

Frequently Asked Questions About Pandemic EBT in California



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Have a question that we didn't include in this FAQ?

- Please see *Five Things to Know About Pandemic EBT in California* for eligibility information and other topics not included in this FAQ: <https://cfpa.net/five-things-to-know-about-p-ebt/> or
- Contact Tia Shimada at tia@cfpa.net

Deadline to Apply for P-EBT

1. What is the deadline to apply for P-EBT benefits?

The P-EBT application deadline was recently extended to July 15, 2020.

Please note, the extended application deadline **does not** change who is eligible for P-EBT or the amount of benefits that eligible children will receive.

For more about who is eligible for P-EBT and who needs to apply, please see the *Five Things to Know About Pandemic EBT in California* factsheet: <https://cfpa.net/five-things-to-know-about-p-ebt/>

Amount of P-EBT Benefits

2. How much should my children receive in P-EBT benefits?

Children who were qualified for free and reduced-price meals on or before March 15, 2020 should receive \$365 in P-EBT benefits.

Children who were qualified for free and reduced-price meals on or after March 16, 2020 will receive less than \$365 in P-EBT benefits. Specific benefits amounts are shown in the table below.

A child who was qualified for free & reduced-price school meals...	Will receive this amount of P-EBT benefits...
On or before March 15	\$365
On or after March 16 through April	\$297
In May	\$177
In June	\$57

3. We have multiple children who are eligible for P-EBT and got a P-EBT card in the mail. How do I know which of our children actually got benefits on that card?

- Set a PIN to activate the card you already received.
- Check the balance on the P-EBT card at www.ebt.ca.gov (you will need to create a user account) or by calling 877-328-9677 (you can check your balance through the automated recording).

- After checking the balance, if you think the card does not include benefits for all of your children who are eligible, you should continue with the following steps. (See Question 1 for information about how much your child should receive in P-EBT benefits.)
- Go online (<https://ca.p-ebt.org/>) and apply for **all** of your eligible children by July 15, 2020. The P-EBT system will know which of your eligible children already received benefits and which did not.
- A separate P-EBT card will be sent to each additional child in your family who is verified as eligible for P-EBT. Set a PIN to activate any new cards that arrive for your children. You can begin using the benefits on those cards once they are activated.

4. A P-EBT card arrived in the mail, but it does not include benefits for all of our children who are eligible. What should we do?

- Set a PIN to activate the card you already received. You can start using the benefits right away.
- Go online (<https://ca.p-ebt.org/>) and apply for **all** of your eligible children by July 15, 2020. The P-EBT system will know which of your eligible children already received benefits and which did not.
- A separate P-EBT card will be sent to each additional child in your family who is verified as eligible for P-EBT. Set a PIN to activate any new cards that arrive for your children. You can begin using the benefits on those cards once they are activated.

Number of P-EBT Cards

5. Our family received a P-EBT card in the mail and also had to apply online for a child who did not receive benefits. Will we receive another P-EBT card or will the benefits be added to the existing card?

P-EBT benefits for any additional eligible children will arrive on a separate card.

You can set a PIN to activate any card already sent to your children. You can start using the benefits on that card right away.

6. I thought all of the P-EBT benefits for my children would come on one card. Why did we get more than one card?

Starting in early June, the P-EBT system began issuing one card per eligible child. Before then, the P-EBT system tried to send one card for all eligible children in the same family. The P-EBT system will no longer group eligible children by family.

If your family received multiple cards, it is ok to activate them (set a PIN) and use the benefits. You will not be penalized for using any of the P-EBT cards issued to your children.

P-EBT Card Not Yet Received

7. My children have Medi-Cal, CalFresh, or Foster Care benefits and we expected to get a P-EBT card in May, but it did not arrive. Do I need to apply online?

If your children qualified for free or reduced-price school meals **on or before** March 15, 2020 and receive CalFresh, Medi-Cal, or Foster Care benefits but they **have not** received a P-EBT card, you should apply online (<https://ca.p-ebt.org/>) by July 15, 2020.

If your children qualified for free or reduced-price school meals **on or after** March 16, 2020 and receive CalFresh, Medi-Cal, or Foster Care benefits, they should automatically receive a P-EBT card. Those cards will be mailed from approximately June 22, 2020 through July 2020. The date your children receive their cards will depend on the date they qualified for free or reduced-price school meals.

Note: *not every child on Medi-Cal is eligible for free and reduced-price school meals.* To receive P-EBT, a child must qualify for free and reduced-price school meals through the National School Lunch and/or School Breakfast Programs for the 2019-20 school year.

8. I applied for P-EBT benefits for my children. The card has not arrived. What should I do?

Due to the high number of applications from across the state, applications are taking longer than expected to be processed. Your application might not be fully processed until the end of July.

If you submitted an application and haven't received a card or any further information, your application is still being processed. During the time that your application is being processed, the State cannot provide any status updates about your application. You **do not** need to apply again.

If you receive an email notification that a P-EBT card is on the way, you should receive the card in approximately 10 days. If you do not receive the card after that time

- Call 877- 328-9677 for assistance.
- Select your language
- Select "0" when asked for a card number
- Select "report lost" or "unauthorized card use" to be connected to a person
- Tell that person you are missing your P-EBT card

If you receive an email notification that your child's P-EBT eligibility cannot be verified, that notification will include instructions for contacting the State to ask questions, dispute the finding, and address any issues with your application.

