



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.

Benefit Months	Issuance Dates
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 19th.

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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