



February 26, 2021 Update

## PANDEMIC EBT FAQs

### Frequently Asked Questions for School Children (2020-21 School Year)

#### 1. What is Pandemic EBT (P-EBT)?

P-EBT is an optional federal program designed to provide food benefits to children who have temporarily lost access to free and reduced-price meals at school due to school closures triggered by COVID-19. For the 2020-21 school year, eligible children will receive a P-EBT benefit based on the number of days they attend school virtually each month.

P-EBT is administered by the South Carolina Department of Education and the South Carolina Department of Social Services.

#### 2. Who is eligible for P-EBT?

Children must meet **all of the following criteria** to be eligible for P-EBT benefits:

- Enrolled in a free and reduced-price school meals program or attending a Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) school.
- Attending a school experiencing pandemic-triggered closures or reduced attendance/hours.
- Attending school virtually, either full-time or on a hybrid schedule.

#### 3. How do I know if my child attends a CEP school?

South Carolina has 527 CEP schools. A listing of South Carolina public and private schools participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), including CEP schools, is available on the DSS website here ([SY 2020-2021 School Listing](#))

#### 4. Who is NOT eligible for P-EBT?

Children who meet any of the following criteria are not eligible for P-EBT:

- Students who attend classes in-person and receive meals at school. *Note: if a student is on a hybrid schedule, he or she may receive P-EBT benefits for the days he/she attends school virtually.*
- Students who are not eligible for free or reduced-price meals or not enrolled in schools that participate in the National School Lunch Program.
- Students who are being homeschooled for the 2020-21 school year.

**5. Are 4K students eligible for P-EBT?**

Children who attend a 4K program in a CEP school or are enrolled in free or reduced-price meals are eligible for P-EBT for the time they attend school virtually during the 2020-21 school year. Please check the list of participating schools on the DSS website. Children enrolled in 4K programs operated by private child care facilities are not eligible for P-EBT.

**6. Are Head Start children eligible for P-EBT?**

Children who attend a Head Start program in a CEP school or are enrolled in free or reduced-price meals are eligible for P-EBT for the time they attend school virtually during the 2020-21 school year. Please check the list of participating schools on the DSS website. Children enrolled in Head Start programs operated outside of a public school are not eligible for P-EBT.

**7. Do I or my child have to be a citizen to be eligible for P-EBT?**

No. P-EBT benefits are for all children who receive free or reduced-price school meals.

**8. When can I expect to receive P-EBT benefits for my child?**

South Carolina will issue P-EBT benefits retroactively and on a staggered issuance schedule. P-EBT cards are expected to **mail out** on or before April 16, 2021 for students eligible for P-EBT benefits for September 2020-December 2020. Due to the high volume of P-EBT cards entering the mailing stream, delivery times for P-EBT cards will vary. Please allow a minimum of 7-10 business days, after the card's mailing, for card arrival.

South Carolina's **benefit issuance** schedule for P-EBT is outlined below. Note: each eligible student will receive one P-EBT card, which will be re-loaded with benefits for the remainder of the school year. For example, if your child is eligible for P-EBT beginning September-December 2020, he or she will be mailed a card in April. If they remain eligible through the end of the school year, additional P-EBT benefits will be loaded onto that same P-EBT card in April, May, and July 2021.

<b>Benefit Months</b>	<b>Issuance Dates</b>
September 2020 - December 2020	Cards will be mailed by April 16, 2021
January 2021 - February 2021	April 20 - 30, 2021
March 2021 - April 2021	May 20 - 30, 2021
May 2021 - June 2021	July 20 - 30, 2021

If a student became eligible for P-EBT after December 2020, a P-EBT card will be mailed during the next issuance cycle after the month he or she became eligible. For example, if your child became eligible for P-EBT benefits in March 2021, a P-EBT card would be issued in May 2021.

**9. Can I receive my child's P-EBT benefits faster by calling my county office?**  
Calls to local County DSS offices or to the State DSS office will not result in faster processing of P-EBT benefits. **Please do not call your local DSS County office with questions about P-EBT.**

**10. What should I do if I feel my child should have received P-EBT benefits but did not?**

If your student did not receive P-EBT benefits and they meet the eligible criteria outlined in Question #2, please contact your student's school or school district to determine the student's free or reduced meal status. ***DSS does not determine eligibility status for P-EBT benefits.***

**11. If my household already receives SNAP, how will the P-EBT benefit be issued?**

Current SNAP households whose child(ren) was enrolled in a free or reduced-price meals program for the 2020-21 school year will be issued a P-EBT benefit card mailed to the address on file with the student's school district.

