



MEPD and TW Bulletin 21-10

Date: May 20, 2021

To: Eligibility Services Supervisors and Staff
Program Managers
Regional Directors
Regional Attorneys
Hearings Officers

From: Access and Eligibility Services Program Policy
State Office 2115

Subject: **1. Compact of Free Association (COFA) Citizens**
2. COVID-19: Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) for School Year 2020-2021

The information in this bulletin will be included in a future handbook revision. Until the handbook is updated, staff must use the information in this bulletin. If you have any questions regarding the policy information in this bulletin, follow regional procedures.

Active bulletins are posted on the following websites:

- [Medicaid for the Elderly and People with Disabilities Handbook \(MEPDH\)](https://hhs.texas.gov/laws-regulations/handbooks/mepd/policy-bulletins) at <https://hhs.texas.gov/laws-regulations/handbooks/mepd/policy-bulletins>;
- [Texas Works Handbook \(TWH\)](http://hhs.texas.gov/laws-regulations/handbooks/texas-works-handbook/texas-works-bulletins) at <http://hhs.texas.gov/laws-regulations/handbooks/texas-works-handbook/texas-works-bulletins>.

1. Compact of Free Association (COFA) Citizens

Background

The Compact of Free Association (COFA) are agreements between the United States and three independent states, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, (RMI) the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), and the Republic of Palau (PAL). Under these agreements, COFA citizens may enter, reside, and work in the U.S. without restriction.

The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 , signed into law on December 27, 2020, provides that non-citizens who lawfully reside in the U.S., under the provisions of the COFA agreements, are considered qualified non-citizens eligible for full Medicaid and Medicare Savings-Program (MSP) without waiting periods and time limits.

Current Policy

[Texas Works Medicaid and CHIP](#)

Children ages 18 and under who lawfully reside in the U.S., under the provisions of the COFA may qualify for Medicaid. ([TWH A-342](#), TANF and Medical Programs Alien Status Eligibility Charts - Chart D Medical Programs)

[MEPD](#)

A person residing in the U.S. under the provisions of the COFA is not eligible for Medicaid unless they have obtained a qualifying immigration status. If the person does not obtain a qualifying status, the person is eligible for Emergency Medicaid only. ([MEPDH D-5220](#), Compact of Free Association States)

New Policy

[All Medical Programs](#)

A person who lawfully resides in the U.S. under the provisions of a COFA agreement is considered a qualified non-citizen and exempt from the five-year waiting period. The person is immediately eligible for full Medicaid if they meet all other eligibility requirements.

Acceptable verification of immigration status for COFA citizens includes:

- I-94 or I-766 with the following Class of Admission (COA) Codes:
 - CFA/RMI – Citizen of Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) due to the Compact of Free Association
 - CFA/FSM – Citizen of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM)
 - CFA/PAL – Citizen of the Republic of Palau
- I-766 Employment Authorization Document (EAD) with the following Category Code:

- A-08 Citizen of the Marshall Islands, Micronesia or Palau admitted as a nonimmigrant
- An unexpired passport with annotations "CFA/RMI," "CFA/FSM" or "CFA/PAL."

Automation

Changes to the Texas Integrated Eligibility Redesign System (TIERS) supporting the new policy will be included in a future release. Staff will be notified when these changes are implemented.

Until then, staff must use **Contingency Processing Method, (CPM) # 960286 Qualified Non-citizens under Compacts of Free Association States**, when processing eligibility determinations for COFA citizens in TIERS.

Correspondence

Correspondence changes are not required.

Handbook

The MEPDH is currently scheduled to be updated in the December 2021 revision.

The TWH is currently scheduled to be updated in the January 2022 revision.

Training

Training is not required.

Effective Date

This policy is effective with the release of this bulletin.

2. COVID-19: Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) for School Year 2020-2021

Background

The Continuing Appropriations Act, 2021 and Other Extensions Act (HR 8337) provided the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) the authority to continue to approve and expand P-EBT benefits for children who lost access to free or reduced-price meals due to pandemic-related school closures through the school year 2020-2021 (SY 20-21). H.R. 8337 also expanded the P-EBT program to cover all children under age six in SNAP households residing in areas where schools or child care facilities are closed or on reduced hours.

