

Pandemic EBT (P-EBT): Emergency School Meals Program Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is P-EBT, or Pandemic EBT Emergency School Meals Program?

Because of COVID-19, children who are eligible for free or reduced-price meals at school will get extra food benefits. P-EBT is a new and temporary food benefit to help families buy groceries because schools were closed.

2. Who can get P-EBT?

Any family with a child in grades K-12 who is eligible for free or reduced-price school meals – including children who go to a school where meals are free for *all* students.

P-EBT is for all students regardless of citizenship or immigration status. The only requirement is a child must be eligible for free or reduced-price school meals.

3. If my child is eligible, how much money will we get?

The amount depends on how many children in your home get free or reduced-price school meals. The maximum benefit is \$399 per child. You will get one P-EBT card for all your children (for example: if you have 3 children, you will get one card with \$1,197).

Families with children who became eligible for free and reduced-price meals **after** their school closed will get **less** than \$399 for each child. It depends on when your family applied for free or reduced-price meals, or for Basic Food. P-EBT Benefits (\$5.70 per day) are based on the number of school days that schools were closed:

March - \$68.40

April - \$125.40

May - \$119.70

June - \$85.50

4. Can P-EBT affect me or my family's immigration status? Is P-EBT only available for U.S. citizens?

No. P-EBT is for all eligible children in Washington State, regardless of their status or their parent's status. You will not be asked about you or your child's immigration status or citizenship when you apply for P-EBT. P-EBT is **not** considered under a public charge. (See **question #17** for more information)

5. How do my children get P-EBT?

There are two ways to get P-EBT:

Families with Basic Food (food stamps): Between June 28th and July 7th, P-EBT benefits will be added to the EBT card you already use.

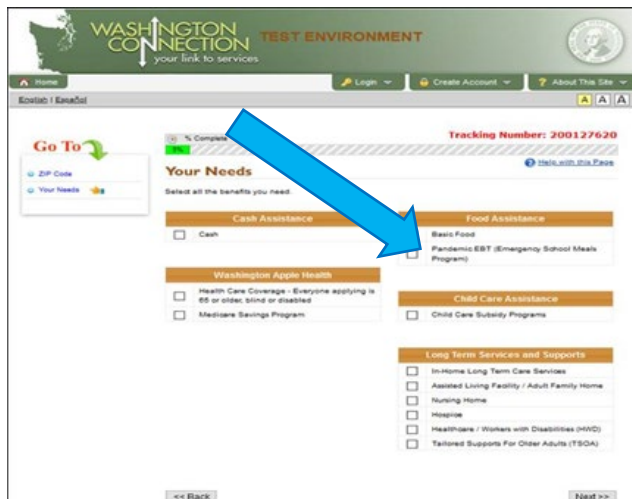
Families with children who receive free or reduced-price school meals:

You must complete a simple application before August 31, 2020 or the beginning of the new school year (whichever is later).

6. How do I apply for P-EBT?

There are two ways to apply:

1. **Online:** www.WashingtonConnection.org (on the application, choose 'Pandemic EBT - Emergency School Meals Program' box in the Food Assistance section)



The screenshot shows the 'WASHINGTON CONNECTION TEST ENVIRONMENT' website. The 'Your Needs' section is active, with a tracking number of 200127620. A blue arrow points to the 'Pandemic EBT (Emergency School Meals Program)' checkbox under the 'Food Assistance' category. Other categories include 'Cash Assistance', 'Washington Apple Health', 'Child Care Assistance', and 'Long Term Services and Supports'.

OR,

2. **Call:** 877-501-2233 (DSHS Customer Service Contact Center. Language translation available)

To apply, for each child you need to know:

- Name of your child's school or school district
- Your child's first and last name as it appears on school enrollment records
- Child's date of birth

P-EBT benefits are approved if the information on your child's school meal application matches your child's information on the P-EBT application.

