



October 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 was recently extended for children in kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade who are eligible to receive free or reduced-price school meals and whose school is operating on remote learning at least five days a week. The child's school must participate in the National School Lunch Program for the child to be eligible.

Younger children in child care programs or homes that participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) are also now eligible under this new round of funding.



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 benefit is about \$99 a month. Families already enrolled in SNAP will receive the extra benefit automatically on their EBT cards. Families not enrolled in SNAP will receive a new card, which state officials say are being mailed in October 2020.

**Hunger Free New Jersey | 192 W. Demarest Ave., Englewood, NJ 07631 | (201) 569-1804, x23 | [hungerfreenj.org](http://hungerfreenj.org)**

**In order to be eligible, however, your child must be enrolled in the federal School Lunch Program. Contact your school district for an application.**

### **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.

### **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](mailto:hungerfreenj@cfanj.org) with the following information:

- Your child's name, your name and your 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.

Please note that HFNJ does not administer the P-EBT program, but does advocate for effective implementation of this and other nutrition assistance programs.

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