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## FAQ about Pandemic EBT (P-EBT) in Pennsylvania

by Just Harvest on [May 8, 2020](#) in [Get Help, Our Programs](#)

**Pennsylvania has now received approval from the USDA to provide Pandemic EBT (P-EBT), a new benefit to help families whose children are missing school meals.**



Below are answers to frequently asked questions about this program. **This post was updated for clarity on May 12.**

## Q1: What is Pandemic-EBT?

The Family's First Coronavirus Response Act authorized a new benefit called Pandemic EBT to help families with children who are eligible for free or reduced-price school meals. The benefit will come on an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card, which is like a debit card. The benefits can only be spent on food items at any store that accepts SNAP ("food stamps"). P-EBT is meant to be compensation for free and reduced-price school meals that families didn't receive due to school closures.

## Q2: Which families are eligible?

Any household with a student who is eligible for free or reduced price meals will automatically receive P-EBT. This means the student must be enrolled at a school that participates in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). NSLP funds free and reduced price meals in public schools, nonprofit private schools, residential care facilities, and some preK programs. If you're not sure whether your school participates in NSLP you should contact them and ask.

- Students who attend a school where all students are offered free meals are automatically eligible, regardless of income. These are schools that participate in the **Community Eligibility Provision**, or CEP. (For the list of public CEP districts and schools in Allegheny County, see Table 1.) Many charter schools in the area are also CEP schools. If your child's school participates in CEP and offers free lunches to all students, then your child is already signed up for P-EBT benefits.
- 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.
- PreK students are eligible if their program offers free or reduced price meals through the National School Lunch Program.
- Families that recently lost income due to job loss or fewer hours can still apply for school meals and then receive P-EBT. (See next question.)

**TABLE 1: Allegheny County districts and schools whose enrolled students will all automatically receive P-EBT**

Carnegie Elementary School (Clarynton)  
Clairton City School District  
Cornell School District  
Duquesne City School District  
Dr. Cleveland Steward Jr. Elementary (Gateway)  
East Allegheny School District  
Evergreen Elementary School (Gateway)  
Highlands School District  
J. A. Allard Intermediate School (Moon)  
McKeesport Area School District  
Penn Hills School District  
Pittsburgh School District  
Richard J. Hyde Elementary School (Moon)  
South Allegheny School District  
Steel Valley School District  
Sto-Rox School District  
West Mifflin Area School District  
Wilkinsburg Borough School District  
Woodland Hills School District

Students enrolled at cyber schools and for-profit private schools, and those who are homeschooled, are not eligible for free and reduced-price school meals and are therefore not eligible P-EBT.

## Q3: What if children didn't qualify for free or reduced price school meals during the school year, but my income has changed and I need to apply?

You can check the income guidelines for reduced-price school meals in Table 2. If you meet them and your child is eligible (see Q2), they will also be eligible for P-EBT.

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.

**Just Harvest can assist with your free or reduced price school meal application.** Leave your name and contact info and the best time to reach you Monday through Friday from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm at (412) 431-8960 x602 or by filling out the form **on this page**. Our team is working from home and our response time may be slower than usual, but we aim to get back to you within 48 hours.

### 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 are currently receiving SNAP (Food Stamps) or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF/cash assistance) benefits, you will get the Pandemic EBT amount deposited onto your current 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 P-EBT card in the mail with instructions on how to use it. **In order for you to receive a P-EBT card your school must have your current address!**

**TABLE 2: Income Limits for Reduced Price Meals for the 2019-2020 School Year and P-EBT**

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
Each additional family member	+\$8,177	+\$682

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

Pennsylvania's Department of Human Services (DHS) and Department of Education will begin to issue P-EBT benefits using information from schools 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. In the second phase, the state will mail P-EBT cards to other households with students who are already enrolled in school meals or who attend a CEP school. Households with newly enrolled students will receive their P-EBT cards throughout the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year. We don't know exactly when phases 2 and 3 will begin.

## 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 P-EBT cards. If you are already receiving other DHS benefits, you should report your change of address by calling the statewide customer service center at 1-877-395-8930 or, in Philadelphia, at (215) 560-7226. (*Note: call times are longer than usual due to the current crisis. Please be patient.*)

## Q8: Will this affect my eligibility for other benefits?

No, it will not, and other benefits will not affect your eligibility for P-EBT.

## Q9: My child attends a school where all students receive free meals, but we don't financially need this benefit.

The state will still automatically send you this benefit and allow you to use it 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. This benefit cannot be transferred to others, so you cannot use this benefit to buy food for others. But you can buy food for your kids using this card and then donate the money you saved on groceries to charity or to help others in need if you wish.

## Q10. Will families receiving Grab and Go meals through school districts be eligible? Will those districts stop that service?

P-EBT doesn't require schools to stop serving Grab & Go meals. This benefit is an additional nutritional resource, not a replacement; families can get both.

Further questions? Contact Ann Sanders at [anns@justharvest.org](mailto:anns@justharvest.org) or post them in the comments below. If you live in Philadelphia you can contact [Greater Philadelphia Coalition Against Hunger](#) for more info (Kathy Fisher, [kfisher@hungercoalition.org](mailto:kfisher@hungercoalition.org)). We thank the Coalition for their contributions to this info.



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