

P-EBT FOR SCHOOL YEAR 2020-2021 FAQ

Updated 02/10/2021

About Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) Program

1. What is P-EBT? (Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer)

P-EBT provides food assistance benefits on a debit-like Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card to North Carolina families whose school-aged children are eligible to receive free or reduced-price meals at school, but who have not been able to access those meals because they have been in virtual learning instruction at least some of the time due to COVID-19.

The P-EBT benefits will be electronically placed on the EBT card monthly and can be used to purchase food items at EBT authorized food or grocery retailers, including most major grocery stores.

Eligibility for P-EBT 2020 - 2021 School Year

2. Do households / families need to apply for P-EBT for their student?

There is no application for P-EBT benefits. Student P-EBT eligibility is based on two required conditions:

- 1) The student must be enrolled in a school that participates in the National School Lunch Program at the time of P-EBT issuance; **AND**,*
- 2) The student must be eligible for free or reduced-price meals at school.*

*Once a student meets these two conditions, **a third condition** related to school closures and remote or hybrid learning must be met to determine whether a student is eligible to receive P-EBT benefits.*

If you would like more information on how to apply for free or reduced-price meals at participating schools, please contact your child's school system.

3. Who is eligible to receive P-EBT benefits and how long is someone eligible to receive P-EBT?

Eligibility for P-EBT is determined through student and learning circumstances. Students must meet all three of the following conditions to receive P-EBT benefits:

1st: The child must meet the following Student Criteria:

- 1) North Carolina students (Pre-K through 12th grade), regardless of age, are eligible to receive P-EBT if they are enrolled in a school that participates in the National School Lunch Program at the time of benefits issuance; **and**,*
- 2) Are eligible to receive free or reduced-price meals at school through the National School Lunch Program.*

If the student does not meet both of these conditions, they are not eligible for P-EBT.

2nd: If the student meets the Student Criteria, they must also meet one of the following criteria for Student Eligibility:

- Was eligible for free or reduced-price meals at schools based on the approval of a household application which is based on household income and size; applications are approved by the school district in which the student is enrolled; **or***
- Have categorical eligibility; certain groups are automatically eligible for meals at school (examples include but are not limited to homeless, migrant, foster care students); **or**,*

- *Have been Directly Certified for free meals at school for the current school year (2020-2021); individuals who receive FNS benefits are “directly certified” for eligibility to receive free meals; or,*
- *Attend a school that participates in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) for the current school year (2020-2021); all students enrolled in a CEP school are automatically eligible for free meals at school.*

3rd: If the student meets the 1st and 2nd criteria shown above, they must also meet the following Learning Criteria (both must be met):

- *The student’s school was closed or has been operating with reduced attendance for at least 5 consecutive days during the 2020 to 2021 school year as a result of COVID-19; and,*
- *The student is in a fully “remote learning mode” (all virtual instruction) or a “hybrid learning mode” (combination of virtual and in-person learning) during the month.*

Eligibility criteria is based on guidance from the US Department of Agriculture (USDA). If you would like more information on the National School Lunch Program, please visit: <https://childnutrition.ncpublicschools.gov/programs/nslp>.

4. My child did not receive P-EBT but think I he/she should have received it, what should I do?

Benefits are issued to students that meet all criteria established by the USDA’s eligibility requirements. Benefit amounts are issued per student learning circumstance based on school data. Please refer to the eligibility criteria to see if your child meets the criteria.

If you believe your child is eligible and you have an FNS card, check to see if the benefits have been issued to that card. If you believe your child is eligible and have not received benefits, please contact the EBT Call Center at 1-866-719-0141. Please note that benefit issuance will be staggered over several days each month, so please allow adequate time for the benefits to be loaded onto your card.

5. Is eligibility and benefit amount determined per student or per household? Will all my school-aged children receive the same amount?

Eligibility for P-EBT is determined for each student. If a household has two eligible students that are attending two different schools, operating in different learning modes, the students may receive different benefit amounts. The amount an eligible student receives is based on whether they are attending school in a “fully remote learning mode” (all virtual instruction) or a “hybrid learning mode” (combination of virtual and in-person instruction).

