

P-EBT FAQs

The questions and answers below contain information about the Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer (P-EBT) Program. Please check the web page URL at the top of each page frequently for updated information.

Background

What is P-EBT?

P-EBT is a program that provides temporary benefits to families of children who normally get free or reduced-price meals at school but could not because they have been learning from home full or part time during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Who can get P-EBT benefits?

School-aged children may be able to get these benefits if both the following apply:

- They are enrolled to receive free or reduced-price meals at a school that participates in the National School Lunch Program.
- Their school responded to a survey sent out by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and reported that students in your child's grade learned from home either full or part time during the 2020-2021 school year.

If you are new to a school or school district, if your child did not get free or reduced-price meals last school year, or if you recently moved or had a change in income, you should fill out an application for free or reduced-price school meals. For more information about this application, contact your child's school.

How do I know if my child's school participates in the National School Lunch Program?

Check the list of participating schools at <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/wi-nslp-2020-2021.pdf>.

Note: If you have any questions about why your child's school is not on this list, contact the school.

Do children in daycare qualify for P-EBT benefits?

Not at this time. The federal government has expanded P-EBT benefits to include younger children but limited it to FoodShare households who might have received free or reduced price meals at child care facilities but did not because the facilities have been closed or operating with reduced hours due to COVID-19.

Wisconsin has submitted a plan to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service describing how our state will issue benefits for these children. Wisconsin is waiting for approval.

More information will become available when the state's plan has been reviewed and approved. No action is necessary at this time for families.

How much can I get through P-EBT?

The state is able to provide \$6.82 for each day a child learned from home and did not get meals at school. The total amount of benefits a family can get for an individual child is based on how much time the child's school said students in each grade learned from home.

The benefits a family gets may be different from child to child. It may also be different from month to month. A child may not get benefits for a month for many reasons, such as:

- The child's school had not started classes yet.

- The child's school had not been closed or operated with reduced hours or attendance for at least five days in a row before that month.
- The child's school reported that all or a majority of students were learning in person.

Where can I use my P-EBT benefits?

P-EBT benefits may be used in any store that accepts FoodShare. Major grocery chains and convenience stores accept P-EBT cards.

What food can I buy with P-EBT benefits?

You can use the benefits to buy food, such as:

- Breads and cereals.
- Fruits and vegetables.
- Meats, fish, and poultry.
- Dairy products.
- Snack foods.
- Seeds and plants to grow food for your family to eat.

See a detailed list of items you can and cannot buy with the benefits at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/eligible-food-items>.

Getting benefits

When will the 2020-2021 benefits be issued?

P-EBT benefits are being issued to families with eligible children for the 2020-2021 school year this spring. The first benefits were provided at the end of March based on the best information DHS had at the time. The benefits provided in March were for the months of August through November 2020. Benefits will be issued for additional months of the 2020-2021 school year later this spring.

What do the P-EBT letters look like?

There are three letters that will be sent to families whose addresses are on file with DHS each time benefits are released. These letters will tell families about whether they will get P-EBT benefits for certain months, and if so, how much for each child for each month. The April letters provided information for the months of August, September, October, and November 2020.

You can see a sample of each of the letters by clicking on the links below:

- The letter shown here: <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/pebt-eligible-letter.pdf> tells a family that they will receive P-EBT benefits for each of their school age children for at least one month of those for which benefits are currently being provided.
- The letter shown here: <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/pebt-not-eligible-letter.pdf> tells a family that none of their children were found eligible for P-EBT benefits during the months for which benefits are currently being provided.
- This letter shown here: <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/pebt-some-eligible-letter.pdf> tells a family that some of their children will receive benefits and some will not receive benefits for the months that benefits are currently being provided.

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

If you get a letter saying your child is not getting P-EBT benefits and you think they should be, please contact the P-EBT support line at 833-431-2224, Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. (excluding holidays), or email us at PEBTsupport@wisconsin.gov. When you reach out, please be prepared to provide the following information:

- Child's full name, date of birth, school, and grade
- Your full name, case number (found at the bottom of each page of your notification letter), email address, phone number, and preferred language

If you do not get a letter about your child's eligibility for P-EBT benefits, but you think they should be eligible, you should complete the P-EBT application at <http://access.wi.gov/pebt>. Families that received a letter about P-EBT, even one that said child(ren) would receive \$0, should **not** fill out the application.

