

Pandemic EBT (P-EBT): Emergency School Meals Program Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is P-EBT, or Pandemic EBT Emergency School Meals Program?

Because of COVID-19, children who are eligible for free or reduced-price meals at school will get extra food benefits. P-EBT is a new and temporary food benefit to help families buy groceries because schools were closed.

2. Who can get P-EBT?

Any family with a child who is eligible for free or reduced-price school meals – including children who go to a school where meals are free for *all* students.

Any child can get P-EBT, regardless of citizenship or immigration status. The only requirement is a child must be eligible for free or reduced-price school meals.

3. If my child is eligible, how much money will we get?

The amount depends on how many children in your home get free or reduced-price school meals. The maximum benefit is \$399 per child. You will get one P-EBT card for all your children (for example: if you have 3 children, you will get one card with \$1,197).

Families with children who became eligible for free and reduced-price meals **after** their school closed will get **less** than \$399 for each child. It depends on when your family applied for free or reduced-price meals, or for Basic Food. P-EBT Benefits (\$5.70 per day) are based on the number of school days that schools were closed:

March - \$68.40

April - \$125.40

May - \$119.70

June - \$85.50

4. Can P-EBT affect my family's immigration status?

No. Applying for or using P-EBT will **not** change a parent or child's immigration status. P-EBT is **not** a public charge. No one will ask about you or your child's immigration status or citizenship when you apply for P-EBT.

5. **How do my children get P-EBT?**

There are two ways to get P-EBT:

Families with Basic Food (food stamps): Between June 28th and July 7th, P-EBT benefits will be added to the EBT card you already use.

Families with children who receive free or reduced-price school meals:

You must complete a simple application before August 31st or the beginning of the new school year (whichever is later).

6. **How do I apply for P-EBT?**

There are two ways to apply:

Online: www.WashingtonConnection.org (on the application, choose 'Pandemic EBT - Emergency School Meals Program' box in the food assistance section) or

Call: 877-501-2233 (DSHS Customer Service Contact Center – language translation available)

To apply, for each child you need to know:

- Name of your child's school or school district
- Your child's first and last name as it appears on school enrollment records
- Child's date of birth

P-EBT benefits are approved if the information on your child's school meal application matches the child's information on the P-EBT application with DSHS.

You can choose where to mail your P-EBT card on your P-EBT application. If your child (children) is approved, your P-EBT card will arrive 3-5 days after you apply.

7. **When is the deadline to apply for P-EBT?**

You must apply by August 31st, 2020, or before the start of the 2020-21 school year (whichever is later).

8. **How will I know if I am approved?**

You will get a P-EBT card in the mail with information about how to use your P-EBT card. (See #6 for more information on how to apply). . The approval process may take longer if you became eligible for free and reduced-price school meals after schools closed.

If your P-EBT application is denied, you will receive a letter in the mail explaining what happened and how to appeal if you think the denial is incorrect.

9. What should I do when I get our P-EBT card in the mail?

Follow the instructions that came with your P-EBT card to activate your card and create a private PIN number. When your P-EBT card is activated, it can be used to buy food in most grocery stores, farmer's markets, and online through Amazon and Walmart for up to one year from the time you received your P-EBT card.

10. What if our P-EBT card arrives with the wrong amount of money?

If you think the amount is not correct call the Customer Service Contact Center at 877-501-2233.

11. Can kids still get meals from schools or other organizations if we get P-EBT?

Yes. Children can get meals from schools **and** get P-EBT. They are separate programs. P-EBT benefits do not replace meals from school or other organizations.

12. How often will I get P-EBT benefits?

One time. P-EBT is not a monthly benefit, like food stamps or WIC.

13. What if I applied online and didn't get my P-EBT card or I got letter denying my application?

Call the Department of Social and Health Services' (DSHS) Customer Service Contact Center at 877-501-2233. You can reach them between 8 am and 5 pm, Monday through Friday (except observed holidays).

14. What can I buy with P-EBT benefits?

Your P-EBT benefits can buy food in most grocery stores and farmer's markets, or to purchase groceries online at Amazon and Walmart.

Use your EBT card like a debit card:

- Select "EBT"
- Swipe your P-EBT card
- Enter your private PIN number

15. Do I have to use all my P-EBT benefits when I get my card?

No. You will have your P-EBT benefits for one year after you get your card.

16. Who do I call if I have questions?

Call 877-501-2233 (DSHS' [Customer Service](#) Contact Center)
8am - 5pm, Monday through Friday (except observed holidays)

If you have questions about your immigration status and this food benefit, you may talk with an immigration attorney. These organizations know about P-EBT and immigration law; they can answer your questions.

17. What can low income families who don't get Basic Food or free or reduced-price School meals, do to get P-EBT benefits?

Families with school-age children who have recently lost jobs or income may complete an application for free or reduced-price school meals through your school district **before** June 30th and **before** you apply for P-EBT. You may also apply for Basic Food before June 30th online (www.WashingtonConnection.org) or by phone (877-501-2233 – DSHS Customer Contact Center). If you are approved for Basic Food, you will also receive P-EBT benefits for your school-age children.

If you are approved for Basic Food or Free and Reduced-price school meals after schools closed and before June 30, 2020, your P-EBT benefits will be pro-rated.

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