6. How will children in foster care and / or those who may be impacted by homelessness get P-EBT benefits?

Children in foster care or impacted by homelessness who are eligible under the established criteria may receive P-EBT benefits.

Students in foster care may be newly eligible for P-EBT or may have experienced placement changes since the last P-EBT issuance and no longer have their EBT card. The NC Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) will work with the NC Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to identify and help eligible foster care students get access to their P-EBT benefits by issuing new cards. Cards will be mailed in the student’s name and will not be grouped together with multiple children. P-EBT cards will be mailed to the local county DSS office that has custody of the foster care student. The student’s foster care social worker will provide the card or assist with transfer of the card to the student’s new placement.

P-EBT cards for homeless and migrant students will be mailed to the address on record for the student at the student’s school. Families are encouraged to confirm this address is correct with their child’s school. The address can be updated by contacting the EBT Call Center at 1-866-719-0141. If you

already have a FNS or P-EBT card you can expect to receive P-EBT benefits on the card you already have.

7. Will children enrolled in homeschool, charter schools, private schools or other non-public schools receive P-EBT? Are all schools, counties, and / or school districts eligible to receive P-EBT?

If your charter, private or non-public school student or home-schooled student is enrolled in a school that participates in the National School Lunch Program, they may be eligible for P-EBT benefits. If your child does not already receive free or reduced-price meals, it would be necessary to complete a household application for free or reduced-price meals through your child's school to determine eligibility.

If a charter, private or non-public school students or home-schooled students are not enrolled in a school that participates in the National School Lunch Program, they are not eligible for P-EBT benefits. This eligibility requirement for P-EBT is based on federal guidance provided by the US Department of Agriculture.

A list of North Carolina schools that participate in the National School Lunch Program can be found at this site:

P-EBT Amount and When to Expect the Benefit

8. Do I have to pay these benefits back?

No. The P-EBT benefit is entirely federally funded and there is no cost to the recipient. Families who receive the correct P-EBT benefit amount based on their child's eligibility will not have to pay back the benefits. However, if a student erroneously receives an overpayment, the household may be required to return the amount of the overpayment. You will be contacted in the event you are over-issued benefits.

9. How much will I receive through P-EBT? How is the amount determined for P-EBT?

An eligible student can receive one of two distinct P-EBT amounts. The amount a student receives depends on whether they are reported by their school as being in a "remote learning mode" (all virtual instruction) or a "hybrid learning mode" (combination of virtual and in-person instruction). The monthly amount for a student in a fully remote learning mode is \$115.94. The monthly amount for a student in a hybrid learning mode could vary based on a monthly average.

A student who is in virtual learning instruction for 17 days or more each month will be identified as being in a remote learning mode. North Carolina determined on average there are 17 instructional days per month for an 11-month school year. The daily rate of \$6.82 per day will be provided for the 17 days for a total of \$115.94 for the month.

A student who attends school virtual some days and in person some days may also receive a benefit. Students who are in virtual learning instruction for at least one day but less than 17 days as reported by their school, will be identified as being in a hybrid learning mode. The number of days that will be used to determine the hybrid learning mode benefit amount will be based on the average number of days North Carolina schools were operating in a hybrid learning mode for each month. The daily reimbursement rate of \$6.82 will be provided for each of those days. For example, if a student is in a hybrid learning mode, and the state average was 9 days for January 2021, the student would receive \$61.38 for the month of January.

It is the state's goal to issue P-EBT food assistance to all eligible students for the 2020-2021 school year. The initial issuance of benefits starting in February 2021 may appear to be a larger amount than expected since the P-EBT benefit could reflect multiple months of P-EBT benefits. P-EBT benefits will be provided in a monthly allotment as long as the student remains eligible.

Students who have returned to school full time, in face-to-face instruction, will not receive P-EBT benefits, as the program is designed to help feed students who are not receiving free or reduced-price meals at school during the day as a result of virtual learning instruction.

