

Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer

Washington State Department of Social and Health Services

Economic Services Administration • Community Services Division

Program Description

Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer, or P-EBT, is a program that provides food benefits to children who are eligible for free or reduced-price meals through the National School Lunch Program but have limited access to onsite meals at their school or child care center due to the COVID-19 pandemic. P-EBT benefits help families affected by these closures to buy food and support their basic nutritional needs. The method in which P-EBT was implemented changed significantly during the 2019-20 through 2022-23 school years. Due to the public health emergency expiration in May 2023, the 2022-23 school year is the final year for P-EBT.

P-EBT was initially authorized through the Families First Coronavirus Act in March of 2020, and USDA approved Washington's plan in May 2020 to issue benefits (known as P-EBT 1.0). Benefits were issued through an application process where the Community Services Division processed applications and validated student eligibility based on data received by Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction.

P-EBT continued in the 2020-21 school year (known as P-EBT 2.0) with new provisions passed through the Consolidated Appropriations Act 2021 and Other Extensions Act, and the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. These acts provided new guidance for P-EBT, including the expansion to SNAP-recipient children under the age of 6 and summer P-EBT benefits. DSHS shifted the application and eligibility determination process, contracting with a vendor to coordinate free and reduced-price lunch eligibility with OSPI and individual school districts directly. This coordination enabled eligible children to receive P-EBT benefits directly, without an application requirement, using a unique P-EBT card outside of DSHS eligibility systems. USDA approved Washington's P-EBT 2.0 plans for schools in March 2021, for children under age 6 in June 2021, and for summer P-EBT in July 2021.

This operational structure continued through the 2021-22 school year (P-EBT 3.0) and 2022-23 school year (P-EBT 4.0), as USDA approved Washington's P-EBT Children Under 6 and Summer P-EBT plans for both school years. However, Washington state did not receive approval to operate P-EBT for school-age children for either school year due to the inability to meet USDA requirements to verify which absences and remote learning days were COVID-related, given the return to in-person instruction under the Governor's Proclamation 21-05. Final summer P-EBT approval was received in June 2023, and requires benefit issuance by Sept. 30, 2023. Following this date, CSD will work with its partners to end the program. Washington's approved plans for each school year can be [found here](#).

Highlights

- In the 2021-22 school year, Washington issued a total of \$565,413,653 to eligible children under the school P-EBT plan and \$191,806,875 to eligible children under the age of 6.

For detailed outcome data on P-EBT through the 21-22 school year, please reference the [Economic Services Administration's Briefing Book](#) (beginning SFY 2020) under the COVID-19 Response section. See the [P-EBT website](#) for information on the 22-23 school year.

More information:

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