



Pandemic EBT

School Year 2020-21

Frequently Asked Questions

General Information

1. What is the Pandemic EBT program?

The Pandemic EBT program, or P-EBT, provides food benefits to eligible students to replace the cost of meals students would have received if not for the lack of in-person instruction or due to school closures during the 2020-21 school year. Please see questions 6 – 11 for P-EBT eligibility information.

2. How is this different from last school year?

The 2019-20 school year P-EBT program originally provided food benefits to eligible school-aged children for the months of March, April, May and June 2020. Households applied for these benefits and if determined eligible, they received a standard benefit amount issued by lump sum on a Quest EBT card.

Washington state received federal approval to issue P-EBT benefits to children because of school closures for the 2020-21 school year, from September 2020 to June 2021. We automated the eligibility process to get more households the assistance they need during the COVID-19 public health emergency. This means households do not have to apply for the 2020-21 P-EBT program.

3. My child is in child care. Do we get P-EBT benefits?

To give P-EBT benefits to children in child care from October 2020 to September 2021, states must develop and submit a separate P-EBT plan for federal approval. The Department of Social and Health Services is currently developing the plan to provide benefits to children in child care.

Families can periodically check www.dshs.wa.gov/PEBT for updated information.

4. If I get P-EBT benefits, will it affect my immigration status or make me a public charge?

No. The Public Charge rule does not apply to P-EBT benefits and P-EBT benefits will not impact immigration status.

5. My child gets lunches at school. Can I still qualify for P-EBT?

Yes. P-EBT benefits are additional food benefits. Children may continue to receive grab-and-go meals at school or community sites, or emergency food at COVID-19 emergency feeding sites offered at community locations, even if they are receiving P-EBT benefits.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

P-EBT Eligibility

6. Who is eligible for P-EBT?

Children who normally have access to the National School Lunch Program, or NSLP, and School Breakfast Program, or SBP, and are registered/enrolled at a school in Washington state that:

- Has been closed or has reduced attendance for five or more consecutive days as a result of the COVID-19 public health emergency during the 2020-2021 school year, and
- Determined the child is eligible for free or reduced-priced school meals.

7. If my children go to Community Eligibility or Provision 2 schools with access to breakfast and lunch at not cost, are they eligible for P-EBT?

All children attending a Community Eligibility or Provision 2 school may be eligible for P-EBT if the school the child attends has reduced in-person learning due to COVID-19.

8. I already receive food assistance. Do I automatically qualify for P-EBT?

Most children active on food assistance are automatically certified for free school meals, but they don't automatically qualify for P-EBT benefits. P-EBT eligibility will depend on the school the child attends and their learning model. See question 22 for more information.

9. My family gets \$0 in food assistance. Do I automatically qualify for P-EBT?

Some families get a \$0 food benefit amount and keep their case open for access to other resources. Families that receive \$0 in food assistance are not automatically certified for free school meals and must apply for free or reduced-price meals by contacting their child's school.

10. My child is home schooled. Do they qualify for P-EBT?

No. P-EBT is available only to children enrolled in and receiving education services in a school, and would normally receive free or reduced-price school meals through the NSLP or SBP if the school wasn't closed or had reduced attendance.

11. How do I find out if my child is eligible for P-EBT benefits?

Eligible children will receive a notice and a P-EBT card with their name on it. We anticipate the notice to be sent to eligible children beginning in late March. The P-EBT card will be mailed shortly after. Families should keep their cards as more benefits may be added later if their school continues to be closed or have reduced hours.

12. Why will it take so long to receive the P-EBT card?

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has recommended states stagger issuances to avoid local grocery store supply and demand issues.

Getting P-EBT Benefits

13. How do I get P-EBT benefits for the 2020-21 school year?

Eligible families do not need to apply to get P-EBT benefits for this school year. Each eligible child will receive a P-EBT card mailed directly to families without having to apply online. Refer to question 6 for more information on eligible families.

