

# P-EBT FOR SCHOOL YEAR 2020-2021 FAQ

Updated 09/22/2020

Updates/Changes are highlighted in the document.

## 1. What is P-EBT?

**i** *Pandemic Electronic Benefits (P-EBT) provides a benefit on an EBT card to North Carolina families whose children have access to free and reduced lunch at school. The P-EBT card functions like a standard EBT card, and the same guidelines apply. The P-EBT program is a collaboration between the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services and the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction and is intended to help families during school closures due to COVID-19.*

## 2. Does this replace the current COVID-19 supplements, other FNS benefits, or meals families may be receiving at this time?

**i** *No. P-EBT benefits are in addition to other services and benefits families may be participating in currently. We encourage families to continue utilizing local school and community meal sites for free, nutritious meals for children. Families can text FOODNC to 877-877 to find local meal sites. The service is also available in Spanish by texting COMIDA to 877-877.*

## 3. Who is eligible for August and September 2020 P-EBT benefits?

**i** *This brief extension of P-EBT benefits provides help buying food to the families of more than 600,000 children whose access to free and reduced-price school meals has been disrupted by COVID-19. DHHS provided P-EBT benefits to as many children as possible under USDA's new guidance and deadline and we wish we could have helped every family*

*Students are eligible if they currently attend school in a district or a charter school that participates in the National School Lunch Program with at least 5 consecutive days of virtual learning between August 17, 2020 and September 30, 2020 **AND***

- Received P-EBT benefits last school year (2019-2020); **or***
- Have been Directly Certified for free or reduced lunch for the current school year (2020-2021) via receiving public assistance prior to the P-EBT benefit administration date; **or***
- Attends a Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) School for the current school year (2020-2021).*

*This is different than the eligibility criteria for P-EBT benefits in the spring, which was available to all children who normally access free or reduced lunch, regardless of school circumstance. Eligibility criteria are based on guidance from the US Department of Agriculture.*

#### 4. Who is NOT eligible for August and September 2020 P-EBT benefits?

**i** USDA has provided update eligibility criteria that must be followed to determine which students would be eligible. Due to these updates, the following students are excluded from receiving P-EBT benefits at this time:

- Any student enrolled in a school district or charter school that does not participate in the National School Lunch Program.
- Any student enrolled in a school district or charter school that does not meet the criteria for 5 or more consecutive days of virtual learning for all students from August 17, 2020 through September 30, 2020.
- Any student who received P-EBT last school year (2019-2020) but is no longer enrolled at a school that participates in the National School Lunch Program. (Examples: students who graduated, dropped out of school, transferred to a school not participating, etc.)
- Any student who did not receive free or reduced lunch or P-EBT benefits last school year (2019-2020), and was not Directly Certified for free or reduced lunch for the current school year and does not attend a Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) school. (Example: Student applied for free and reduced lunch this school year (2020-2021) but the student did not receive P-EBT last year and is not directly certified for free and reduced lunch via public assistance.)

While DHHS wishes we could serve even more children, we are required to work within the rules and time frames issued by the USDA.

#### 5. My family did not receive P-EBT benefits for the 2019-2020 school year. Can I receive them now?

**i** The brief extension of P-EBT benefits, provides help buying food to families of more than 600,000 children whose access to free and reduced-priced school meals has been disrupted by COVID-19.

Unfortunately, due to the benefit timeframe allowable by the USDA, benefits are limited to identified eligibility criteria provided by the USDA above. If a student meets criteria via being directly certified or is newly enrolled in a Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) school and is enrolled in a district or charter school participating in the National School Lunch Program and has a qualifying event for 5 or more consecutive days, that student will receive P-EBT benefits for August and September.

DHHS provided P-EBT benefits to as many children as possible under USDA's new guidance and deadline, while wishing we could help every family.

#### 6. My child is a new kindergartener. Will they receive this benefit?

**i** Currently, P-EBT benefits are only available for those students who were issued PEBT benefits for any part of the 2019-2020 school year and remain enrolled at a school that participates in the National Free and Reduced Lunch Program, or those students who have

*been determined newly eligible for free or reduced meal programs through Direct Certification methods via public assistance by their school district or charter school for the 2020-2021 school year through at the time of PEBT benefit administration. Additionally, the school the student is enrolled in currently must have utilized virtual learning for all students for at least five consecutive days between August 17, 2020 and September 30, 2020. Because of this eligibility criteria, new kindergartners will not be included in this current P-EBT benefit period unless they meet the criteria established above for students enrolled via Direct Certification methods via school districts or those enrolled in Community Eligibility Provision Schools.*

