



## **Pandemic EBT (P-EBT) in Pennsylvania:** ***Q and A about this new benefit to help families whose children are missing school meals***

Updated May 7, 2020



### **Q1: What is Pandemic-EBT?**

The Family's First Coronavirus Response Act authorized a new benefit to help families who have children who are eligible for free or reduced-price school meals called Pandemic-EBT. The benefit will come on an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card, which is like a debit card. The benefits can only be spent only on food items.

### **Q2: Which families are eligible?**

Any household with a student who is eligible for free or reduced price meals is able to receive P-EBT. This includes:

- Students who attend a school where all students are offered free meals are eligible, regardless of income. (These are schools that participate in the Community Eligibility Provision, or CEP.)
- Students are eligible regardless of immigration status. Receiving or using this benefit does not impact the student's or any household member's immigration status or any current or future application for permanent residency.
- **Families that recently lost income due to job loss or fewer hours can still apply for school meals. (See next question.)**

### **Q3: What if my income has changed, my children didn't get school meals during the school year, and I need to apply?**

Your school can tell you how to apply. Many schools have a simple one-page or online school meals applications available. You can also apply for both the National School Lunch Program and for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) online through [COMPASS](#), Pennsylvania's online application system.

These are the income limits for Reduced Price Meals for the 2019-2020 School Year:

| HOUSEHOLD SIZE                          | YEARLY INCOME | MONTHLY INCOME |
|-----------------------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| 1                                       | \$23,107      | \$1,926        |
| 2                                       | \$31,284      | \$2,607        |
| 3                                       | \$39,461      | \$3,289        |
| 4                                       | \$47,638      | \$3,970        |
| 5                                       | \$55,815      | \$4,652        |
| 6                                       | \$63,992      | \$5,333        |
| 7                                       | \$72,169      | \$6,015        |
| 8                                       | \$80,346      | \$6,696        |
| For each additional family member, add: | \$8,177       | \$682          |

**Q4: How much money will I receive?**

Households will receive \$5.70 per day per child for each missed school day.

- If your child was receiving free or reduced price meals when schools closed, you will receive \$370.50 for each child.
- If your child was determined eligible for free or reduced-price meals after schools closed, you will receive a pro-rated amount for the number of weekdays from the first of the month in which the child was determined eligible to the end of the year. For instance:
  - If determined eligible during April, you would receive \$302.10 to cover the period from April 1 through June 12.
  - If determined eligible during May, you would receive \$176.70 to cover the period from May 1 through June 12.

**Q5: How will I get the EBT card?**

If you already receive SNAP (Food Stamps) or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF cash assistance), you will get the P-EBT amount deposited onto your EBT card for each student who is certified for free or reduced-price school meals. If you do not already have an EBT card, you will receive a card in the mail with instructions on how to use it. *It's important to have an up-to-date address on file with your school! (See next question).*

**Q6: When will I get my P-EBT?**

DHS and PDE will begin to issue P-EBT benefits within approximately 15 days of plan approval (which occurred May 6). Benefits will be issued in phases, households that are already getting SNAP (food stamps), Medical Assistance, or TANF Cash Assistance will receive P-EBT benefits first. P-EBT cards will then be mailed to other households with students already enrolled in school meals in the second phase, and to households with newly enrolled students throughout the remainder of the school year.

**Q7: What if I've moved since the beginning of the school year?**

Notify your school of your address change, as that is the address that will be used to mail out the EBT cards. If you are receiving DHS benefits, you should report your change of address by calling the statewide customer service center at 1-877-395-890 or, in Philadelphia, at 215-560-7226. *(Note, due to the current crisis call times are longer than usual. Please be patient.)*

**Q8: Will this affect my ability to receive other benefits?** No, it will not.**Q9: My child attends a school where all students receive free meals, but we don't financially need this benefit.**

You are still allowed to receive and use this benefit for your family. The economy is very uncertain, so you can hold onto the EBT card in case you need it months from now. Any unused benefits will be taken back after 6 months. The benefit cannot be transferred to others, so you cannot use this benefit to buy food for others. But, if you are financially able to give money to food assistance charities, you may do so.