs and avert financial hardship for families affected by the pandemic.

The food assistance benefits will go to Michigan families with students ages 5-18 who are enrolled in the Michigan Department of Education program for students eligible for free or reduced-price school meals and will reach approximately 895,000 students. This includes families currently receiving Food Assistance Program benefits as well as those not currently enrolled in the program.

These additional benefits will fortify and supplement the important efforts that local school districts will continue to put forth, providing nutritious school meals to children at over 2,000 stationary locations and nearly 700 mobile sites throughout Michigan.

"I am proud that Michigan is the first state to receive federal approval for this program to put healthy food on the table for families that need them," said Gov. Gretchen Whitmer. "The spread of COVID-19 has had a profound impact on our state. My administration will continue to work around the clock to help Michiganders through this difficult time and slow the spread of this virus."

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) received authorization from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Services to provide the additional food assistance.

"Children should never go hungry. Yet because of COVID-19, it is a risk unlike at any time in generations," said MDHHS Director Robert Gordon. "I am glad that Michigan will be the first state to deliver SNAP benefits to families that previously received free or reduced-price lunches, whether or not

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they were SNAP-eligible. In a time of terrible need, it will be a small, good thing for nearly a million Michigan children.”

**Families not currently receiving food assistance benefits will receive an EBT card.**

Eligible families not currently receiving food assistance benefits will receive in the mail a pre-loaded Electronic Benefits Transaction (EBT) card – known as a Bridge Card – issued under the name of the oldest student in the household.

The amount of EBT benefits will be no less than the total amount of free or reduced-cost school lunch benefits that the family would have received during the time that school is closed. The benefits will include \$193.80 per eligible student to cover the months of March and April and an additional \$182.40 per student to cover May and June combined.

Benefits for all eligible school-aged children in the home will be loaded onto this one EBT card. Prior to receiving the card, families will get a letter from MDHHS describing how to use their EBT card, how to set up their PIN, and other pertinent information about food assistance benefits. EBT cards can be used much like a debit card for food items only purchased in-person at SNAP retailers

Families who are not already receiving food assistance benefits should start receiving MDHHS notices in the mail late next week, with the EBT cards arriving by the first week of May.

**Families currently receiving food assistance benefits will receive additional benefits on their EBT Bridge Cards.**

Eligible families currently receiving food assistance benefits will be issued a supplement to their existing benefits. Supplemental benefits can be used as families would typically use their EBT card. Families who already receive food assistance benefits should begin receiving their additional benefits next week – with the payments being staggered over a 10-day period.

Families can use their pre-loaded EBT cards at any retailer that accepts Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) EBT benefits. You can find a list of SNAP retailers on the [SNAP Retailers website](#).

Information around coronavirus outbreak is changing rapidly. The latest information is available at [Michigan.gov/Coronavirus](http://Michigan.gov/Coronavirus) and [CDC.gov/Coronavirus](http://CDC.gov/Coronavirus).

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