10. Could my child receive different amounts for different months?

Yes. Since the benefit amount for an eligible student will be determined for each individual month, and is based on student attendance, students may receive different amounts for different months as their learning circumstances may change each month. As long as a student remains eligible and the student is participating in remote or in virtual instruction, they are eligible to receive P-EBT benefits.

The “hybrid learning mode” benefit amount is based on a monthly average that reflects student attendance. Since the average student attendance is recalculated monthly, the averages will be adjusted, and the benefit amounts could be different. Please refer to the question titled “How much will I receive through P-EBT? How is the amount determined for P-EBT?” for additional information.

How Households Will Receive the Benefits

11. How and when will I receive P-EBT? How often will I receive P-EBT in 2021?

P-EBT benefits will be automatically issued to your EBT card. Students in families receiving FNS benefits can expect to receive their P-EBT benefits on their FNS EBT card. Those families who received a P-EBT benefit card in a previous issuance can expect to receive their benefits on that same card. Students who are not in a family receiving FNS benefits and who did not receive P-EBT previously will receive a P-EBT card with benefits. The card will arrive in the mail several days after receiving a notice in the mail informing you of eligibility.

The first issuance of P-EBT benefits will be to students who were eligible between the months of August to December 2020. These benefits will start being issued in February for those who already have an EBT card. Those who do not have an EBT card and are eligible during these months should anticipate receiving their card through the mail in February or March. You will not receive all months of P-EBT at one time. North Carolina is spreading out the benefits over several days to ensure enough food supply at stores that accept EBT.

Letters regarding eligibility will be sent to households. Students who are newly eligible may take longer to receive their P-EBT benefits than those who have previously received a P-EBT card, or those who have an existing FNS or P-EBT card.

For the 2021 school year, benefits will be issued retroactively on a monthly basis starting in March as long the student remains eligible. The benefits received in March will be for January and February 2021. March benefits will be issued in April, April benefits will be issued in May, and so on. Benefits will continue to be provided every month as long as the student remains eligible.

If an original P-EBT card has been lost or destroyed a new card can be ordered at www.ebtedge.com, on the ebtEDGE mobile app, or by contacting the North Carolina EBT Call Center at 1-888-622-7328.

12. What if I receive a card with a name on it that is not the parent, guardian or student?

Benefits are issued for the student’s benefit to the address provided by the school in which the student is enrolled. The P-EBT card may be issued in the parent or guardian’s name, or the student’s name. It is ok to proceed with using the card that was provided to you as long as the student(s) is in your care and you provide their meals. If you believe your benefits were incorrectly issued, please contact the North Carolina EBT Call Center at 1-866-719-0141. If you would like to update your address or contact information you may contact the EBT Call Center.

How to Use the P-EBT Card

13. How do I activate my P-EBT card and create a Personal Identification Number (PIN)? What date of birth (DOB) do I use in order to activate my card?

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

You will need to enter your card number. To activate your card, you will be asked to enter the date of birth (DOB) associated with the card. Enter the DOB of the youngest student in the household that attends a school that participates in the National School Lunch Program. Enter the DOB as two digits for the month, two digits for the day and four digits for the year. For example, January 24, 2014 would be entered as 01242014. If there are multiple children in your household it may be necessary to try each child's DOB to successfully activate your P-EBT card. Once the card is activated you can create the PIN.

Example: The household consists of 2 students; one is 13 years old (DOB: 04/04/2007) and one is 15 years old (DOB: 01/01/2005), and both are eligible for free or reduced-price meals at school. To activate the card, enter the date of birth for the 13-year-old (04042007). If the 13-year-old student's DOB does not work, enter the 15-year-old student's DOB. The user will then be prompted to create a unique PIN.

To change your PIN, call the toll-free number on the back of your EBT card. Follow the automated instructions to change the PIN. Assistance is available from a customer service representative 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If you forget your PIN, you must call 1-888-622-7328 to get a new PIN.

14. What can I buy with my P-EBT benefits? Is there an ID requirement in order to use the card?

The P-EBT card can be used to purchase food items at EBT authorized retailers, including most major grocery stores. Similar to FNS benefits, hot foods or foods that are already prepared cannot be purchased with your P-EBT benefits.