*DHHS wishes that we could have served even more children, however we are required to work within the rules and time frames issued by USDA.*

## **7. My family received P-EBT benefits last school year, will I receive them again this fall?**

**i** *Continued eligibility for P-EBT benefits depends on the following criteria:*

- *The student must continue to be enrolled in a school participating in the National Free and Reduced Lunch Program, and*
- *The student is enrolled in a school district or charter school that provided instruction virtually 5 consecutive days for all students.*

*Students who attend in-person instructional days can receive free and reduced meals at the school and thus are not eligible for P-EBT benefits. DHHS is unable to provide benefits for virtual learning periods of less than 5 consecutive days in duration.*

## **8. Do families need to apply for the P-EBT program?**

**i** *There is no application for NC P-EBT benefits. P-EBT eligibility information for August and September 2020 benefits comes from the Department of Public Instruction based off enrollment in free and reduced-price meals at schools participating in the National Free and Reduced Lunch Program at the time of P-EBT and those school districts or charter schools having a qualifying event that causes 5 consecutive days of virtual learning in those benefit months for all students.*

## **9. What about children who enrolled in free and reduced lunch programs after schools were closed?**

**i** *Those students who received P-EBT benefits for any part of the COVID-19 time frame established for benefits for the 2019-2020 school year are eligible for P-EBT benefits for August and September 2020 if they are currently enrolled in a school participating in the National Free and Reduced Lunch program and the school district or charter school has a qualifying event that causes 5 consecutive days of virtual learning during established benefit months for all students.*

## 10. How much will I get in P-EBT benefits?

**i** The daily rate for of benefits for P-EBT is \$5.86 per eligible student. Allotment amounts will be calculated based on the number of days the student is not at school due to a qualifying event with a minimum of 5 consecutive days for all students. Please note, while all students received full allotments for the period at the end of the 2019-2020 year, USDA has determined that allotment amounts are determined by a student's opportunity to receive free and reduced benefits at school during the school day.

- Those eligible students who have returned to school full time, face to face instruction, will not receive allotments for P-EBT benefits as the program is designed to help feed children not afforded the opportunity to receive free and reduced lunches at school during the day.
- Those eligible students who are in a hybrid attendance model, where they may attend some days but not every day will receive allotments only if all students are virtually learning for 5 consecutive days due to a qualifying event. No student may receive benefits for less than 5 consecutive days.

## 11. Will children receiving free lunches in a school that the entire school receives free lunches and the parents did not fill out any paperwork for the free lunches receive P-EBT?

**i** If they are attending school in a school district or charter school that has a qualifying event that causes 5 consecutive days of virtual learning during established benefit months for all students, then those students who are enrolled at a Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) school will continue to receive P-EBT benefits for August and September of the 2020-2021 school year.

## 12. What happens if my child returned to school but then the school closed again?

**i** North Carolina DHHS will continue to work with DPI and the USDA requirements to assist as many families as we can during this time. We are aware that some school districts and charter schools may face this situation and we will work with DPI to get correct benefit allotments to those eligible families for the school days closed due to COVID-19 where eligible students were unable to receive free and reduced lunch benefits.

## 13. Will students that have already turned 18 before the end of the P-EBT period still receive P-EBT benefits if they are still a full-time student receiving free or reduced lunches?

**i** Students over 18 are eligible so long as they meet identified criteria above and are still enrolled in a qualifying school district or charter school.

## 14. Does legal status of the child affect eligibility for P-EBT? Are school aged children who are undocumented non-citizens enrolled in a free/reduced lunch school program receive the P-EBT benefits?

**i** Any child that meets eligibility requirements as identified above will be eligible for August and September P-EBT allotments, regardless of other criteria such as legal status.

## 15. How and when will I get my benefits?

**i** P-EBT benefits will be loaded the same way that they were loaded for the 2019-2020 benefits. Those families receiving FNS benefits will receive their P-EBT benefits on their FNS EBT card. Those families who received a P-EBT benefit card (see image below), will receive their August and September allotments on that same card.



