

# Oregon approved to issue \$550+ million in food assistance to 572,000 children

SALEM—The State of Oregon received approval from the federal government to issue Pandemic EBT (P-EBT) for the 2020-21 school year. This will provide more than \$550 million in food assistance for approximately

572,000 children in Oregon.

P-EBT provides food benefits to families whose children do not have access to the free or reduced-price meals usually provided at school. Oregon was approved to provide retroactive food benefits to eligible students for the 2020-21 school year. The P-EBT benefits are expected to be issued beginning in July.

“P-EBT benefits will significantly support the food security, health and well-being of children and families across Oregon,” said Dan Haun, director of the Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS), Self-Sufficiency Programs. “Still, many Oregonians are struggling meeting their basic needs.

We encourage them to contact our partners at 211 and the Oregon Food Bank.”

“All children deserve access to adequate nutrition to fuel their learning. The Oregon Department of Education (ODE) is happy to be partnering with ODHS and local school districts to meet the nutrition needs of Oregon’s children and families who were most impacted by the pandemic,” said Cindy Hunt, Chief of Staff at ODE.

ODHS and ODE share responsibility in ensuring that children receive P-EBT food benefits. ODE collaborates with school districts to determine eligibility and ODHS issues the benefits on Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards.

Households do not need to apply for P-EBT. Benefits will be automatically issued for students who normally have access to free and reduced-price meals and are enrolled at a school in Oregon.

If your children are not currently enrolled in free or reduced meals you can apply through your school or online at [www.oregon.gov/ode/](http://www.oregon.gov/ode/). Qualifying for free or reduced meals for the 2020-21 school year before June 30, 2021 will ensure you receive P-EBT when the benefits are issued. P-EBT benefit eligibility and amounts will vary. Visit [pebt.oregon.gov](http://pebt.oregon.gov) for more information.

Each student will receive their own P-EBT card.

Students who are already receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits will receive the P-EBT benefits on the EBT card associated with their household’s SNAP case.

P-EBT does not replace any child nutrition program already offered, and families are encouraged to continue participating in grab-n-go-meals or emergency food programs at their local schools and community locations.

P-EBT is separate from SNAP benefits including emergency allotments that are also being issued due to the impact of COVID-19. P-EBT benefits are not considered in a public charge test.

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“When I became editor, my first — and best — decision was to promote her to features editor, where she has done an exceptional job the past five years,” said Hickson.

Besides making her mark at the paper, Meyer has since affirmed her place in the community, joining the Kiwanis Club of Florence in 2017, having been named a Paul Harris Fellow of the Rotary Club of Florence and being honored by U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotilla 52 with a certificate of appreciation for her story about the City of Florence’s quest to become a Coast Guard City.

“If you love what you do and your community, you get involved more and more,” she said.

In her transition to editor, Meyer looks forward to continuing to nurture the deep relationships in the community she’s already cultivated.

Nonprofits like RAIN (Regional Accelerator and Innovation Network) and local groups like CROW (Children’s Repertory of Oregon Workshops) and the Last Resort Players have been meaningful elements of her reporting since the beginning, she said. CROW was her very first story as a full-time reporter.

Though proud of her accomplishments so far, Meyer pointed out that Hickson’s editorial and managerial guidance has been key to uncovering her own potential as a journalist.

“Ned is a friend and a mentor — like the fun uncle figure in my life,” she said. “Just a strong positive role model.”

Meyer highlighted Hickson’s approach of mediating conflict amid the frequently occurring tempests of news coverage as a major point of admiration.

“If you measure your tone and your phrasing, people are more likely to at least read what you write, even if they do disagree,” she said. “And it’s more open, then, for somebody else to respond. That’s one of Ned’s strengths — how he has encouraged that community communication.”

Meyer hopes to continue Hickson’s approach in this regard.

“I’m also a mediator, but please never yell at me,” she said with. “I want people to get along, but I also want things to be aired out and expressed and I think it’s important that people have a chance to do that. So, I really plan to follow in his footsteps in a very strong way.”

Over the past several years, Meyer is also proud of the diversity of coverage the paper has committed itself to.

“I stand with our editorial series,” she said. “We’ve covered everything from gun laws, to LGBTQ issues to health care to the pandemic. ... We’ve built a lot of trust in the community, which also means we’ve covered some stuff that’s really hard.”

The coverage of a recent death in the community, she pointed out, was able to be told in a deep, yet delicate manner due to the paper’s relationship with the community.

“The people who were around it allowed me, as the reporter at the time, to meet with people who were part

of the situation,” she said. “And that might not have happened a year ago. ... And I don’t want to betray that trust — I want to keep building on that.”

While aiming to retain all the elements which have made the *Siuslaw News* successful, Meyer also sees her new position as a way to add fresh perspective.

“I very much acknowledge that I’m young,” she said. “It’s also important to me that diverse voices are included in a newspaper. Our community is diverse to a certain extent. We’re still in rural Oregon, but it’s important that the people who live here and who are a part of community feel like they’re represented in the newspaper.”

Part of her approach will be to build bridges, she said, as she presented her right forearm, where there is a tattooed silhouette of the Siuslaw River Bridge.

“As a newspaper, we want to represent our community and we want to help people know about our community,” she said. “And me personally, if I’m describing myself outside of my job, I describe myself as a storyteller and a community builder.”

Ultimately, Meyer hopes to see her role have an uplifting effect on the place she has grown to call home while keeping a firm foothold on community engagement.

“There are a lot of things that are going to continue in the way that people are familiar with,” she said. “I want to listen to what the community needs from us. And that’s going to continue for sure.”

Meyer pointed to more than 130 years of the *Siuslaw News* serving the area and sees herself as adding to another chapter in a long, historical legacy of interpreting cultural dynamics and shifting values.

“Our paper has been here the whole time writing about how it has all affected our community,” she said. “That’s going to continue, no matter who’s editor.”

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