Examples of items you CAN buy with a P-EBT card:

- Breads, cereals, fruits, vegetables
- Meats, fish, poultry & dairy products
- Bottled water and non-alcoholic beverages
- Seeds and plants that produce food

Examples of items you CANNOT buy with a P-EBT card:

- Beer, wine, liquor, cigarettes or tobacco
- Any nonfood items, such as: pet foods, soaps, household supplies and vitamins and medicines
- Hot foods or foods that are already prepared

Remember to check your balance before you shop. There are several ways to check card balances 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Using your card number, you can:

- Call 1-888-622-7328.

- Visit www.ebtedge.com. Click on More Information under EBT Cardholders.
- Download the *ebtEDGE* mobile app. The app is available as a free download on the Apple Store and Google Play.

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

15. How long do I have to use the benefits?

P-EBT benefits must be used within 365 days. You do not have to use all your benefits at one time and any unused benefits will roll over month-to-month.

16. How do I change the address if it is incorrect or if I have moved?

P-EBT letters of eligibility and P-EBT cards for newly eligible students will be sent to the address on record at the student's school. Families are encouraged to confirm this address is correct with their child's school. The address can be updated by contacting the EBT Call Center at 1-866-719-0141.

Families that received P-EBT previously and still have their P-EBT card, should have access to the benefits on that card. Families who no longer have their P-EBT card and need a new card can call 1-888-622-7328. Please confirm the mailing address when ordering a new card.

Other Information

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

If families do not wish to receive P-EBT benefits for their children, they 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 (365 days after the benefits are issued).

18. Does the legal and/or immigration status of the child affect eligibility for P-EBT?

Any child that meets eligibility requirements as identified above will be eligible for P-EBT benefits for school year 2020-2021, regardless of their legal or immigration status. Receiving P-EBT food assistance does not impact your immigration status and will not impact a future immigration application you may file.

19. Does P-EBT replace other COVID-19 supplements, other Food and Nutrition Service benefits, or meals children may be receiving at schools/community meal sites at this time?

No. P-EBT food assistance is in addition to other benefits children and families may be receiving. Receiving P-EBT will not disqualify you or your child from accessing additional food such as meals from school (grab-and-go meals for curbside pick-up or placing an order for meal bundles for 3, 5 or 7 days, etc.). Many schools are providing meals to children age 18 and under as part of the State's emergency public health nutrition response during the pandemic. The meals available at various schools are intended to provide a food and nutrition safety net to help prevent food insecurity and child hunger. You are encouraged to contact your child's school to learn how you may access additional food for your children, including those who are not enrolled in school.

20. If my child does not qualify to receive P-EBT benefits, what other food

assistance resources are available to me?

If you would like information on where to access nearby meal sites for children who are 18 and under, you can also text FOODNC to 877-877 for English and COMIDA to 877-877 for Spanish.

In addition, No Kid Hungry NC has created a map of local school sites, community organizations and food assistance programs across North Carolina where families can access food for their children. The interactive map can be viewed at nokidhungrync.org/covid19/.

Additional food resources are available at <https://nc.gov/covid-19/family-community-covid-19-resources>. You can also dial 2-1-1 or 1-888-892-1162 to speak with someone who can tell you about resources in your area. You can also visit the 2-1-1 United Way North Carolina website by visiting <https://nc211.org/>.

21. Will children who are in childcare facilities be eligible to receive P- EBT?

In February 2021, North Carolina DHHS received guidance from the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) that children who are in childcare facilities can receive P-EBT benefits, and it outlined the rules and basic eligibility requirements that must be met. It is the state's goal to try and provide a P-EBT benefit that is similar to the benefit provided to school-aged children.

NC DHHS must create and submit a plan to USDA for approval with specific criteria for children in childcare facilities to receive P-EBT. This plan must be approved by USDA to begin providing benefits to eligible children. Please visit the NC DHHS P-EBT website that will continue to be updated with additional information as it becomes available: www.ncdhhs.gov/PEBT.