

News stories

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Help to pay for food coming to Minnesota families whose children miss school meals because of COVID

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Minnesota families who rely on free and reduced-price school lunch programs will soon get extra help to cover food costs when COVID-19 keeps their children home from school.

By early January, a first round of Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer food benefits will go to small number of families whose children attend schools that closed or shifted to remote learning for at least five consecutive days in September, October or November. Future rounds of P-EBT benefits next year will include families whose children have to stay home because of quarantines for individual students, groups of students, or entire classrooms.

More than 200,000 Minnesota schoolchildren will be eligible for the P-EBT benefits for the 2021-22 school year, with \$186 million in federal funding from the American Rescue Plan Act. Families will receive \$7.10 for each child for each missed day.

“Children need healthy meals even on the days when they can’t go to school in person,” said Human Services Commissioner Jodi Harpstead. “This support will help families feed their children during the school year, and we know that good nutrition supports children to focus in school.”

A child is eligible for P-EBT this school year if:

- Their school participates in the National School Lunch Program or the Seamless Summer Option, and
- The student is eligible for free or reduced-price meals, and
- Their school closes, shifts to remote learning, or reduces hours or attendance for at least five consecutive days because of COVID, or
- Their parent notifies the school they are keeping their child home because of COVID, and the school accepts the absence as COVID-related.

Minnesota is one of six states with federal approval for its P-EBT program for the current school year. The others are Indiana, Michigan, New Mexico, North Carolina and Ohio. The U.S. Department of Agriculture set the daily P-EBT benefit of \$7.10 for the current school year.

“Throughout the pandemic, our No. 1 priority has been the health and safety of students and families, including ensuring access to healthy meals through programs like P-EBT,” said Education Commissioner Dr. Heather Mueller. “I am thankful our families will have support to put food on the table, which is so important for our students’ physical, social-emotional and mental well-being.”

The Minnesota Department of Human Services will text or email families when P-EBT benefits are approved. Schools will collect and submit data on pandemic-related absences to the Minnesota Department of Education. Parents should check to make sure they are receiving P-EBT texts or emails and that their school has their correct contact information.

Once approved, DHS will issue the benefits on children’s P-EBT cards. Families who didn’t previously have a P-EBT card will get a new one. To replace an existing card for \$2, call EBT Edge at 888-997-2227.

DHS anticipates tentatively issuing P-EBT benefits for meals missed due to COVID again in February, April and June.

For questions about P-EBT:

- Contact the P-EBT Call Center at 651-431-4608 or 833-454-0153 from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. weekdays.
- Complete the [P-EBT Help Form \(https://pebthelp.state.mn.us/\)](https://pebthelp.state.mn.us/), or call 651-431-4608 or 833-454-0153 for assistance in multiple languages.
- Visit [mn.gov/dhs/p-ebt/faqs \(https://mn.gov/dhs/p-ebt/faqs/\)](https://mn.gov/dhs/p-ebt/faqs/) for frequently asked questions.

Food assistance is also available through the following resources:

- Apply for SNAP at [mnbenefits.mn.gov \(https://mnbenefits.mn.gov/\)](https://mnbenefits.mn.gov/) or [ApplyMN.dhs.mn.gov \(https://applymn.dhs.mn.gov/online-app-web/spring/public/process-login?execution=e2s1\)](https://applymn.dhs.mn.gov/), or contact your local county or Tribal human services office.
- Contact your school to ask about educational benefits.
- Use the Hunger Solutions [online food shelf finder \(https://www.hungersolutions.org/find-help/\)](https://www.hungersolutions.org/find-help/) to locate resources near you.