

Frequently Asked Questions for the Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) Food Benefits

Answers to many commonly asked questions about the P-EBT food benefits for **New York State** residents:

What are P-EBT food benefits?

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act of 2020 authorized the payment of P-EBT food benefits to households with children who would have received free school lunches under the National School Lunch Act, if not for a school closure. These temporary food benefits are to help cover the cost of meals children would otherwise would have received at school from March through June during the 2019-2020 school year.

Do I need to apply for P-EBT food benefits for my child/children?

No, you do not (and cannot) apply for P-EBT food benefits. P-EBT food benefits will automatically be issued to all eligible children.

If your family received Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and/or Temporary Assistance–TA (Cash) benefits for March 2020, **and** you have children between ages 5 and 18 who receive free or reduced-price school lunch, you should have already received P-EBT food benefits for each eligible child in your household. These food benefits were automatically issued to your family's current EBT card in May and June.

If you have children who receive free or reduced-price school lunch, but your family did not receive P-EBT food benefits in May and June, you still will automatically get P-EBT food benefits for each school-age child in your household. If you have children who receive free or reduced-price school lunch, but your family has not yet received P-EBT food benefits, you still will automatically get P-EBT food benefits for each school-age child in your household. Information about when and how to access P-EBT food benefits will be mailed to households with eligible children through October.

Are my child/children eligible for P-EBT food benefits?

All children who would have **received** free or reduced-price school lunches for the days their school was closed due to COVID-19 are eligible to receive P-EBT food benefits. This includes:

- all children attending Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) schools where all children attending public schools in the district received free or reduced-price school lunches.
- Children who attend private, parochial and charter schools and who received free school lunches.
- Three and four-year-old children attending Universal Pre-Kindergarten and who received free school lunches.
- Young adults ages 19 to 21 who are still in school and who received free school lunches.
- Foster children who received free school lunches.
- Children who are non-citizens and who received free school lunches.

Only children who would have received free or reduced-price school lunches had schools not closed in March due to COVID-19 are eligible for P-EBT food benefits.

How do I know if my child/children received free or reduced-price school lunch under the National School Lunch Act?

Please contact your child/children's school or school district with questions concerning their participation in the national free or reduced-priced school lunch program.

Do my foster child/children qualify for P-EBT food benefits if they received free school lunches?

All children who would have received free school lunches for the period that schools were closed due to COVID-19 are eligible to receive P-EBT food benefits.

Do my preschool age child/children qualify for P-EBT food benefits if they were receiving free and/or reduced-price lunch?

Children ages 3 and 4, who attended pre-kindergarten and who received free school lunch through the National Free Lunch Program are also eligible to receive P-EBT food benefits. Information about when and how to access P-EBT food benefits will be mailed to households with eligible children through October.

Do young adults ages 19 to 21 who are still in school and receive free and/or reduced-price lunch qualify for P-EBT food benefits?

Young adults who are ages 19 through 21 who were still in school during the 2019-20 school year **and** who would have received free school lunches during the period that schools were closed due to COVID-19 are also eligible to receive P-EBT food benefits. Information about when and how to access P-EBT food benefits will be mailed to households with eligible young adults through October.

How much will my child/children receive in P-EBT food benefits?

The maximum monthly amounts you may receive for each eligible child in your household are:

Month	Amount
March	\$68.00
April	\$125.00
May	\$119.00
June	\$108.00

So, \$420 is the **maximum** amount of P-EBT food benefits that one child could receive for the entire March through June period.

When will my qualified child/children receive the P-EBT food benefits?

1. Families with children ages 5 through 18 who received either **SNAP** or **TA (Cash)** benefits for March 2020 have already received their P-EBT food benefits.
2. Most, but not all, families with children ages 3-18 who get **Medicaid** AND who get free school lunches have already received their P-EBT food benefits in **July**.
3. **All other families** with children eligible for P-EBT food benefits will receive a P-EBT 2020 food benefit card for each of their eligible children. Eligible children will continue to receive their P-EBT 2020 food benefit cards through October.

How will I receive P-EBT food benefits for my qualified child/children?