14. What address will the new P-EBT card be mailed to?

P-EBT cards will be mailed to the address on file with the school. Contact your school to ensure they have your current mailing address.

Families submitting school meal applications with a current address should also update the address with the school. School meal systems and student information systems may not be the same.

Getting P-EBT Benefits (continued)

15. Will my benefits be back-dated to the beginning of the school year?

Yes. If a child is determined eligible, we will issue P-EBT benefits back to the beginning of the 2020-21 school year or the month the school became eligible and through January 2021. Benefits for these months will be issued in March 2021; however, families may not receive their card until the end of April. The amounts may vary for each child based on their respective school learning models. Benefits for February through the end of the school year will be issued every other month.

16. What do I need to do when the new P-EBT card arrives in the mail?

Follow the instructions that come with your P-EBT card and create your secure Personal Identification Number or PIN. Keep your card! If your school stays in a remote learning environment, has reduced attendance days or is closed due to COVID-19, we may add more benefits to your card.

17. Should I keep my P-EBT card?

Yes. Additional benefits may be administered later in the year. Cards should be kept in a safe place.

18. What if I need a replacement P-EBT card because I lost or damaged it?

P-EBT card replacements are processed by calling the EBT vendor, FIS, at 888-328-9271. Families may also visit www.ebtEdge.com or the ebtEdge app if a replacement card is needed. To request a replacement P-EBT card, you will need the following information: the child's full name, date of birth, zip code and full address as provided by the school.

The mailing address must match what is in the system for a replacement card to be mailed. Please expect seven to 10 business days to receive your card.

See question 20 for additional information on when your address doesn't match what the EBT vendor, FIS, has on file.

19. Can I put these benefits on my existing food EBT card?

No. The P-EBT program is unique and benefits are separate from other food or cash benefits available on your Quest EBT card.

20. My child didn't receive the notice or P-EBT card. What should I do?

If you have not received your card by May 2021, call the P-EBT Contact Center at 833-518-0282.

21. We do not need these benefits. Can I decline them?

We encourage households determined eligible for P-EBT to use the benefits for your family and to help boost the local economy. Benefits are not transferrable and cannot be gifted or donated. If you still wish to decline the benefits, you may destroy the card or return the card to the address on the back of the card. Benefits will be automatically removed after 274 days of non-use.



P-EBT Benefit Amounts

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

Meals are budgeted at a daily rate of \$6.82, which covers lunch, breakfast and a snack, multiplied by an average of 18 operating days per month for the 2020-21 school year.

The P-EBT benefit amount is based on each student's learning situation and can vary from student to student, even within a family.

Schools will report their learning model for the majority of students for the majority of each month. Each school is unique and may have modified their learning model several times since September 2020. Because of this, each child may receive a different benefit amount. The table below provides the different benefit levels based on learning model.

Learning Model	Calculation	Dollar Amount per Month
Full remote learning	$\$6.82 \times 18 \times 100\%$	\$123
One day in-person	$\$6.82 \times 18 \times 80\%$	\$99
Two days in-person	$\$6.82 \times 18 \times 60\%$	\$74
Three days in-person	$\$6.82 \times 18 \times 40\%$	\$50
Four days in-person	$\$6.82 \times 18 \times 20\%$	\$25

23. Why is the amount not based on my child's actual attendance?

To help the most children, we applied a statewide standard amount awarded to the children. We are unable to monitor individual student attendance. We are using the main learning model at the child's school as reported by the school.

24. Can P-EBT benefit amounts be changed or corrected?

The amount of P-EBT will be based on what the school reported as the main learning model for the entire school for each month. If you believe there has been an error on your child's P-EBT amount, you can call the P-EBT Contact Center at 833-518-0282 to request they review your eligibility.

