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\$6.4 million in Summer P-EBT benefits for American Samoa's School-aged Children are to be distributed starting January 18, 2023

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Governor Lemanu Palepoi Sialega Mauga announced on Monday, January 09, 2023, that the Department of Human and Social Services (DHSS) will start issuing \$6.4 million in Summer Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer (Summer P-EBT) benefits starting **January 18, 2023**, to approximately 14,000 public and private school children. This is the second year that American Samoa is participating in the Summer P-EBT which is funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food and Nutrition Service (FNS). Although FNS approved American Samoa's 2022 Summer P-EBT State Plan on September 26, 2022, for all school children who were eligible for school meals during School Year 2021-2022 that ended on June 10, 2022, funding to implement the Summer P-EBT was not available to us until December 1, 2022. Moreover, the shipment of special coupon paper to print Summer P-EBT benefits arrived by airfreight on Saturday, December 24, 2022, and was delivered to the American Samoa Nutrition Assistance Program (ASNAP) office on Wednesday, December 28, 2022, after it was cleared by the Customs Office and released by the Office of Procurement.

In making the announcement, Governor Lemanu said, "At a time when our families need extra support in purchasing food due to the current high inflation rate, the rising cost of living, and significant increases in food costs, I am excited to announce that thousands of American Samoa families will once again benefit from this critically needed temporary food assistance program to keep our children nourished and healthy". He added, "I extend my sincerest gratitude and appreciation to USDA's FNS Administrator, Cindy Long, for approving our second round of Summer P-EBT to ensure that our families can continue to put food on their tables and have access to nutritious food."

The ASNAP is currently conducting mass issuance of ASNAP benefits or food stamps for January 2023 for their recipients who are low-income elderly, blind, and with disabilities. Once

mass issuance ends on Tuesday, January 17, 2023, the ASNAP will start issuing Summer P-EBT benefits in alphabetical order starting on Wednesday, January 18, 2023. With this second round of Summer P-EBT benefits, DHSS will issue a one-time benefit amount of \$455 per eligible child. This covers the standard 55 days of summer at \$8.28 per day. The ASNAP will advertise the Summer P-EBT issuance schedule in the next few days on various radio stations, KVZK-TV, and on the Facebook pages for the ASNAP; American Samoa WIC Program, American Samoa Child Care Program, and the American Samoa Children and Family Services Division. Families with school children who received their Regular School Year P-EBT benefits that DHSS distributed between August 15, 2022, and December 30, 2022, will automatically qualify for the additional \$455 per child under the Summer P-EBT. They do not need to reapply but are required to show their P-EBT ID cards to claim benefits from the ASNAP office.

In conclusion, Governor Lemanu commends USDA's Summer P-EBT Program for providing food benefits to eligible families so they can take care of their children.

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