I applied for P-EBT benefits for the 2019-2020 school year. Do I need to fill out another application?

You do not need to apply for P-EBT benefits, but you should make sure your child is enrolled in free or reduced price school meals and that your address is up to date with your school. If you received a notice in the mail in April informing you about your benefits, you do not need to apply.

If your child attends a Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) school where all meals are provided for free, you do not need to apply for free or reduced price school meals.

My child got benefits last year. Will they automatically get benefits this school year?

No, just because a child got P-EBT benefits last year does not mean they will get them this school year. Your child must meet the requirements described above in "Who can get Pandemic EBT benefits?"

I think my child is eligible for free or reduced price meals, but I haven't applied. Can I still get P-EBT benefits?

To get P-EBT benefits, your child's school must first have decided that your child can get free or reduced price meals. You should contact your school for an application (sometimes called an "free and reduced meal application") and apply as soon as possible. If your child qualifies and has been learning from home during the 2020-2021 school year, benefits may be issued retroactively to the start of the year.

What time period will P-EBT benefits cover?

Benefits will be provided going back to the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year. Benefits provided to eligible families in March were for the months of August through November 2020.

How are P-EBT benefits issued?

Families eligible to receive benefits who have an active QUEST card will have their benefits added to that card.

Families eligible to receive benefits who do not have an active QUEST card will get a P-EBT card in the mail with the benefits already added to it. The card can be used like a debit card to buy food.

Even if you received benefits for the 2019-2020 school year, benefits for the 2020-2021 school year will be sent to you on a new P-EBT card. When you receive this new card, you must follow the instructions provided to activate the card. Once the new card is activated, any old P-EBT card (from the 2019-2020 school year) will no longer be usable.

Once you have activated your new P-EBT card, you can throw the old one away.

Note: A P-EBT card sent to you this year should not be thrown away, even if all the benefits on it are spent. Future benefits for the 2020-2021 school year will be added to that card.

Why aren't my children's benefits the same for every month?

The benefits a family gets may be different from child to child or be different from month to month. There are many reasons for this, such as:

- Your child's school reported that children in some grades learned in person while others learned from home.
- Your child's school reported that in some months children learned from home, while in other months they learned in-person.

If you believe you did not get the right benefits, call the P-EBT support line at 833-431-2224, Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. (excluding holidays), or email us at PEBTsupport@wisconsin.gov.

What if I don't want to use my benefits? Can I give it back or give it to someone else?

Participation in P-EBT is voluntary. If you choose not to participate, please dispose of your card by cutting through the magnetic stripe on the card and throw the card out.

Note: There is no advantage to you if you return or decide not to use your P-EBT benefits. Using P-EBT will not result in a FoodShare overpayment.

You cannot give your card to someone else. It is illegal to sell, trade, or give your P-EBT benefits to another person. If you do this, you could become ineligible for the program, be fined, or even arrested.

P-EBT Card / QUEST card information

How are P-EBT benefits issued?

Families eligible to receive benefits who have an active QUEST card will have their benefits added to that card.

Families eligible to receive benefits who do not have an active QUEST card will get a P-EBT card in the mail with the benefits already added to it. The card can be used like a debit card to buy food.

Even if you received benefits for the 2019-2020 school year, benefits for the 2020-2021 school year will be sent to you on a new P-EBT card. When you receive this new card, you must follow the instructions provided to activate the card. Once the new card is activated, any old P-EBT card (from the 2019-2020 school year) will no longer be usable.

A limited number of families may find that they can access their 2020-2021 school year benefits on their old P-EBT card from last year. These families can use the benefits issued to the old card until they receive their new P-EBT card in the mail. The benefits available on the old card will be removed from that card on April 27, 2021, or once they activate a new P-EBT card. At that time, benefits can only be accessed using the new P-EBT card.