In coordination with the Texas Department of Agriculture and the Texas Education Agency, HHSC received federal approval to implement the P-EBT program for SY 20-21 to provide eligible Texas families with P-EBT payments.

Covid-19 Policy Information

[SNAP](#)

P-EBT provides food benefits for families with children who temporarily lost access to free or reduced-price meals at school during the COVID-19 pandemic.

P-EBT for SY 20-21 is for families with children who:

- are eligible for free or reduced-price meals at school through the National School Lunch Program (August 2020 to June 2021); or
- are receiving SNAP as of October 2020 and have children who are under six years of age.

Benefit Amounts

The monthly P-EBT benefit amount for each child will vary based on the school they attend. The P-EBT benefit amount for each eligible child is calculated based on multiplying:

- a percentage provided by the school about virtual student attendance;
- the daily benefit amount of \$6.82; and
- the number of average school days in the month.

Each month between August 2020 through June 2021 will be calculated separately and issued as one lump sum.

Note: Children in the same household but attending different schools may be issued different P-EBT benefits for SY 20-21.

Issuance

P-EBT benefits for SY 20-21 will be issued in phases.

Automatic Issuance Group

The following households will be issued P-EBT benefits automatically and do not need to submit an application:

- SNAP households who received benefits for at least one month between August 2020 and April 2021 with eligible school-aged children; and
- SNAP households who received benefits for at least one month between October 2020 and April 2021 with child care aged children (children born on or after Aug. 1, 2014).

Note:

- Households do not need to apply or take any action.
- P-EBT benefits for school-aged children will be based on the information provided by the child's school.
- P-EBT benefits for child care aged children will be based on the highest P-EBT benefit amount of an elementary school in their county for the months they were active on SNAP.
- P-EBT benefits for all of SY 20-21 will be issued to the household's current EBT card between May 24 – 28, 2021.
- Staff do not need to take any action to process these benefits.
- Child care aged children certified after May will be issued benefits at a later time.

Application Group

The following households must submit an application to receive P-EBT benefits:

- Households with eligible school-aged children who are part of a family that received SNAP benefits for the **first time** in the month of May 2021 or June 2021.
 - P-EBT benefits for all of SY 20-21 will be issued to the household's current EBT card.
- Households with eligible school-aged children who were **not** part of a family that received SNAP benefits for at least one month between August 2020 and May 2021.
 - These households will receive information from their school districts on how to apply online for P-EBT benefits with a link to the application on or before June 1, 2021.

- The online P-EBT application will be available between June 2, 2021 and Aug. 13, 2021.
- After the household submits an application, the student's eligibility will be automatically verified using the free and reduced-price meal list provided by the child's school.
- A P-EBT card will be mailed to these households. P-EBT benefits for all of SY 20-21 will be issued to the household on this EBT card. **Note:** Non-SNAP households that received P-EBT for SY 19-20 will not be able to reuse their previously issued EBT card.

Note: P-EBT benefits can be used in the same manner as SNAP benefits following policy in [TWH A-1554](#), Use of SNAP Benefits, and online through authorized FNS retailers, following policy in [MEPD and TW Bulletin 20-12](#), SNAP Online Purchasing Pilot, released on May 12, 2020. However, P-EBT benefits are not considered as SNAP benefits.

Staff Procedures

No staff action is required at this time. Designated HHSC staff will be assigned to process exceptions that occur during the application process. Further instructions will be provided to those staff members.

Additionally, if staff receive questions about P-EBT, FAQs have been posted to the following HHSC webpage: hhs.texas.gov/pebt. Families with additional questions about PEBT should be referred to the hhs.texas.gov/pebt webpage for information or to the PEBT Call Center at 833-442-1255 which is opened Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 6 pm (Central Time).

Automation

P-EBT benefits will be issued to the *Automatic Issuance Group* on their current EBT card between May 24 - 28, 2021. P-EBT benefits for the *Application Groups* will be processed based on date received starting June 2, 2021. New P-EBT cards will be issued to non-SNAP households.

Correspondence

Correspondence changes are not required.

Handbook

Handbook updates are not required.

Training

Training is not required.

Effective Date

This policy is effective with the release of this bulletin.