



August 2020

The ABCs of Pandemic Food Aid for NJ School Children

What is P-EBT?

Pandemic-EBT (P-EBT) is a federal program to help families buy food for children who are not receiving free or reduced-price school meals because schools are closed due to the pandemic. This assistance comes through the New Jersey Department of Human Services.

The benefit is available to children who were in kindergarten through 12th grade in spring 2020 and who were eligible to receive free or reduced-price school meals as of June 19. (The child's school must participate in the National School Lunch Program for the child to be eligible. Preschool children are not eligible).

The P-EBT card works like a debit card to purchase food items anywhere EBT benefits (also known as food stamps) are accepted.



Do I need to apply?

No. Eligible New Jersey students and families will receive money on a new or existing EBT card to help fill the school meals gap. The average benefit will be \$5.70/day per student. That starts on the date schools initially closed (March 18) or the date your child became eligible for free or reduce-price school meals, whichever is later. That adds up to about \$114 per child for four weeks. Families can get both P-EBT and "grab and go" meals from schools and community organizations that schools are serving during the pandemic.

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Will using the P-EBT card hurt my immigration status?

No. Using P-EBT benefits does not impact you or your child's immigration status. The "public charge" rule does not apply to P-EBT benefits so immigrant families should not be afraid to activate their cards.

Will there be another round of P-EBT?

The first round of P-EBT payments only included students who were eligible as of March 18. New Jersey is planning to provide P-EBT benefits at a later date to students who became eligible for free or reduced-price school meals from March 19 to June 19. It is uncertain at this time whether another round of P-EBT will be provided for the upcoming school year. You should hold onto your card in case that does happen.

What should I do if I have not received my card or am having other trouble using my benefits?

First contact your child's school district to be sure the district provided your child's correct name, date of birth and address to the NJ Department of Human Services. If so, then visit the New Jersey Department of Human Services P-EBT webpage. You will find answers to various questions and instructions for what families should do if they have moved or have other issues. This site also provides information about when cards are being mailed to families.

View the webpage at <https://www.nj.gov/humanservices/njsnap/pebt.shtml>.

The state has also set up an online inquiry form you can use if you have already contacted your local school and your county welfare office and have not been able to solve the problem.

View the inquiry form at: <https://www.nj.gov/humanservices/njsnap/home/contactus.shtml>

If you have tried to contact your local school, your county welfare agency and used the state's online inquiry form but have not received a response, e-mail us at hungerfreenj@cfanj.org with the following information:

- Your name and school district,
- A brief explanation of the problem you are encountering,
- What you have done to try to fix the problem,
- The response, if any, you have received from the school or agencies you contacted.

Visit us at hungerfreenj.org.

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