



August 27, 2021

PANDEMIC EBT FAQs

Frequently Asked Questions for School Children (Summer 2021)

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.

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

2. Who is eligible for Summer K-12 P-EBT?

All K-12 students who would have received free or reduced-price school meals at school under the National School Lunch Program are eligible for a **one-time** P-EBT benefit covering the 2021 summer period. This includes:

- Students who received P-EBT benefits during the last month of the 2020-2021 school year. Because the covered summer period is an extension of the school year, this includes students who graduated.
- Students who were eligible for free or reduced-price school meals under the National School Lunch Program during the 2020-21 school year but did not receive P-EBT benefits in the last month of the school year because they attended school in-person.
- Students who are determined newly eligible for free or reduced-price school meals during the covered summer period. This would include students who submitted meal applications during the summer months. These meal applications will not be processed until late August 2021. Please contact your child's school to determine if they are newly eligible for Summer K-12 P-EBT.

3. Who is NOT eligible for Summer K-12 P-EBT?

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

- 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 were homeschooled for the 2020-21 school year.

4. How much is the Summer K-12 P-EBT benefit amount?

The benefit amount is based on a daily rate of \$6.82, multiplied by the number of weekdays during the summer benefit period. For South Carolina, this equates to 55 days. At \$6.82 per day, each eligible child will receive \$375.

5. Are 4K students eligible for Summer K-12 P-EBT?

Children who attend a 4K program in a CEP school or were enrolled in free or reduced-price meals program for the 2020-2021 school year are eligible for Summer K-12 P-EBT. 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 Summer K-12 P-EBT.

6. Are Head Start children eligible for Summer K-12 P-EBT?

Children who attend a Head Start program in a CEP school or were enrolled in free or reduced-price meals program for the 2020-2021 school year are eligible for Summer K-12 P-EBT. 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 Summer K-12 P-EBT.

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

No. Summer K-12 P-EBT benefits are for all children who receive free or reduced-price school meals.

8. When can I expect to receive Summer K-12 P-EBT benefit for my child?

If your child(ren) received P-EBT benefits during the 2020-2021 school year, Summer K-12 P-EBT benefits will be added to the existing P-EBT card on or before August 30, 2021.

If an eligible student did not receive P-EBT benefits during the school year because they attended school in-person, P-EBT cards are expected to be **mailed out** on or before August 30, 2021.

If a student is determined newly eligible for free or reduced-price school meals during the covered summer period, P-EBT cards are expected to be **mailed out** on or before September 27, 2021.

Due to the high volume of P-EBT cards entering the mailing stream, delivery times for Summer K-12 P-EBT cards will vary. Please allow a minimum of 7-10 business days, after the card's mailing, for card arrival.

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 Summer K-12 P-EBT benefits but did not?

If your child(ren) did not receive Summer K-12 P-EBT benefits and they meet the eligible criteria outlined in Question #2, please contact your child(ren) 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. 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.

12. Do I have to use all my P-EBT benefit when I get it?

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.

13. When will my P-EBT benefit expire?

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

14. 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.

15. 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)

16. 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>



17. Do Summer K-12 P-EBT benefits replace summer feeding programs or other community feeding programs for children and families?

No. The Summer K-12 P-EBT benefit is provided in addition to other meal programs; it does not replace them.

18. 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>.