You can choose where to mail your EBT card on your P-EBT application. If your child (children) is approved, your EBT card will arrive in the mail 3-5 days after

approval. Due to the application workload, it may take up to 30 business-days for your application to be processed.



7. When is the deadline to apply for P-EBT?

You must apply by August 31, 2020, or before the start of the 2020-21 school year (whichever is later).

8. How will I know if I am approved?

You will get a EBT card in the mail with information about how to use your EBT card. (See #6 for more information on how to apply). The approval process may take longer if you became eligible for free and reduced-price school meals after schools closed.

If your P-EBT application is denied, you will receive a letter in the mail explaining what happened and how to appeal if you think the denial is incorrect.

9. What should I do when I get the P-EBT card in the mail?

Follow the instructions that come with your EBT card. You must activate your card before you use it to buy food. To activate your card, you will call and give the zip code for the mailing address on your P-EBT application. Then you create your private PIN number that you will use when you go shopping – like a debit card.

10. What if our EBT card arrives with the wrong amount of money?

If you think the amount is not correct, call DSHS' Customer Service Contact Center at: 877-501-2233.

11. Can kids still get meals from schools or other organizations if we get P-EBT?

Yes. Children can get meals from schools **and** get P-EBT. They are separate programs. P-EBT benefits do not replace meals from school or other organizations.

12. How often will I get P-EBT benefits?

One time. P-EBT is not a monthly benefit, like food stamps or WIC.

13. What if I applied online and didn't get my P-EBT card, or I get a letter denying my application?

Call the Department of Social and Health Services' (DSHS)

Customer Service Contact Center at: 877-501-2233

Open: **8am - 5pm, Monday through Friday** (except observed holidays)

14. What can I buy with P-EBT benefits?

P-EBT can buy food in any SNAP-certified store: most grocery stores, farmer's markets, some corner stores, or to buy groceries online at Amazon and Walmart (depending on your area). P-EBT cannot be used for:

- Non-food items (for example: cleaning supplies, diapers, tampons, etc.)
- Alcohol
- Hot or prepared foods (for example: deli food, roasted chicken, etc.)
- Vitamins or medicines

Use your EBT card like a debit card:

- Select "EBT"
- Swipe your EBT card
- Enter your private PIN number

15. Do I have to use all my P-EBT benefits when I get my card?

No. You will have your P-EBT benefits for one year after you get your card.

16. Who do I call if I have questions?

Call 877-501-2233 (DSHS' Customer Service Contact Center)

8am - 5pm, Monday through Friday (except observed holidays)

17. What if I have questions about P-EBT and my ability to apply for a green card/legal permanent residence?

Applying for or using P-EBT will **not** affect your ability to apply for a green card (legal permanent residence). Applying for P-EBT will **not** affect the ability for a family member here or outside the U.S. to apply for a green card. P-EBT is **not** considered under a public charge determination. If you have questions about your immigration status and P-EBT, you should talk with an immigration attorney or DOJ-accredited representative. Northwest Immigrant Rights Project (NWIRP) knows about P-EBT and immigration law; they can answer your questions:

- NWIRP Seattle Office: 206-587-4009

- NWIRP Yakima Valley (Granger) Office: 509-854-2100
- NWIRP Wenatchee Office: 509-570-0054
- NWIRP Tacoma South Office: 206-816-3893

18. How can low income families who don't get Basic Food or free or reduced-price school meals get P-EBT benefits?

Families with school-age children who have recently lost jobs or income may complete an application for free or reduced-price school meals through your school district **before** June 30, 2020 and **before** you apply for P-EBT. You may also apply for Basic Food before June 30, 2020 online (www.WashingtonConnection.org) or by phone (877-501-2233 – DSHS Customer Service Contact Center). If you are approved for Basic Food, you will also receive P-EBT benefits for your school-age children.

If you are approved for Basic Food or free or reduced-price school meals *after* schools closed and *before* June 30, 2020, your P-EBT benefits will be pro-rated.

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