Once you have activated your new P-EBT card, you can throw the old one away.

Note: A P-EBT card sent to you this year should not be thrown away, even if all the benefits on it are spent. Future benefits for the 2020-2021 school year will be added to that card.

If I have more than one child, will I get a different P-EBT card for each child?

If you have more than one child approved for P-EBT, you will receive one card that has all the benefits on it.

How long will I have access to the P-EBT benefits on the card?

Benefits must be used within one year of the date they are put on the card. They will automatically be removed from the card after one year.

Who will get the P-EBT card if parents are divorced or separated?

P-EBT benefits will be provided to the current household that the state has on file for a child.

What if I get a P-EBT card but my child is no longer in my care?

If your child is not in your care, you are not eligible to receive P-EBT benefits for the child. Call the P-EBT support line at 833-431-2224, Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. (excluding holidays) if you received benefits that you are not eligible for.

How do I activate my P-EBT card?

Families should follow the instructions that come in the mail with their P-EBT card. These instructions will explain how to activate and use the card. If there are questions, call Card Service at 877-415-5164.

How can I check the balance on my card?

You can check the balance on your card at any time by going to the [ebtEDGE website](#) or using the [ebtEDGE mobile app](#).

What should I do with my old P-EBT card?

Make sure there are no benefits remaining on the card. You can check the balance on your card at any time by going to the [ebtEDGE website](#) or using the [ebtEDGE mobile app](#).

A limited number of families may find that they can access their 2020-2021 benefits on their old P-EBT card from last year. These families can use the benefits issued to the old card until they receive their new P-EBT card in the mail. The benefits available on the old card will be removed from that card on April 27, 2021, or once they activate a new P-EBT card. At that time, benefits can only be accessed using the new P-EBT card.

Once you have activated your new P-EBT card, you can throw the old one away.

I am currently receiving Wisconsin FoodShare benefits and have a QUEST card. Can P-EBT benefits be loaded on that card?

If you already have a QUEST card and qualify for P-EBT, P-EBT benefits will be automatically added to your QUEST card.

I didn't get my P-EBT card. What should I do?

Your P-EBT card will come separate from your notification letter. Call Card Service at 877-415-5164.

I lost my card. How do I get a replacement?

If you lost your P-EBT card, call Card Service at 877-415-5164 to get a new one.

The P-EBT application

What is the P-EBT application?

The P-EBT application (<http://access.wi.gov/pebt>) is for families who have not received a letter from DHS about the P-EBT program, but who believe their child is eligible to get benefits. If you received a letter, even if it told you that you were getting \$0 in benefits, filling out this application will not help you. You need to work with DHS' P-EBT support team to get help.

By filling out this application, you will find out if your child is on DHS' list of students in Wisconsin who can receive free or reduced price meals through the National School Lunch Program. DHS will ask you to confirm information about your child's school and grade. Finally, you will provide DHS with your address so that you can receive benefits if your school tells DHS your child has been learning from home during the 2020-2021 school year.

To complete the application, you will need:

- Parent/guardian information, such as full name, date of birth, phone number, and address
- Student information, such as full name, date of birth, school name, and school city

Students who are determined eligible for free or reduced price meals at any point within the school year will be eligible for P-EBT back to the beginning of the school year.

Who should fill out the P-EBT application?

The application is for families who have not received a letter from DHS about the P-EBT program, but believe their child is eligible to get benefits. If you received a letter about P-EBT, even if it told you that you were getting \$0 in benefits, filling out this application will not help you. You need to work with the P-EBT support team to get help. You can call them using the P-EBT support line at 833-431-2224, Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. (excluding holidays), or email us at PEBTsupport@wisconsin.gov.

What happens after I complete the application?

After completing the application, if the information you provided does not match information on file with DHS, you will receive a message that a record for your child could not be found. If the information provided does match, you will get a message that a record has been found.

If you see "Record Found" next to your child's name, this means the system found your child's information. Next, DHS' Support Team will determine whether your child should receive PEBT benefits based on their school's report of how often students learned from home each month of the 2020-2021 school year. You will receive a letter in the mail telling you whether your child will receive benefits, and if so, how much. There is nothing more you can do until you receive this letter.

