

## P-EBT: Food Benefits for School-Aged Children

P-EBT (Pandemic-EBT) is a food benefit program created in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This program is meant to help students who normally get free or reduced-price school meals at their school but cannot because they are not physically attending school.

P-EBT was offered at the end of the last school year but the process is different for the 2020-2021 school year. This year, P-EBT cards will be automatically issued; there is no application for P-EBT.

**To receive P-EBT benefits, students must be enrolled in free or reduced-price meals or attend a school that provides meals free to all students, known as CEP: Community Eligibility Provision schools.**

Students who attend private schools or other schools that do not participate in the free/reduced price meals program are not eligible to receive P-EBT.

For each day that K-12 schoolchildren lack access to in-school meals, P-EBT provides eligible families with \$6.82 in benefits per student, per day. These benefits are provided on a card that can be used like a debit card to purchase food at any grocery store that accepts LINK cards. Benefits will be issued starting in March 2021 but they will be retroactive to the start of the 2020-2021 school year; benefits will go through the end of the school year.

P-EBT cards will be mailed in unmarked envelopes. It is anticipated that families will begin to receive the cards in March. Each eligible child in the home will receive a card with their name on it. This means if there are four eligible students in the home, the family will receive four individual cards.

P-EBT is available to children regardless of immigration status. P-EBT benefits are *not* subject to public charge.

Families who may be eligible but not enrolled in the free or reduced-price meals program should contact their schools to apply. Income eligibility guidelines may be found on the ISBE website at <https://www.isbe.net/Pages/Household-Eligibility-Resources.aspx>

Families who are enrolled in the meals program or who live in a CEP district should make sure their mailing address is up to date with their school. Families can request that the cards be mailed to their schools. They should notify the school to arrange this.

Families who are enrolled in the meals program but do not receive a P-EBT card by end of March may contact Illinois Department of Human Services by calling 1-800-843-6154 or emailing [DHS.FCS.PEBT@illinois.gov](mailto:DHS.FCS.PEBT@illinois.gov).

## Messages for Families:

- **If your child is already enrolled in free or reduced-price school meals OR attends a school that provides meals for free to all students AND your address is up-to-date:**
  - Your child will get P-EBT automatically for qualifying days (days when the child lacked access to an in-school meal).
  - Each child will receive their own card with their name on it.
  - Cards will be mailed to you in March.
  - Cards will arrive in an unmarked envelope so please be on the lookout.
  - Families should hold onto their P-EBT card(s) because future benefits will be loaded onto the same card.
- **If you are new to your school district, or your student is not enrolled in free or reduced-price meals, OR you recently moved:**
  - You must fill out a free or reduced-price school meal application with your school. Your child may be eligible for benefits retroactive to August, but you should complete an application as soon as possible.
  - Please visit your school website or call your school to submit a school meal benefit application.
- **You can get your P-EBT card mailed to the school instead, but you must notify the school that you want to do this.**
- **All students are eligible regardless of immigration status**
  - P-EBT will not be considered under the public charge rule.
- **Students can still get free meals from school and community sites and get P-EBT, too:**
  - Take home meals and P-EBT are separate programs.
  - To find free meal sites near you, text the word “food” or “comida” to: “877-877”
  - You can also visit your school district website to find school meal locations in your area.

Don't forget: to receive P-EBT benefits, it is important that your address is up to date with your school.

For more information about P-EBT, please review the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document or visit [www.chicagosfoodbank.org/pebt](http://www.chicagosfoodbank.org/pebt).