The P-EBT food benefits will be loaded onto an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card:

- Most families that receive SNAP and/ or TA (Cash) benefits already received the P-EBT food benefits for each eligible child sometime in May or June. The P-EBT food benefits were issued directly to your household's existing EBT card and added to your SNAP balance. You can check your family's SNAP/P-EBT food benefits **balance** (but **not** your eligibility for P-EBT food benefits) by visiting www.connectebt.com or by calling **1-888-328-6399**. Call center agents at this number can only answer questions about your SNAP balance. They do not have information about P-EBT food benefits and cannot answer any questions about whether you are eligible and when you will receive them.
- Most families with children who receive Medicaid, who are between the ages of 3 and 18 and who are eligible for P-EBT food benefits will have their P-EBT food benefits issued either to the Medicaid Common Benefit Identification Card (CBIC) of the parent or to the CBIC of the oldest child in your household who has been certified for free or reduced-price school lunches. Households with children in this group received a letter in July telling them how to access their P-EBT food benefits using their Medicaid CBIC.
- The parents/guardians of eligible children who did not receive their P-EBT food benefits on a SNAP, TA (Cash) or Medicaid card will receive a P-EBT 2020 food benefit card in the mail. A card will be sent for each eligible child. These cards will be mailed in each school-aged child's name, not a parent's or guardian's name. A picture of what the P-EBT 2020 food benefit card looks like is included below. Eligible children will continue to receive their P-EBT 2020 food benefit cards, including instructions on how to use them, through October. Once your benefits have been used, please be sure to keep this card in the event P-EBT food benefits are issued in the future.
 - Please note, that all P-EBT 2020 food benefit cards will have an ID number that starts with the letter "I" and a generic birthdate of 01/01/1900.



How do I use P-EBT food benefits if they are on a Medicaid Common Benefit Identification Card (CBIC)?

To access your P-EBT food benefits using your CBIC, you must have a Personal Identification Number (PIN).

- If you do not already have a PIN, you can select one over the phone by calling **1-888-328-6399**. Please be prepared to provide security information, including your zip code and the last four digits of the cardholder's social security number, to complete this process.
- If you have already received a letter from OTDA notifying you that P-EBT food benefits have been issued to the CBIC that you use for Medicaid and you need to request a replacement card, call the P-EBT helpline at 1-833-452-0096.
 - For detailed instructions on how to select a PIN for your NYS Medicaid CBIC view the **Activating a NYS Medicaid Card for P-EBT Food Benefits** video at: <https://youtu.be/EwwFPUDLX8o>.
 - For written instructions on how to select a PIN for your NYS Medicaid CBIC visit: <https://otda.ny.gov/SNAP-COVID-19/P-EBT-Medicaid-Card-PIN-Instructions.asp>.

How do I use P-EBT food benefits if they are on a P-EBT 2020 food benefit card?

When you receive your P-EBT 2020 food benefit card in the mail, you will also receive information about how to select a PIN. It is important that you follow the directions for selecting a PIN to be able to access P-EBT food benefits. To access your P-EBT food benefits using a P-EBT 2020 food benefit card, you must have a Personal Identification Number (PIN).

- You can select one over the phone by calling **1-888-328-6399**. Please be prepared to provide security information, including your zip code and the month and day of the cardholder's birthday (MM/DD), to complete this process.
 - For detailed instructions on how to select a PIN for your P-EBT 2020 food benefit card view the **Activating a P-EBT 2020 Food Benefit** video at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JvWV-FvyA5Y&feature=youtu.be>
 - For written instructions on how to select a PIN for your P-EBT 2020 food benefit card visit: <https://otda.ny.gov/SNAP-COVID-19/P-EBT-Card-PIN-Instructions.asp>

Once your benefits have been used, please be sure to keep this card in the event P-EBT food benefits are reissued in the future.

I have an EBT card but no longer receive SNAP/TA (Cash) benefits. Can I still use that card to access my P-EBT food benefits?

Please check your family's P-EBT food benefits balance by visiting <http://www.connectebt.com/> or by calling **1-888-328-6399**. If your P-EBT food benefits are not available on your EBT card, you will receive more information in the mail about how to access your P-EBT food benefits.

Will the P-EBT food benefit program continue through the summer?

Currently, P-EBT food benefits will only be issued for those months—March through June—for which schools were closed due to COVID-19 during the 2019-20 school year. In the event that P-EBT food benefits are issued in the future, please be sure keep your child's P-EBT 2020 food benefit card.

How do I use an EBT/NYS Medicaid CBIC or P-EBT 2020 food benefit card?

An EBT card looks and is used like a bank debit card to buy food at authorized retail food stores. For more information on how to use an EBT card visit: <http://otda.ny.gov/workingfamilies/ebt/>.

To find authorized retail food stores near you, the SNAP Retailer Locator can be found at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/retailer-locator>.

What can I purchase with my child/children's P-EBT food benefits?

