



Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance

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General Information System (GIS) Message

Section 1

Transmittal:	21 TA/DC054 Upstate and New York City
Date:	August 05, 2021
To:	Subscribers
Suggested Distribution:	Commissioners, SNAP Directors, TA Directors, Medicaid Directors
From:	Alison Maura, Director of Temporary Assistance and HEAP Employment and Income Support Programs
Subject:	COVID-19 Pandemic EBT Food Benefits for the 2020-2021 School Year
Effective Date:	Immediately
Contact Information:	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Questions – SNAP Bureau 518-473-1469 or otda.sm.cees.snap@otda.ny.gov
Attachments:	Attachment 1: LDSS-5186 Attachment 2: LDSS-5186 SP

Section 2

The purpose of this GIS is to advise social services districts (districts) that, starting in June 2021, the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) began the process of issuing Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) food benefits for the 2020-2021 school year to students who have been certified as eligible to receive free school lunches under the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), and who had a reduction in in-person learning during the 2020-2021 school year due to COVID-19.

The terms and conditions of eligibility for P-EBT benefits, originally set forth by the Families First, Coronavirus Response Act, 2020, were amended for the 2020-2021 school year by the Continuing Appropriations Act, 2021 and Other Extensions Act, and the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021. The Consolidations Appropriations Act, 2021, authorized the extension of the availability of P-EBT benefits through the 2020-2021 school year. P-EBT food benefits will be issued in accordance with the terms of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) memorandums of March 20 and November 16, 2020, and in accordance with New York State's federally approved plan.

Just as they were for the 2019-2020 school year, P-EBT benefits are issued directly by OTDA. Districts have no role in the administration or issuance of P-EBT benefits. The benefits are issued outside of the Welfare Management System (WMS) and OTDA'S benefit issuance control systems. Most district staff therefore will not have access to any P-EBT food benefit issuance information. However, staff who have access to the EBT Electronic Payment Processing Information Control (EPPIC) system will be able to see the deposit of these benefits into EBT accounts.

As during the 2019-2020 school year, **there is no application process for P-EBT benefits**. Eligible children will **automatically** receive P-EBT food benefits based on school reported in-person and remote

learning attendance information for months their child[ren]’s in-person attendance at school was reduced due to COVID-19 during the 2020-2021 school year. The issuances are based on rosters of eligible children compiled from data provided by school districts and schools participating in the NSLP. Benefits will be issued in the following manner:

- P-EBT benefits for eligible children receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or Temporary Assistance (TA) benefits at the time of issuance of the initial benefit will have P-EBT food benefits issued to their SNAP and TA households’ EBT cards. OTDA is employing public messaging to notify these households and has developed a poster (LDSS-5186 and LDSS-5186 SP) and other information which will be accessible on OTDA’s COVID-19 P-EBT informational webpage at: <https://otda.ny.gov/PEBTg1>.
- P-EBT benefits for eligible children who are **currently** enrolled in Medicaid (but not receiving SNAP or TA) **and** who successfully accessed and redeemed their P-EBT food benefits for the 2019-2020 school year on a Medicaid Common Benefit Identification Card (CBIC), will receive their food benefits for the 2020-2021 school year on the same Medicaid CBIC. These children will receive a letter in the mail explaining that their benefits for the 2020-2021 school year will be available on the same CBIC used to access their 2019-2020 benefits. If the CBIC card used to access their 2019-2020 benefits has been lost, stolen or damaged, information about how to order a replacement NYS Medicaid CBIC or reset a PIN, can be found at: <https://otda.ny.gov/SNAP-COVID-19/P-EBT-Medicaid-Card-PIN-Instructions.asp>.
- All other eligible children will receive their food benefits on a P-EBT Food Benefit card. Those who successfully accessed their food benefits for the 2019-2020 school year on a P-EBT Food Benefit card will receive a letter explaining that their food benefits for the 2020-2021 school year will be issued on the **same** P-EBT Food Benefit card. **Newly eligible children who were not previously issued a P-EBT Food Benefit card, or children whose household failed to redeem P-EBT benefits issued for the 2019-2020 school year, will be mailed a new P-EBT Food Benefit card with instructions explaining how to activate the card and access the food benefits.**

Under the plan approved by USDA-FNS, there are **two monthly P-EBT food benefit amounts**, a **“fully-remote”** amount (\$132) and a **“hybrid”** amount (\$82). For each month an eligible student qualifies for P-EBT food benefits they will receive one of the following two amounts:

- **“Fully-remote”** – A child is eligible for a “fully-remote” benefit for a given month if, due to COVID-19, their school reported that the child’s in-person attendance was fewer than eight (8) days during the month, i.e., the child was **learning remotely for more than twelve (12) days** during the month.
- **“Hybrid”** – A child is eligible for a “hybrid” benefit for a given month if, due to COVID-19, their school reported that its predominant learning modality during that month is either hybrid or in-person **and the number of remote learning days for that month are between one (1) day and twelve (12) days.**

Eligible children attending **public** school in New York City will receive either a fully remote or hybrid benefit based on **individual attendance** information included on rosters provided by the New York City Department of Education.