If you see "Record Not Found" next to your child's name, this means the system was NOT able to successfully locate your child's information in DHS' list. At this time, P-EBT benefits cannot be issued to your child because DHS cannot find them in the list of students who normally receive free or reduced price meals at school. You can contact your school to make sure the school participates in the National School Lunch Program, your child(ren) is (are) enrolled in the school's free or reduced price meal program, and that school has your child(ren)'s names spelled correctly in their records. You can also call the P-EBT support line if you have questions.

What does it mean if I don't see my school listed in the application?

If your child's school does not appear on the drop-down menu provided as part of the application form, it means that your child's school is not on record with the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction as participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). You can find a list of participating schools at <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/wi-nslp-2020-2021.pdf>. Children who are enrolled in a school that does not participate in NSLP are not eligible for P-EBT.

Do I need to provide my Social Security number to complete the application?

No. Giving us your Social Security number is optional. Providing your child's Social Security number on the application is also optional, but it could help us in locating your child's records.

What can I expect after I submit the P-EBT application?

After you submit your application, the system will try to match the information you provide about your children to the information we have on record about children who receive free or reduced price meals through their schools. If a record match is not found, this means the system was not able to find a match with the names on our list. You can contact your school to make sure you are a part of their program and that the information you provided on the application matches exactly what the school has on record for your child. (If you write "Jenny Smith" and your school has "Jenni Smith" in their records, the names will not match.) If you still believe that your child should be eligible for P-EBT, you can call the P-EBT Team through the support line at 833-431-2224, Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. (excluding holidays) or email us at PEBTsupport@wisconsin.gov. We ask that you allow 3-5 days after submitting to allow our team to review your application and see if they can find any potential matches in our list.

If the information provided does match, you will get a message that a record has been found. However, remember that filling out the simplified application and receiving a message confirming a match does NOT mean your child will automatically receive benefits. Next, the P-EBT Support Team will figure out whether your child should receive P-EBT benefits based on their school's report of how often students learned from home each month of the 2020-2021 school year. You will receive a letter in the mail telling you whether your child will receive benefits, and if so, how much. Please allow 7 business days before contacting the P-EBT Support Team so this letter can get to you at the mailing address you provided. There is nothing more you need to do until you receive this letter.

If you receive a letter saying your child is eligible for benefits and providing an amount, you should receive a pre-loaded P-EBT card in a separate mailing. This is a white plastic card you can use like a debit card to buy food. You will have to activate the card when you get it. Instructions on how to do this will be provided.

Issues and concerns

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

If you get a letter saying your child is not getting P-EBT benefits and you think they should be, please contact the P-EBT support line at 833-431-2224, Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. (excluding holidays), or email us at PEBTsupport@wisconsin.gov. When you reach out, please be prepared to provide the following information:

- Child's full name, date of birth, school, and grade
- Your full name, case number (found at the bottom of each page of your notification letter), email address, phone number, and preferred language

If you do not get a letter about your child's eligibility for P-EBT benefits, but you think they should be eligible, you may need to complete the Pandemic EBT (P-EBT) application. Families that received a letter about P-EBT, even one that said your child(ren) would receive \$0, should not fill out the application.

Will my immigration status be affected or will I become a public charge if I get these benefits?

No, your immigration status is not affected, and you will not become a public charge.

Is P-EBT eligibility affected by having taken advantage of "grab-and-go" and/or summer meals offered by schools?

No. P-EBT benefits are not affected by whether children received "grab-and-go" meals or school meals in the summer.

I need food help now. What can I do?

P-EBT does not replace other food assistance. If your family does not already receive FoodShare benefits, you should visit the ACCESS website (<https://access.wisconsin.gov/access>) to see if you are eligible. Families can also call 211 to find other food resources in their communities.

What if I have problems with my P-EBT or QUEST card?

If you need help with your QUEST or P-EBT card, please call QUEST Card Service at 877-415-5164.