P-EBT food benefits can be used to purchase food at authorized retail food stores. A detailed list of food items that may be purchased with the food benefits can be found at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/eligible-food-items>.

Will I need to pay back my child/children's P-EBT food benefits?

No. Families who receive P-EBT food benefits will not have to pay back the benefits.

Do I have to use my child/children's P-EBT food benefits right away?

No. P-EBT food benefits will remain available and accessible on your NYS Medicaid CBIC or P-EBT 2020 food benefit card for up to one year from the date they are issued. You can check your family's P-EBT food benefits balance by visiting www.connectebt.com or by calling 1-888-328-6399.

Will receiving P-EBT food benefits impact my family's 'public charge' status?

Receiving P-EBT food benefits will not affect the 'public charge' status for non-citizen households.

My child's school district provides "grab-and-go" lunches for curbside pick-up or delivery. Will the P-EBT food benefit program change that?

No. P-EBT food benefits will not affect the school's curbside lunch pick-up or delivery program. And your household's participation in that program does not affect eligibility for P-EBT food benefits.

My family receives SNAP benefits and received SNAP Emergency Allotment supplements for March, April, and/or May. Will this have any effect on if or when my qualified child/children will receive the P-EBT food benefits?

P-EBT food benefits are **NOT** SNAP benefits. Therefore, eligibility for or receipt of P-EBT food benefits is not affected by your receipt of the SNAP Emergency Allotment supplements.

Should I contact my local department of social services if I have any questions about P-EBT food benefits?

No. P-EBT food benefits are being issued by the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance. They are **not** SNAP benefits, and your local department of social services has no information about your eligibility for these benefits, and no information about when you will receive these benefits if you are eligible. If you have any questions about P-EBT food benefits, please send an email to this address: otda.sm.eisp.PEBT@otda.ny.gov.

If you have already received a letter from OTDA notifying you that P-EBT food benefits have been issued to your household and you have questions, you may call the P-EBT Food Benefits Helpline: 1-833-452-0096.

Do my homeschooled child/children qualify for P-EBT food benefits?

Only children who receive free or reduced-price lunch at school are eligible for P-EBT food benefits. Households with homeschooled children do not usually receive free or reduced-priced school lunches and therefore are not be eligible for P-EBT food benefits. Please contact your school district with questions concerning access to the free or reduced-priced school lunch program.

What if I get P-EBT food benefits for my children but do not want or need the benefits? Can I give them to somebody who does need them or donate them to my local food bank?

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has advised that P-EBT food benefits are not transferable and cannot be donated. The P-EBT food benefits are intended for you to use to buy food for you and your child[ren]. USDA advises that if you and your family have received a P-EBT 2020 food benefit card and do not want to use the benefits to buy food, you should dispose of the card by cutting through the magnetic stripe on the card or shredding the card and discarding it in a secure manner. If your child(ren)'s P-EBT food benefits were issued to a NYS Medicaid CBIC do **NOT** dispose of the card—you are required to keep this card while enrolled in Medicaid.

P-EBT food benefits will remain available and accessible on your NYS Medicaid CBIC or P-EBT 2020 food benefit card for up to one year from the date they are issued.

We appreciate your interest in supporting the nutrition needs of those in your community during these difficult times. In most communities there are a number of nonprofit organizations that accept donations—including donations of non-perishable food items and/or donations of money they can use to buy food—to help those in your community who do not have enough food. For more information please visit:

coronavirus.health.ny.gov/food-pantries

Are there other food benefits or programs besides P-EBT food benefits that can help my family?

Yes. If your family does not already receive SNAP, you can see if you are eligible for and apply for SNAP by visiting www.mybenefits.ny.gov.

To locate a food pantry in your area visit coronavirus.health.ny.gov/food-pantries

To find a location where you can pick up free meals for your child/children:

- Visit the USDA Meals for Kids Site Finder at www.fns.usda.gov/meals4kids
- Text “Food” or “Comida” to **877-877**
- Call the USDA National Hunger Hotline at **1-866-3-HUNGRY** or **1-877-3-HAMBRE** (Spanish)
- Call **211** for New York State Residents
- Call **311** if you live in New York City

Who do I contact if I have questions about P-EBT food benefits?

You can send your questions in an email to otda.sm.eisp.PEBT@otda.ny.gov.

If you have already received a letter from OTDA notifying you that P-EBT food benefits have been issued to your household and you have questions, you may call the P-EBT Food Benefits Helpline: 1-833-452-0096.