NEWS RELEASE

Contact: Jodi McGinnis Porter
jodi.mcginnis-porter@state.nm.us

March 11, 2022

New Mexico to deliver over $1 million in food assistance
Benefits allocated for 14,250 school students

SANTA FE – Families of about 14,250 New Mexico students will receive benefits on March 14, to reimburse them for free and reduced-price school meals missed due to COVID-related absences.

Approximately, $1,083,694 in Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) will be issued to cover meals that K-12 students missed last year in August and September, after schools returned to in-person learning.

The federal government adjusted the guidelines for receiving P-EBT benefits when schools returned to in-person learning in April, resulting in fewer benefits. Previously, allocations were based solely on eligibility for free and reduced lunches, but the return to in-person learning now requires the additional consideration of individual student attendance records to determine that an absence was related to COVID-19.

Some districts and schools weren't collecting cause-of-absence data last spring, but the Public Education Department updated its data collection system for the current school year to assure every eligible student receives P-EBT for qualified absences.

To offset any potential inconsistencies in reporting, New Mexico's Human Services and Public Education Departments continue to work closely to identify eligible students, manage and distribute the benefits.

Under the new guidelines, a student is eligible for school aged P-EBT if they were eligible for free or reduced-price meals through the National School Lunch Program **and** missed school for five (5) consecutive days or more due to COVID. Each school and school district is responsible for keeping track of student absences, and every student's COVID-related absence must have been reported by the school to the Public Education Department, in order for the child to be eligible for P-EBT. This includes:

- Missing school if the student tested positive for COVID and/or was in close contact with a student who tested positive and quarantined.
- If the student's district/school was shut down due to positive COVID cases.

For each day a child does not attend school in person due to COVID, the daily rate is $7.10, an increase from $6.82, which was issued for the 2020-2021 school year. Beginning, March 18, 2022, parents and guardians will be able to check whether their child qualified for the latest P-EBT issuance at VERIFY PEBT Information: https://www.yes.state.nm.us/yesnm/pandemic/pebt?execution=e1s1

If your child has a P-EBT card, please keep the card and do not destroy it. If a new address or guardian was reported to the school, a new P-EBT card will be sent to the new address. For questions regarding your child's P-EBT card, you can contact NM PEBT Hotline directly at 1-833-415-0569.

For frequently asked questions, please visit: [Help Feed Your Children with Pandemic EBT | New Mexico Human Services Department (state.nm.us)](state.nm.us)

The Human Services Department provides services and benefits to 1,091,026 New Mexicans through several programs including: the Medicaid Program, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Child Support Program, and several Behavioral Health Services.

We talk, interpret and smile in all languages. We provide written information to our customers in both English and Spanish and interpretation services are available in 58 languages through our provider, CTS Language Link. For our hearing, and speech impaired customers, we utilize Relay New Mexico, a free 24-hour service that ensures equal communication access via the telephone to individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind or speech disabled.

###