**12. If I am not a current SNAP recipient, how will the P-EBT benefit be issued?**

For households not participating in SNAP whose child(ren) were enrolled in a free or reduced-price meals program or attending a CEP school, a new P-EBT card will be mailed to the address on file with the student's school district.

**13. If I have more than one child, will I get a different card for each child?**

Yes, if you have more than one child eligible for P-EBT benefits, a card will be issued for each eligible child.

**14. How can I verify my student's mailing address?**

You may verify the student's mailing address by going to the P-EBT Address Portal located at: <https://benefitsportal.dss.sc.gov/#/pebt/addressverification> . You will need to have your student's unique Student ID, Date of Birth, School District and School Name to access any personal identifying information.

***DSS strongly encourages ALL households with potentially eligible students to validate their address in the DSS P-EBT Address Portal on or before March 19<sup>th</sup>.***

**Any changes or updates you make to your address on the DSS P-EBT Address Portal will only be used for the purposes of P-EBT.** Updating your address on the DSS Address Portal **will not** update your address on file with your child's school or on a current SNAP case. If an address change is necessary, please remember to contact your child's school to amend your address and/or notify your local county DSS office to update the address on an active SNAP case.

**15. Why can I not find my student in the Address Portal?**

If you cannot locate your child(ren) in the portal, you will need to check the listing of schools on the DSS website ([SY 2020-2021 School Listing](#)) to verify your student attends a CEP school or a school participating in the National School Lunch Program.

If your student's school is listed, please **contact the child's school** to ensure eligibility for free or reduced-price meals and/or verify the demographic information sent to DSS is correct (Student Last Name, Date of Birth, unique Student ID, School District and School Name).

**16. If a student chooses virtual learning, but has the option for in-person instruction with the meal service, is the student eligible for P-EBT?**

Yes, a student whose parent chooses to have them attend school virtually may receive P-EBT if they meet all the eligibility criteria outlined in Question #2.

**17. If a student receives a meal through parent pick up or is sent home with meals for virtual learning days, is the child still eligible for P-EBT?**

Yes, as long as the child does not receive and consume a meal onsite as part of an in-person instructional day and is eligible for free and reduced-price meals or attends a CEP school.

**18. What P-EBT benefit amount will I receive?**

The P-EBT benefit amount for each child is based on a daily rate of \$6.82 multiplied by the number of days a student is marked virtually present by their school/school district. The maximum monthly allotments (total benefit a child may receive if he or she is attending school virtually full-time) are as follows:

Month	Maximum Monthly Allotment
September 2020	\$143
October 2020	\$150
November 2020	\$122
December 2020	\$96
January 2021	\$130
February 2021	\$136
March 2021	\$157
April 2021	\$109
May 2021	\$143
June 2021	\$61

**19. What if an eligible P-EBT household does not want to participate in the P-EBT program?**

If an eligible household receives a P-EBT card and does not want to participate in the program, the household should destroy the P-EBT card. The P-EBT card and food benefit **cannot be transferred** to anyone else or used by someone outside your household.

**20. What can be purchased with the P-EBT benefit?**

Purchasing rules are the same for SNAP and P-EBT. P-EBT benefits can be used to purchase food for a household, such as:

- fresh, frozen, canned, or dried fruits and vegetables
- meat, poultry, fish, dairy products, eggs
- cereal, bread, pasta, rice
- any ingredients you use for cooking
- baby formula
- diabetic foods
- snack foods and non-alcoholic beverages
- seeds and plants for growing food at home

**P-EBT benefits CANNOT be used to buy:**

- beer, wine, liquor, cigarettes, or tobacco
- vitamins, medicines, and supplements
- prepared foods, hot foods
- non-food items (pet foods, cleaning supplies, paper products, hygiene items, or cosmetics)

**21. What retailers accept P-EBT?**

P-EBT benefits can be used to purchase food items at retailers displaying a SNAP logo/signage. Find the closest retailer where you can use your benefits at:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/retailer-locator>



**22. When will my P-EBT benefit expire?**

P-EBT benefits expire one year (365 days) after issuance.

**23. How do I request a replacement card?**

To check your balance or report your P-EBT card lost, stolen, or damaged, call 1-800-554-5268.

**24. Do I have to use all my P-EBT benefit when I get them?**

No. The benefit will carry over from month to month. Benefits not used within 365 days of issuance will be automatically removed from the card.

**25. Do P-EBT benefits replace summer feeding programs or other community feeding programs for children and families?**

No. The P-EBT benefit is provided in addition to other meal programs; it does not replace them.

**26. I am a grocery retailer interested in becoming an approved SNAP/P-EBT merchant. What do I need to do?**

Grocery retailers/food stores in SC who are interested in accepting SNAP/EBT must contact the USDA for approval. Visit online at:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/apply-to-accept>.

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