*Note: If you received P-EBT benefits previously and disposed of the card and need a new P-EBT card, you may request a new card by:*

- Visiting [www.ebtedge.com](http://www.ebtedge.com) if they created an account prior to losing or destroying the card.
- Using the **EBT Edge** mobile app (can be downloaded on Google Play or Apple Store) if they registered their phone prior to losing or destroying the card.
- Calling the EBT Call Center at 1-888-622-7328 for directions on obtaining new card

*As part of the requirements for August and September benefit issuance, the USDA has required that NC submit all benefits for issuance by September 30. Benefits should be available on or shortly after that date depending on processing volume by the vendor. Notices will be sent to households notifying them of allotment amounts and when to expect benefits.*

*Please note, those students who are newly eligible may take longer to receive their benefit card than those who have received previously and have an existing account and/or EBT card.*

## 16. I no longer have my P-EBT card. Can I get a new card and notice from the school?

**i** No. The USDA has given the NCDHHS the authority to administer P-EBT benefits in collaboration with the Department of Public Instruction. Those families who need a replacement card should

- Visit [www.ebtedge.com](http://www.ebtedge.com) if they created an account prior to losing or destroying the card.

- Use the **EBT Edge** mobile app (can be downloaded on Google Play or Apple Store) if they registered their phone prior to losing or destroying the card.
- Call the EBT Call Center at 1-866-719-0141 for directions on obtaining a new card

### 17. I received a benefit on my existing EBT card and received a P-EBT card previously, where will my benefits go this time?

**i** P-EBT benefits for the 2020-2021 school year will load to the same EBT card that was previously established. This means you could receive another round of allotments on both your FNS EBT card and your P-EBT card depending on your situation.

### 18. What if my address is incorrect or I have moved?

**i** Those families who moved after receiving their P-EBT notices and benefits at the end of the 2019-2020 year and still have their EBT card will still have access to their benefits on that same card. The notice, which includes allotment information, will go the linked address for the P-EBT card. Those families who no longer have their P-EBT card and need a new card issued to a new address should make sure to update their mailing address. To update address information for P-EBT benefits, please contact the EBT Call Center at 1-866-719-0141.

### 19. How do I create and utilize my Personal Identification Number (PIN) for my P-EBT card?

**i** Families receiving a P-EBT card will need to create a Personal Identification Number (PIN) to activate the card. Applicants may log into [www.ebtEdge.com](http://www.ebtEdge.com), utilize the ebtEDGE mobile app, or call 1-888-622-7328 to complete this process.

The caregiver will be asked to enter the date of birth of the youngest child school age child receiving free or reduced lunch in the household prior to creating the PIN.

For example: The household consists of 2 school age children; one is 13 years old (DOB: 04/04/2007) and one is 15 years old (DOB: 01/01/2005) and both receive free or reduced lunch through school. To create the PIN, the family would enter the date of birth for the 13-year-old (04042007). The user will then be prompted to create a unique PIN.

Note: If there are multiple children in your household it may be necessary to try each child's date of birth to successfully activate your P-EBT card.

### How long will this program last and how long will I have to use benefits?

**i** Unused benefits will rollover month-to-month and must be used within 365 days.

## 20. What if I do not want P-EBT benefits?

- i** Families should destroy the P-EBT card. If they change their mind, they may call the EBT Call Center at 1-888-622-7328 to request a replacement card at any time prior to the expiration of the benefits.

## 21. How does this affect children in foster care?

- i** Foster care children who are eligible under the established criteria for August and September 2020 allotments will receive P-EBT benefits. Because of the possibility of placement changes since the last P-EBT enrollment period, DHHS will work with DPI to identify those eligible foster care students attending identified schools with qualifying events and issue a new card. Cards will be mailed in the student's name and will not group multiple children together. The mailing address identified within the DPI records for the student will be utilized for mailing of cards. This process will be the same for all eligible foster care children, including those in congregate care.

## 22. Can I buy hot foods with my P-EBT benefits?

- i** No. The Notice for P-EBT has examples of items that can and cannot be purchased with the P-EBT card.

<https://files.nc.gov/ncdhhs/pebt/P-EBT-Admin-Letter-5-11-2020.pdf>

## 23. What is the ID requirement for using the P-EBT card at the grocery store?

- i** The Grocery Retailers Association is aware of the process for P-EBT and have been informed of the card design as well as benefit projections. By federal statute, retailers cannot ask for ID for EBT purchases if they do not request ID on regular debit card purchases.

## 24. Does this cost anything? Do I have to pay these benefits back?

- i** The P-EBT benefit is entirely federally funded and there is no cost to the recipient. Families who receive P-EBT benefits will not have to pay back the benefits.

## 25. What if the family has more questions or needs additional resource information?

- i** Families should contact the EBT Call Center (1-866-719-0141) for questions or additional resource information. The EBT Call Center may be experiencing a high volume of calls and you may be placed on hold or need to call back. Please be patient and call back later if you need.

## 26. Will P-EBT disbursements show in NC FAST?

**i** *P-EBT disbursements will only appear in the ebtEDGE app. P-EBT benefits are not typical FNS payments and will not be recorded in NC FAST.*