

Pandemic-Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) Program



Ohio | Department of Education
Department of Job and Family Services

Important Information about Your Child's School Meals

What is Pandemic EBT (P-EBT)?

Federal law allows States to implement a temporary program called Pandemic-Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT), which provides eligible children with Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as food stamps) benefits. Preschool (Pre-K) through 12th grade students within eligible school buildings who are eligible for free or reduced-price meals through the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) or School Breakfast Program (SBP) may be eligible for P-EBT benefits.

The program is administered by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services and the Department is partnering with the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) to ensure eligible children receive this important benefit.

For questions regarding P-EBT, please contact the P-EBT customer service line at 1-866-244-0071.

How do I know if my child is eligible for P-EBT benefits?

Under the new law passed October 1, 2020, a school child is eligible for P-EBT if two conditions are met:

The child would have received free or reduced-price meals under NSLP or SBP if not for the COVID health emergency; *and* The child does not receive free or reduced-price meals at the school because the school is closed (includes virtual/remote learning) or has been operating with reduced attendance or hours (includes hybrid schedules) for at least 5 consecutive days.

Once this criteria has been met, the child is eligible for P-EBT benefits for the days he or she does not attend school in person, or attends school in person but does not receive a meal at school to eat at school. Children are not eligible for P-EBT benefits for days they attend school in person and receive meals at school. Examples of potentially eligible school children are the following situations:

- All children are participating in fully remote learning;
- Children in hybrid learning;
- Children who have the option of attending fully remote (e.g. Virtual academies), even though the school is operating fully in-person; or
- Children who normally attend school in-person full time but have had to quarantine due to COVID for at least 5 consecutive days.

Under the old law, a school operating a hybrid schedule for at least 5 days with in-person instruction occurring every other day (Monday, Wednesday, Friday) with virtual/remote learning on the other days (Tuesday and Thursday) was not eligible for P-EBT. Under the new law, a school with this type of hybrid schedule meets the requirements for P-EBT. Based upon the date a school met the requirements above, eligible children who were not previously eligible under a hybrid model may be provided benefits for August and September.

How much will an eligible child receive?

Each child will receive \$6.82 (the combined daily federal reimbursement rate for breakfast and lunch for school year 2020-2021) for each day the child does not receive free or reduced-price meals at the school because the school is closed (includes virtual/remote learning) or has been operating with reduced attendance or hours for at least 5 consecutive days. This also includes days a child is not at school in-person for at least 5 consecutive days because they are sick or having to quarantine due to COVID-19. Weekends, holidays or school breaks are not included.

How are P-EBT benefits issued?

ODJFS obtains a list from the schools or school districts of all children eligible for free and reduced-price meals and the number of days they met the criteria for P-EBT. Based on this data, P-EBT benefits are provided on an electronic benefit transfer (EBT) card.

- *If the child is a current SNAP recipient:*
The P-EBT benefits may be added to the account on which the child is active in early February.
If the child was unable to be matched to his or her active SNAP account, you will be sent a P-EBT card in the child's name.
- *If the child is not a current SNAP recipient:*
Mid-February you should receive a preloaded P-EBT card in the mail.

- The card will be in the child's name, not the parent or guardian's name.
- Instructions on how to activate the card will be included (also see instructions below).
- **You must keep this new card as it will be used for any future P-EBT benefits your child is eligible for.**

If the child has previously been on SNAP, but is not currently, he or she will receive a P-EBT card. Each child will receive a P-EBT card; benefits of siblings will not be grouped onto one card.

Although you will receive a new card in mid-February, if you received a P-EBT card for prior benefits it will still be active and can be used if there is a balance.

How often will this benefit be issued?

If your child meets the P-EBT eligibility criteria in a month, benefits will be provided as follows:

- The October and November benefits (and August and September benefits for children now eligible under the new law) are to be issued in early February. New P-EBT cards should be received by families in mid-February.
- December benefits will be issued by the end of February.
- January benefits will be issued by the end of March.
- February benefits will be issued by the end of April.
- March benefits will be issued by the end of May.
- April benefits will be issued by the end of June.
- May benefits will be issued by the end of July.
- June benefits will be issued by the end of August.

Can a family apply for P-EBT benefits?

No. P-EBT does not have an application. Any child eligible for free and reduced-price meals should receive the P-EBT benefits. If your child has not been approved for free or reduced-price meals, you should contact your child's school to ask how to apply.

