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USDA approves Wisconsin plan to provide summer food benefits for kids and families.

MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers announced today that the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service has approved Wisconsin's plan for the Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) program to help families feed kids over the summer months. Wisconsin is the first in the nation to receive this federal approval. Created by the U.S. Congress, the Summer EBT program is based on similar efforts used during the coronavirus pandemic to address food insecurity for kids.

"Making sure our kids have enough to eat is critical for supporting their success in and out of the classroom. Unfortunately, when school is out, many families lose access to one of their most reliable sources of healthy meals," said Gov. Evers. "This program will be a tremendous asset in helping ensure families can afford quality, nutritious food to fill these gaps, and I am

proud of the hard work of our agencies and our administration's leadership in getting these dollars out the door and into the hands of families who need them as soon as possible."

According to the USDA, the Summer EBT program provides grocery-buying benefits to low-income families with children of school age during the summer months when schools are closed. Based on the USDA's Summer EBT for Children demonstration projects and Pandemic EBT (P-EBT) program, Summer EBT benefits will come in the form of pre-loaded cards that families can utilize to buy groceries. The Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS), the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI), and the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF) are working together to get these benefits to families across the state.

Most families eligible for these benefits will receive them automatically, thanks to state agencies collaborating to identify kids who qualify based on their participation in certain other benefit programs, like FoodShare or the free or reduced-price meal program at their school. For each eligible child identified, the state will provide a one-time summer benefit of $120. This is the standard benefit amount set by the USDA for the 2024 program year. These benefits will be provided to families in late June.

EBT stands for electronic benefit transfer, a reference to how families get the assistance: on a pre-loaded debit card they can use to purchase food at grocery and convenience stores, some farmers markets, and anywhere that accepts FoodShare benefits. Families who already have a QUEST card or a P-EBT card from the pandemic will get the benefits on their existing card. Families who don't already have a card will be sent one in the mail with their benefits pre-loaded. All families will also get a letter in the mail informing them about the benefits they received.

More information about the program will be shared with schools and families in the coming weeks as DHS, DCF, and DPI coordinate to implement the newly approved plan.

To stay up to date on the program, visit the Summer EBT: Food Benefits for Eligible Children During the Summer Months page on the DHS website.