

About Pandemic EBT:

Guidance for Schools

Get help buying groceries while schools are closed

What is P-EBT?

Due to COVID-19 school closures, families enrolled in your school district may be eligible to get help with food benefits. These food benefits are called Pandemic EBT Emergency School Meals Program or P-EBT.

Who can receive P-EBT?

Students enrolled in a K-12 school that offers a school lunch program during the normal school year **AND**

- Is eligible for free or reduced-price school meals **OR**
- Is attending a school where meals are free for all students such as a Provision 2 or Community Eligibility Provision School.

How do households qualify for P-EBT benefits?

Households can qualify for P-EBT benefits in three ways:

1. Directly Certified Basic Food and receiving free meals at school: no application required. -DSHS will automatically issue households P-EBT benefits on their existing EBT card.
2. Directly Certified TANF, Foster, Migrant, Homeless or Medicaid: the household must apply for P-EBT.
3. Eligible for free and reduced-price meals: must apply for P-EBT.

Students not already approved to receive free or reduced-price school meals may complete a meal application any time before the end of the school year and be eligible for P-EBT benefits. School districts should process the meal applications for households.

- Households currently eligible for free and reduced-price meals but not directly certified because they receive Basic Food benefits will need to apply for P-EBT.

How does a household apply for P-EBT benefits?

Households where eligible school-aged children primarily live can apply for P-EBT benefits by visiting [Washingtonconnection.org](https://www.washingtonconnection.org) or calling 877-501-2233. The application must be completed by August 31, 2020 or before the start of the 2020-2021 school year—whichever is later. Once approved, an EBT card will be mailed to the household.

Households that already receive Basic Food benefits do not need to apply for P-EBT. These added benefits will automatically get added to your EBT card.

P-EBT is not subject to the public charge rule, so a family's immigration status will not affect their eligibility for these benefits.

What role do schools play?

1. Distribute information to families

Schools play a key role in helping distribute this information to families in their school district. Many families eligible for these benefits are not already enrolled in Basic Food, so they need to complete the application process for P-EBT to receive benefits. Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction has provided a [communications toolkit](#) to support schools in sharing this information with student households and will provide additional technical support, as needed, to carry out this process.

Some strategies for sharing this information with your school district households are:

- Adding information to your district website about P-EBT.
- Sharing information through your district's social media.
- Putting flyers in meal sacks/boxes distributed at meal service sites.
- Sending an email or calling households in your district.
- Working with your district's migrant and bilingual education and McKinney-Vento liaisons to ensure children whose families do not speak English and homeless children receive information about these benefits. The parent flyer in the communications toolkit will be available in multiple languages within the next few weeks to help with this outreach.

2. Continue to distribute, collect and process free and reduced-price meal applications.

Many families that did not qualify for free and reduced-price meals prior to the COVID-19 pandemic may now qualify. Collecting updated household income applications helps more families access the P-EBT benefits while they are available. Families can receive P-EBT benefits starting in the month their child(ren)'s free and reduced-price meal eligibility was determined. Benefits are available for eligible

families through the end of June. Application for these benefits is open until the 2020-2021 school year begins, but eligibility for free and reduced-price meals must have been determined no later than June to be eligible for these benefits.

3. Update your free and reduced-price meals eligibility data in CEDARS frequently.

Applications for P-EBT received by the Department of Social and Health Services will be compared to CEDARS data to determine that children are eligible for free or reduced-price meals and are students in a school that participates in the National School Lunch Program. Keeping CEDARS data (enrollment and F/R qualification) as up-to-date as possible will ensure eligible households receive their benefits in a timely manner.

4. What if a family contacts us?

Depending on what the family is asking, there are resources to help.

- If a family is interested in learning more about P-EBT, direct them to k12.wa.us/PEBT. This webpage is a direct link to the flyer detailing how to apply and receive benefits, as well as frequently asked questions.
- If a family is interested in applying for Pandemic EBT, ask them to [review the P-EBT flyer](#), which will direct them to their next steps.
- If a family is asking about their P-EBT benefits, refer them to washingtonconnection.org or 877-501-2233 to speak to a DSHS representative.

5. Can we continue our summer meal programs even though households will receive P-EBT?

Yes.

6. Can households that participated in our programs while school was closed receive P-EBT benefits?

Yes.

Questions?

View the frequently asked questions on the [Pandemic EBT Guidance webpage](#).

If you have any more questions, please email Child.Nutrition@k12.wa.us.

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