Does a family have to accept the card and use it?

No, your participation in the program is voluntary. If you choose not to participate, please dispose of your card by cutting through the magnetic stripe on the card and discard the card in a secure manner. You cannot transfer the card to someone else.

How long will a family have access to the P-EBT benefits on the card?

The P-EBT benefits will be available for 12 months. If after 12 months the P-EBT benefits have not been spent, they will be removed (expunged) from the account. Current SNAP households will still have access to their remaining SNAP benefits.

How is the P-EBT card activated?

The family needs to take the following steps to activate the card:

1. Call the phone number on the back of the P-EBT card.
2. Identify the P-EBT card number on the front of the card to enter,
3. Use the date of birth of the child named on the card,
4. When asked to enter the last four digits of the social security number, enter the year of the child's birth (e.g. 1980) and
5. Set a new four-digit PIN number which will be used each time the card is used.

Is Pandemic EBT a replacement for “grab-and-go” and/or summer meals offered by schools?

No, schools can continue operating these programs and children may receive both P-EBT benefits and continue receiving “grab and go” meals.

Are children who are home-schooled or attend a school that does not participate in the National School Lunch Program eligible for P-EBT?

No, only children who would be receiving free and reduced-price meals through NSLP or SBP at school if not for the COVID health emergency are eligible.

Is P-EBT available to immigrant children?

Yes. Like the National School Lunch Program, P-EBT is available to all school children regardless of immigration status. P-EBT is a replacement for free and reduced-price school meals which is not considered in a “public charge” determination.

What address will the P-EBT card be sent to if a child's parents are divorced or are not residing in the same household?

P-EBT cards will go to the address identified by the school. This also applies to children currently in receipt of SNAP but could not be matched to the active case.

For foster children who are in receipt of free and reduced-price meals, who will the EBT card go to - the foster parent or the public children services agency?

The card will go to the address on file with the school.

If a family has accidentally thrown away the P-EBT card or has lost the card, what should they do?

The family should call Conduent (the P-EBT card vendor) at 1-866-386-3071 to request a replacement if the card is lost, stolen or damaged. It is the same process SNAP customers do to replace the Ohio Direction EBT card. The family will have to provide the following information to request the replacement:

When the family calls, their old card will be locked, and a new card will be mailed to them. If the family finds their lost card, they will not be able to use it once they have reported it lost or stolen. The family will have to wait to receive the replacement card in the mail, which can take 7-10 days.

The family can request a replacement via the inter-active voice response system (IVR) with their card number or demographic information if they do not know the card number. To speak with a live Customer Service Representative to request a P-EBT replacement card when the family does not recall the 16-digit P-EBT card number:

1. Press Option 4 – To report card lost, stolen or damaged
2. Prompt asks to enter your SSN (P-EBT caller MUST enter: 9 digits. 0 + child's DOB)
3. Prompt asks to enter your DOB (P-EBT caller MUST enter child's DOB: 2 digits for month\2 digits for day\4 digits for the year)
4. When prompted to enter your PIN, Do Nothing
5. When prompted to enter your PIN the 2nd time, Do Nothing.
6. This will allow the call to be escalated in order to speak with a live Customer Service Representative.

Reminder: there are recorded messages about COVID 19 benefits, that the P-EBT caller MUST listen through, to the very end. At the end of the message, the caller is encouraged to "Please remain on hold while your call is being transferred to a Customer Service Representative."

Who should a family contact if they have questions regarding P-EBT?

For general program questions, questions about your child's benefits or the P-EBT card, please call the P-EBT customer service line at 1-866-244-0071 Option 1.

If you have questions about whether or not a child is eligible for free and reduced-price meals, you should contact your child's school.

What if the wrong address for the child was provided to ODJFS and the family needs to report the correct address?

If the address is wrong, the family may call the P-EBT customer service line at 1-866-244-0071 Option 1.

How can the benefits be used?

These benefits can be used to buy food items anywhere Ohio Direction cards are accepted.

These benefits are non-transferrable. Do not use P-EBT benefits to buy ineligible items, such as alcoholic drinks or tobacco products. Do not trade or sell these benefits. You will be subject to a penalty if you purposely do so. Penalties can include ineligibility for the program, financial penalties, and/or jail time.

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