9. I applied for P-EBT and I think my child's P-EBT card was stolen or lost in the mail. What should I do?

If you submitted an application and received an email notification that a P-EBT card was on the way, you should receive the card in approximately 10 days. If you do not receive the card after that time

- Call 877- 328-9677 for assistance
- Select your language

- Select "0" when asked for a card number
- Select "report lost" or "unauthorized card use" to be connected to a person
- Tell that person you are missing your P-EBT card

If you submitted an application and haven't received a card or any further information, your application is still being processed.

- Due to the high number of applications from across the state, applications are taking longer than expected to process. Your application might not be fully processed until the end of July.
- During the time that your application is being processed, the State cannot provide any status updates about your application.
- You **do not** need to apply again.

Change of Address

10. My children have Medi-Cal, CalFresh, or Foster Care benefits and I think they should get a P-EBT card automatically. Our family recently moved. How do I update our address so my children receive a P-EBT card?

If you believe your card may have been sent to an incorrect address or are worried it may be lost, please call 877- 328-9677 to see if a card was mailed and to what address.

- Select your language
- Select "0" when asked for a card number
- Select "report lost" or "unauthorized card use" to be connected to a person
- Tell that person you are missing your P-EBT card

If your card has been lost or you confirm your card was mailed to the wrong address, please call 833-780-0353 or submit a secure message at <https://inquiry.pebt.dss.ca.gov/>. Your address can be changed and a new P-EBT card will be sent.

11. I applied for P-EBT and we moved/changed our mailing address before the P-EBT card arrived. What should I do?

A change of address cannot be processed until you receive an email notification that your P-EBT card is on the way. If you receive that notification and your card does not arrive, please call 877-328-9677 to confirm if a card was mailed and to what address.

- Select your language
- Select "0" when asked for a card number
- Select "report lost" or "unauthorized card use" to be connected to a person
- Tell that person you are missing your P-EBT card

If your card has been lost or you confirm your card was mailed to the wrong address, please call 833-780-0353 or submit a secure message at <https://inquiry.pebt.dss.ca.gov/>. Your address can be changed and a new P-EBT card will be sent.

Young Children and Preschool Students

12. My child will be in preschool, Head Start, or kindergarten in the fall of 2020 and will qualify for free or reduced-price school meals. Can my child receive P-EBT now?

Unfortunately, no. P-EBT is only available to individuals who qualify for free or reduced-price school meals through the National School Lunch and/or School Breakfast Program during the 2019-20 school year.

13. My child is in preschool or Head Start and received free or reduced-price meals before the preschool/Head Start closed because of COVID-19. Is my child eligible for P-EBT?

A child who was enrolled in preschool/Head Start and qualified for free or reduced-price meals in the 2019-20 school year is eligible for P-EBT if the preschool/Head Start operated the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) or the School Breakfast Program (SBP). Many preschools/Head Starts operate the Child and Adult Care Food Program instead of NSLP or SBP.

It can be difficult for parents to know which meal program their child's preschool/Head Start operates. If you think your child may be eligible for P-EBT, you can apply online at <https://ca.p-ebt.org/> by July 15, 2020.

Note: 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.

Customer Service and Application Assistance

14. I have questions about P-EBT but can't connect with a live person by phone. What should I do?

The California EBT hotline (877-328-9677) can assist with questions about activating P-EBT cards (setting a PIN) and concerns about cards that may have been lost or stolen during mailing. The hotline is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Assistance is available in 18 languages.

For other types of questions, you can contact the P-EBT helpline by phone 833-780-0353 or by submitting a secure message through <https://inquiry.pebt.dss.ca.gov/>.

- The helpline is open from 8:30am-4:30pm Monday-Friday. Assistance is available in 18 languages.
- The helpline is getting an extremely high number of calls and messages. **The fastest way to have your questions answered is to leave a voicemail message or submit a secure message.**
- If you leave a voicemail at 833-780-0353, please be sure to include your phone number.
- Submitting a message (<https://inquiry.pebt.dss.ca.gov/>) will allow staff at the helpline to start answering your questions before they get back in touch with you. You are required to include a phone number to submit your message. You are strongly encouraged to provide an email address to help answer your questions as quickly as possible.
- We understand it is very stressful and frustrating to wait for assistance. Please note that calling or emailing multiple times about the same issue makes it harder for helpline staff to respond to your message.

15. I need help with the P-EBT application. Is there someone who can help me in my language?

The P-EBT application is available in English, Spanish, and Chinese.

The P-EBT helpline (833-780-0353) can answer questions about completing the P-EBT application. Assistance is available in 18 languages.

The helpline is open from 8:30am-4:30pm Monday-Friday. See Question 12 for more information about getting help with P-EBT.

Other

16. What should our family do with our P-EBT card after the benefits have been used?

Please keep your card and do not throw it away. Currently, P-EBT is a one-time benefit: each child receives all of their P-EBT benefits all at once. However, the government could authorize additional P-EBT benefits. Keeping your existing card(s) could help you get any future P-EBT benefits more quickly and easily.

Have a question that we didn't include in this FAQ?

- Please see *Five Things to Know About Pandemic EBT in California* for eligibility information and other topics not included in this FAQ: <https://cfpa.net/five-things-to-know-about-p-ebt/> or
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