All eligible children who attend a public school outside of New York City, or a non-public school (private, parochial or charter) anywhere in New York State, will receive either a fully-remote or hybrid benefit based on the school’s **predominant learning modality** (in-person, hybrid or fully-remote) for each month. The determination of each school’s predominant learning modality is based on learning modality information (whether the school was operating fully in-person, fully remote or in a hybrid manner) reported daily by schools to the New York State Department of Health (DOH).

For example, if a school reported to DOH that the predominant learning modality for children at that school during a given month was a hybrid model, **all** eligible children attending that school initially will receive the hybrid benefit of \$82 for that month, regardless of what a particular child's actual learning modality may have been. OTDA anticipates receiving individual attendance information from schools after the end of the 2020-2021 school year and will schedule clean up issuances as appropriate. During clean up, children who received the hybrid benefit based on their school modality for that month, but who themselves attended school remotely for more than 12 days that same month, will receive the difference between the hybrid and fully-remote benefit for that month.

Unlike the P-EBT food benefit issuance for the 2019-2020 school year, food benefits for this academic year will be distributed geographically by region rather than by payment cohort. The distribution of P-EBT food benefits will begin with NYC public school children and then to Rest of State regions as regional rosters are processed. OTDA will have a link to a public-facing portal available on its P-EBT benefits webpage so that parents and guardians of children eligible to receive the benefits and the general public can see where the rosters of students attending eligible schools are in the payment process. All eligible children will receive their P-EBT food benefits for 2020-2021 school year in two payments:

- The first payment of P-EBT food benefits for each month between September 2020 and March 2021 that an eligible child qualified for food benefits began being issued to all eligible **public-school** children in June.
- The second payment of P-EBT food benefits for each month between April and June 2021 that an eligible child qualified for food benefits will be issued to all eligible **public-school** children after the first payments have been issued.
- OTDA anticipates that benefits for the entire period of benefit eligibility (September 2020 through June 2021) will be issued to eligible **non-public school** children beginning in September 2021.

P-EBT food benefits are not SNAP benefits. Under the authorizing legislation, P-EBT food benefits are not SNAP benefits and the eligibility, and rights and responsibility rules and regulations that apply to SNAP do not all apply to these benefits. For example, disputes regarding eligibility for or the amount of P-EBT food benefits received are not eligible for fair hearings. Eligibility for P-EBT food benefits is not limited by immigration status, nor will it impact a family's "public charge" status. However, P-EBT food benefits are subject to the same purchase and use restrictions as SNAP benefits. They are intended to be used to purchase food for the household of the children that received them and may only be used to purchase the same food items that may be purchased with SNAP benefits.

OTDA has developed public messaging to direct questions and concerns to the agency's website and away from the districts. To alleviate the number of phone calls directed to districts, a dedicated P-EBT food benefit helpline has been established to assist callers with questions related to eligibility, receiving and accessing benefits, as well as activating and replacing lost or stolen Medicaid CBIC and P-EBT Food Benefits cards. If your district receives inquiries regarding P-EBT food benefits, please advise the caller that your office does not administer these food benefits and to visit OTDA's COVID-19 webpage (<https://otda.ny.gov/SNAP-COVID-19/>).

Noticing

Districts are encouraged to either post the link to OTDA's COVID-19 P-EBT informational webpage <https://otda.ny.gov/SNAP-COVID-19/> or add the poster (LDSS-5186, LDSS-5186 SP) on the OTDA webpage directly to their district's website.

FAQs

OTDA has prepared a set of FAQs for P-EBT households. The FAQs may be accessed at this link: <https://otda.ny.gov/SNAP-COVID-19/Frequently-Asked-Questions-Pandemic-EBT.asp>.

P-EBT Food Benefits Helpline

All telephone inquiries regarding P-EBT food benefits can be directed to call **1-833-452-0096**.

Email Inquiries

Households may use the following online form to submit P-EBT related inquiries in writing
otda.ny.gov/COVID-19/PEBT-info.