25. Will there be more P-EBT benefits?

Benefits for February through the end of the school year may be issued every other month if your school continues to have limited in-person learning. Future school year Pandemic EBT benefits are unknown. Make sure to keep your card for potential future benefits. Please visit www.dshs.wa.gov/pebt for additional details.

P-EBT Contact Center

26. Who do I call for P-EBT Questions?

All P-EBT eligibility questions may be directed to the P-EBT Contact Center at 833-518-0282.

27. Who do I call to set up my PIN?

Once you get your card, families may call 888-328-9271 to set up your PIN.

28. Who do I contact if I did not receive my P-EBT card because of an address change?

Families should call the P-EBT Contact Center at 833-518-0282 for help with an address change.

Using P-EBT Benefits

29. Where can I use my P-EBT benefits and what can I buy with them?

Use your P-EBT card like a debit card. Your P-EBT benefits can buy food at most grocery stores and farmers markets. You can use your P-EBT benefits at any store that accepts EBT, including online from Amazon and Walmart. Most retailers have signs saying they accept EBT.

P-EBT benefits can be used to buy any food that can be bought with SNAP EBT. EBT eligible foods are most foods, except prepared and foods sold hot. You can learn more about EBT eligible foods by visiting [What can SNAP Buy?](#)

30. Can P-EBT be used for SNAP Market Match?

Yes. Families can use their P-EBT to get SNAP Market Match. This program allows families to get double the amount of food at participating farmer's markets! Learn more at [DOH SNAP Market Match](#).

31. Do I have to use all my P-EBT benefits when I get them?

No. The benefits will carry over from month to month. Your P-EBT benefits will remain on your card for a maximum of 274 days from your last activity starting from the issuance date.

Don't throw your P-EBT card away. As long as the COVID-19 public health emergency is in place, we may issue additional P-EBT benefits on this card.

32. Do I have to set up my PIN on my P-EBT card by a specific date?

No. However, we do encourage all families to set up their PIN and activate their P-EBT benefits as soon as they receive the card, but there is no set deadline to set up a PIN or activate the P-EBT card.

33. How do I check my balance?

You can call the EBT vendor, FIS, at 888-328-9271 (the number on the back of the P-EBT card) to check the balance, or go to www.ebtEdge.com or download the ebtEdge application on your cell phone.

34. Someone used my benefits. Can I get them replaced?

No. We cannot replace the value of any benefit that has been redeemed. It is very important you choose a secure PIN that is easy to remember but not commonly used.

We encourage you to contact the EBT vendor, FIS, at 888-328-9271 to cancel your card and request a new one. If you suspect fraud, call the Washington State Welfare Fraud Hotline at 800-562-6906.

Other P-EBT Information

35. I am facing homelessness. How do I get my P-EBT card?

If your family is facing homelessness and your child is eligible for P-EBT, you can request your P-EBT card be sent to a different address that you can access (i.e., your child's school). Call your school to make necessary arrangements for pick-up of the P-EBT card.

36. P-EBT benefits are not covering all my costs; I need more assistance. Who do I contact?

If you need more food assistance or cash assistance, you can call the Department of Social and Health Services to apply for benefits at 877-501-2233 or visit www.washingtonconnection.org.

You may also call Washington Information Network, or WIN211, at 877-211-9274 to learn more about other resources available in your community.

37. Are there any other food benefits available right now?

- This [meal finder tool](#) can help families find locations serving meals to children. Participating in these meal services does not prevent eligible children from getting P-EBT benefits. Contact your local school district to learn about free meal site locations in your area. These meal programs are available to all children age 18 and under, regardless of what school they attend.
- You can go to www.washingtonconnection.org to apply for Basic Food benefits.
- If you have younger children, you may also qualify for the Women, Infants and Children or WIC program, which provides food assistance to children up to the age of 5 and pregnant and breastfeeding mothers. Find more information at <https://www.doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily/WIC>. If you suspect fraud, call the Washington State Welfare Fraud Hotline at 800-562-6906.