

Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer (P-EBT) Program
Questions & Answers for Schools
Updated April 28, 2021

Many students may be eligible for Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer (P-EBT). This food assistance benefit is for students who were eligible for free or reduced price meals in schools under the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school year. Your assistance in providing the information requested will help Missouri families buy food.

When will households be able to apply for and receive P-EBT benefits?

At this time, we do not know when households will be able to apply for P-EBT and when they will receive the benefits.

What is P-EBT?

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (P.L. 116-127; the Act) as amended by the Continuing Appropriations Act, 2021 and Other Extensions Act (P.L. 116-159) authorized the continuation of a temporary assistance program for families with children affected by school closures during the public health emergency that was declared on January 27, 2020. Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer (P-EBT) helps cover food costs for children who qualify for free or reduced lunch at school but the school was closed (virtual) or has been operating with reduced attendance or hours (hybrid) due to the pandemic for at least five consecutive days during the 2020-21 school year.

Who is Eligible for P-EBT Benefits?

To qualify for P-EBT benefits, the **child and school** must meet certain criteria:

The child:

- Must be enrolled in free or reduced price school meals at a school that participates in the National School Lunch Program; or
- Enrolled in a Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), Provision 2 or Provision 3 school, which offers breakfast and lunch free to all students; and
- Without access to an **in-school** provided meal due to the **school** operating at reduced attendance hours (virtual or hybrid). Students might have participated in a grab-n-go meal service or taken meals home to consume and still be eligible for P-EBT benefits because the **school** operated at reduced attendance hours (virtual or hybrid).

The school level:

- Must participate in the National School Lunch Program; and
- Must have been closed or operating remote (virtual) or has been operating with reduced attendance or hours (hybrid) due to the pandemic for at least five consecutive days during the 2020-21 school year.
- Students enrolled in the school were without access to an **in-school** provided meal due to the **school** being closed or operating remote (virtual) or operating with reduced attendance hours (hybrid) due to the pandemic for at least five consecutive days during the months of October-May of the 2020-21 school year.

Our students are currently receiving free meals through the Seamless Summer Option (SSO) or the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). Does this make them eligible for P-EBT benefits?

Only students certified as free or reduced through application, direct certification, or other source categorical eligibility (such as homeless, runaway, foster, migrant and Head Start), or enrollment in a school that operates Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), Provision 2 or Provision 3 are eligible for P-EBT benefits. On the list of free and reduced students, please do not include students who are receiving free meals only due to the operation of SSO or SFSP. Students who were individually certified for free or reduced price meals or enrolled in a CEP, Provision 2 or Provision 3 school in the 2019-20 or 2020-21 school year are eligible even if enrolled in schools currently participating in SSO or SFSP.

Our school operates Provision 2 for breakfast only, and does not operate Provision 2 for lunch. Do I include these students on the list of free and reduced students?

Yes. Students who are enrolled in a school that operates Provision 2 for breakfast only are eligible for P-EBT benefits regardless of their eligibility status for lunch. Please include all students enrolled in a school that operates Provision 2 for breakfast and/or lunch in the list of free and reduced students.

If households chose to have their students learning virtually for the year, will they receive P-EBT benefits for the entire year?

No. The school must have been closed or operating remote learning at some point during the 2020-2021 school year. The current plan is that these students will not receive benefits for the entire year but will receive benefits for the month(s) the school was closed or hybrid. A student that participates in virtual or hybrid learning pattern by choice but the school is open and not virtual or hybrid will not be eligible for this benefit.

Though we have been closed or hybrid due to COVID, there has not been a time during the 2020-2021 school year (even when closed due to COVID) that we did not make meals available to students on what would have been normal attendance days. Do we need to send the spreadsheet even though meals were available?

Yes. This program will provide P-EBT benefits for students who were not able to receive **in-school** meals because the school was closed or operating at reduced attendance or hours due to COVID-19. Students might have still had access to meals through a grab-n-go meal service, bus delivery or taken meals home to consume and still be eligible for P-EBT benefits because the school operated at reduced attendance hours (virtual or hybrid). If the school was closed or operating at reduced attendance or hours due to COVID-19 during the months of October-June of school year 2020-21 send a spreadsheet of students enrolled in the school building and eligible for free or reduced price meals. On the list of free and reduced students, please do not include students who are receiving free meals only due to the operation of SSO or SFSP.

On our lists of Free and Reduced students, should we remove students who withdrew from the district?

No. Please list the students who were enrolled even if they withdrew. However, please remove students who graduated in 2020.

Should we include Pre-K students on our list of Free and Reduced students?

Please include eligible Pre-K students who have access to the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and/or the School Breakfast Program (SBP). If they do not have access to these programs, do not include them on the list of Free and Reduced students.

Is there an application for P-EBT Benefits?

An application is required for the 2020-2021 school year for P-EBT benefits. An application will be made available once the USDA approves the Missouri plan.

If we were open to in-person learning for the entire 2020-21 school year, do we still need to complete the survey?

Yes. You must complete the survey to let us know you were open to in-person learning during the entire school year. However, you will **not** need to send a spreadsheet of free and reduced price students.

The survey request learning patterns for October-May of the 2020-21 school year. If you were virtual in September and then returned to in-person learning must complete the survey.

More information can be found on our FNS website [here](#) in the News and Updates section. Thank You!