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DHS requiring Summer EBT recipients to reset PINs in response to theft reports

(LITTLE ROCK, Ark.) — The Arkansas Department of Human Services (DHS) will require all Summer EBT (SEBT) recipients to reset the PIN numbers associated with their cards in response to reports of thefts of these benefits from out-of-state scammers.

Eligible families should reset their PINs through the EBT call line at 1-800-997-9999 or through the online portal linked at ar.gov/summerebt effective immediately. The cards will not work until this additional step has been completed in order to prevent additional fraudulent activity.

“Stealing benefits meant to feed children during the summer is a despicable and heinous crime, and the Arkansas Department of Human Services (DHS) is outraged that some families in our state have been victimized,” said DHS Secretary Janet Mann. “We know that resetting the PIN may present an inconvenience to families, but this is a necessary step to thwart ongoing fraud.”

Scammers prey on accounts that have common PINs, and in the past they have employed physical skimming devices and digital phishing scams through false emails, websites, and texts to get individuals to enter their information. Changing the PIN to a unique combination that only the family knows is an important step that prevents future fraud.

It is critical that families safeguard the new PIN, and only use the EBT call line or the online portal linked below and at ar.gov/summerebt to change or enter the PIN. DHS fully expects the scammers will respond with new, fraudulent texts, emails, websites, phone calls, or other schemes to steal the new PIN, and urges families to be vigilant against these attempts. **DHS will never text, email, or call and request the PIN, and any attempt to gain this information should be considered a scam and disregarded.**

Instructions for setting a new PIN

Call the phone number on the back of the card (1-800-997-9999) and enter the SEBT card number on the front of the Summer EBT card. Select Summer EBT option 1 in the menu, and when asked to enter your child's Social Security Number (SSN), enter 0000. Next, enter the date of birth as MM/DD/YY for the child named on the front of the card. Finally, set the new 4-digit PIN. After these steps are completed, the card is ready to use with the new PIN.

DHS has also placed anti-fraud protections on the call line to prevent scammers from using automated bots to reach it. This system may mistakenly prevent some legitimate phone numbers from accessing it. SEBT recipients are encouraged to call from the phone number listed on their application or on file with their child's school. If that number doesn't work, they can fill out a form at ar.gov/SNAPfraud to verify their number and be allowed access to the number.

Recipients can also create or access their SEBT account to change the PIN through the [Arkansas Electronic Benefit Transfer portal](https://ar.gov/EBT). Follow the instructions to create an account, and type 111-11-0000 when prompted for the Social Security Number. Families have to create a separate account with a different username and password for each child if they have more than one child. You can use the same email address to validate the account.

Additional information

It is unclear at this time precisely how these benefits are being taken or the full extent of the thefts, but DHS is working with the law enforcement arm of the United States Department of Agriculture to investigate the reports. At this time, DHS has identified multiple significant usage of Summer EBT cards in states including but not limited to New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania, and these are considered to likely be fraudulent.

DHS knows from previous reports of SNAP fraud that there are multiple potential avenues that criminals employ. Scammers prey on accounts that have common PINs, and in the past they have employed physical skimming devices and digital phishing scams through false emails, websites, and texts to get individuals to enter their information.

"We continue to urge beneficiaries to protect their account information, to change their PIN frequently, and to only enter information into the official Arkansas EBT portal and app," said Mary Franklin, Director of the DHS Division of County Operations. "While we have no indication that this is tied to a larger systemwide breach, we are also conducting an in-depth internal investigation and have reached out to our vendor that creates and issues the EBT cards and asked for assurance that there is no compromise in their process or system."

Summer EBT benefits are federally funded, and DHS is not authorized to replace stolen funds. SEBT beneficiaries can visit ar.gov/SNAPfraud for additional EBT resources including tips for protecting cards; links to the official Arkansas EBT portal and app; a form for reporting fraud; and a link to the Arkansas foodbank directory of assistance sites around the state. Additionally, DHS recommends that families who have been victimized fill out a police report to document the theft with law enforcement.

Going forward, DHS is implementing changes that will improve security around EBT cards that serve both SEBT and SNAP recipients. At the end of July, DHS will move to a new vendor to issue and administer these cards, and new security features will be added to cards in the near future. This will include chips similar to those that are found in credit cards that make it harder for scammers to steal the account number as well as digital tools to allow card-holders to lock their

account or prevent card usage in outside states. While these changes will not be available immediately, DHS is actively pursuing them and looks forward to having them in place.
