

Five Things To Know About Pandemic EBT in California

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1 P-EBT is for children who are eligible for free & reduced-price school meals.

Pandemic EBT (P-EBT) is a program to help families buy food for their children while schools are closed because of the COVID-19 crisis. Children¹ are eligible for P-EBT if they are eligible for free or reduced-price meals through the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) or the School Breakfast Program (SBP). **This includes any child enrolled at a school or other institution that offers breakfast and/or lunch free of charge to all students** (i.e., universal meals) through options such as Provision 2 or the Community Eligibility Provision.

P-EBT is not limited to K-12 students, but is limited to individuals eligible for free and reduced-price meals through NSLP or SBP during the 2019-20 school year. For instance, preschool children are eligible for P-EBT if they are eligible for free or reduced-price meals and enrolled at a preschool that operates NSLP or SBP (rather than the Child and Adult Care Food Program). However, children who attend in-home childcare (family day care homes) are not eligible for P-EBT because in-home childcare providers (family day care homes) do not operate NSLP or SBP.

2 P-EBT is available to children in immigrant families.

P-EBT is available to children regardless of immigration status. Experts at the Protecting Immigrant Families Campaign led by the National Immigration Law Center and the Center for Law and Social Policy report that P-EBT is not be considered in a public charge determination ([link](#)).

3 P-EBT does not replace other forms of nutrition assistance.

Each eligible child who qualified for free or reduced-price meals *on or before* March 15, 2020 will receive \$365 in P-EBT benefits. The P-EBT benefit will be pro-rated for each eligible child who became qualified for free or reduced-price meals *on or after* March 16, 2020.

Getting P-EBT **does not** affect the eligibility of a family or a child to receive other nutrition services such as CalFresh, WIC, and meals being offered at schools or other community sites. P-EBT **does not** replace any of these programs, services, or benefits.

P-EBT **is not** CalFresh, but the benefits can be used in the same way: to purchase food at grocery stores and farmers' markets that accept EBT. P-EBT can also be used to purchase food from some online retailers.² However, P-EBT benefits cannot be used to purchase meals at restaurants.

¹ While this document uses the term "children" to describe individuals who may be eligible for P-EBT, some individuals over the age of 18 may be eligible for P-EBT. For example, special education students up to age 22 who are eligible for free and reduced-price meals through NSLP or SBP are eligible for P-EBT.

² Currently, only Amazon and Walmart are approved as online retailers for P-EBT purchases.



While many children will be mailed a P-EBT card automatically, many others will need to apply online before June 30, 2020.

P-EBT Cards Mailed Automatically. From May 12 through the end of May, P-EBT cards were automatically sent to some eligible children. Most children who participate in CalFresh or Medi-Cal, or are in Foster Care -- and are eligible for free or reduced-prices school meals -- should have automatically received a P-EBT card in the mail.

P-EBT Application Deadline. Families who did not automatically receive a P-EBT card for their eligible children in May 2020 must apply online for P-EBT before **July 15, 2020**. Apply at <https://ca.p-ebt.org>.

Children Newly Eligible for Free & Reduced-Price Meals. If a child is determined eligible for free or reduced-price meals on or after March 16, 2020 (the average date of COVID-19-related school closures in CA), that child is eligible for pro-rated P-EBT benefits. A child who is directly certified³ for free or reduced-price meals on or after March 16, 2020 should automatically receive a P-EBT card without needing to apply. That card will arrive after May 2020 and the specific timing will depend on the date of direct certification. If a family submits a school meal application on or after March 16, 2020 and their child is determined eligible for free or reduced-price meals, that family can apply for P-EBT at <https://ca.p-ebt.org> before **July 15, 2020**.



P-EBT shouldn't be a one-time benefit & shouldn't leave vulnerable Californians behind.

Current federal law makes P-EBT a one-time benefit. Millions of Californians need help now -- and will need help as the COVID-19 crisis continues to undermine health, safety, and economic security.

We call on federal leaders to sustain Pandemic EBT through the summer and over the course of this crisis. We also call on federal leaders to expand Pandemic EBT to all young children and older adults who lost access to free and reduced-price meals through the closure of early learning and adult care programs.

Additional information and materials:

- P-EBT application and FAQ for families with children: <https://ca.p-ebt.org/>
- Outreach materials and program details: <https://www.cdss.ca.gov/home/pandemic-ebt>
- FAQ for education stakeholders: <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/nu/pandemicebtfaqs.asp>

For help with a child's P-EBT card, families can call 1.877.328.9677 or send a secure, online message via <https://inquiry.pebt.dss.ca.gov>.

Questions or comments? Please contact...

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³ A child can be directly certified for free or reduced-price school meals (i.e. determined eligible for free and reduced-price meals without the use of a school meal application) through confirmation of income based on participation in CalFresh, CalWORKs, Medi-Cal, or the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations. Children who are categorically eligible for free school meals based on their foster, migrant, homeless, runaway, or Head Start status can also be directly certified.