

Pandemic Food Benefits: Only 2 States Approved to Date

About a month ago, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act created a pandemic electronic benefit transfer (P-EBT) program to give low-income families access to nutritious food while schools are closed. That law was enacted on March 18th and required states to submit, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to approve, plans to operate the new P-EBT program. USDA guidance to states followed on March 20th, specifying the process for submitting plans and obtaining agency approval. Now, weeks later, only nine states have submitted plans and only two, Rhode Island and Michigan, have been approved to date. Given that American households are reporting increased furloughs, layoffs, and unemployment applications, P-EBT could provide a critical lifeline for families when school meals are unavailable.

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