



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF

EDUCATION

Policy Updates Related to COVID-19: Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) Guidance for Local Education Agencies (LEAs)

June 15, 2020

Background

As a part of the response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak in the United States, the District of Columbia has received approval from the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) to implement the Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) provision in the Families First Coronavirus Response Act.

P-EBT provides food assistance to the families of children who receive free or reduced-price meals (FARM) under the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). These families will receive food benefits to subsidize the cost of meals they would have normally received while at school in response to this public health emergency. P-EBT benefits are intended to cover breakfast and lunch and are valued at \$28.50 per week, per child. P-EBT will deliver an estimated \$26 million in federal food assistance to more than 68,000 children in the District.

More information on the District's P-EBT program can be found online at dhs.dc.gov/p-ebt. The P-EBT Call Center is operated by the DC Department of Human Services (DHS) and can be reached at (202) 868-6663 from 7:30 a.m. – 4:45 p.m., Monday – Friday.

Scope

This document contains details and policies specifically relating to the provision of **Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer (P-EBT)**.

Effective Date

This guidance will take effect immediately and will remain in effect until all benefits are transferred. Students can be deemed eligible for P-EBT through June 19, 2020.

Eligibility

Q1: What is the Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer (P-EBT) provision?

A: P-EBT is a new and temporary federal food benefit for families who have one or more child(ren) who receive free or reduced-price school meals (FARM) under the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) at their school.

Q2: What are the dates for P-EBT coverage?

A: The dates for benefit coverage are March 16, 2020 through June 19, 2020.

Q3: What are the benefit amounts per child?



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF

EDUCATION

A: P-EBT benefits are intended to cover breakfast and lunch for five days each week. Families will receive \$5.70 per child per school day or \$28.50 per child per week.

Q4: How does a family know if they are eligible for the P-EBT program?

A: There are two ways for a family to be eligible for P-EBT:

- Any District child who is enrolled in a school that participates in NSLP and qualifies for free or reduced-price school meals will receive P-EBT benefits. This includes any child in a school that provides free meals to children through the NSLP.
- Families with children experiencing a change in income may also qualify for P-EBT even if they have not previously participated in NSLP or received FARM. Families should contact their child(ren)'s school(s) to learn if they are eligible prior to June 19, 2020.

Q5: Can private school students receive benefits from P-EBT?

A: There are three private schools that participate in NSLP. These schools include San Miguel, Bishop Walker, and Washington School for Girls. Children who attend these schools and are certified for FARM via direct certification or by using the Application for Free and Reduced-Price School Meals (FARM Application) are eligible for P-EBT.

Q6: Can students from child care centers and day care homes participate in P-EBT?

A: No, child care centers and day care homes are not eligible to participate in this program.

Q7: If a school does not participate in NSLP, can a child that attends the school be eligible for P-EBT?

A: No, if a child attends a school that does not participate in the NSLP, they are ineligible for P-EBT, regardless of whether or not the family receives Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

Q8: What is the responsibility of School Food Authorities (SFAs) that participate in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)?

A: Schools that currently participate in CEP do not need to take action for their students to be eligible. Any student at a school that qualifies for FARM is eligible for the P-EBT benefit. Schools do need to be available to verify current parent/guardian and child guardianship if necessary.

Q9: What is the responsibility of SFAs if they do not participate in CEP?

SFAs that do not participate in CEP must continue supporting families in applying for FARM, process FARM applications, and update their student information system (SIS) *as soon as possible*. Schools should be prepared to field calls from families. In addition, there may be instances when schools will need to verify current parent/guardian and child guardianship.

Q10: What should be done if a student attends a CEP school or is already eligible for FARM, but cannot be found in the P-EBT call center database?

A: The SFA or call center staff will capture the family's household data, and should engage with OSSE to resolve the data issue.



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF

EDUCATION

Q11: What action should be taken if a student has not previously received FARM, but the family had a change in our income level?

A: The parent/guardian should contact their child's school to complete a FARM Application as soon as possible. If they are found to be eligible as of June 19, 2020 their information will be transferred to the District Department of Human Services (DHS). P-EBT benefits will be provided for the month that they are certified, through June 19, 2020.

FARM applications received by a school after 3pm on June 19, 2020 will not be eligible for P-EBT. This information will be final, with no opportunity to edit. OSSE will not accept any changes in information after this date. This aligns with data validation certification timelines.

Q12. If a FARM application is submitted by June 19, 2020 and subsequently deemed eligible, will the student receive benefits?

A: Yes – the application must be submitted by June 19, 2020 and processed as soon as possible. The SIS must be updated by June 25, 2020 at 3pm. This information will be final, with no opportunity to edit. OSSE will not accept any changes in information after this date. This aligns with data validation certification timelines.

Q13: If SFAs have questions specific to FARM applications, who should they contact?

A: Contact your [nutrition program specialist](#) for questions regarding FARM applications.

Q14: How will issues be resolved when guardianship information is out of date or misaligned in the database?

A: The parent/guardian information would need to be verified by the LEA. The SIS must be updated by June 25, 2020 at 3pm. This information will be final, with no opportunity to edit. OSSE will not accept any changes in information after this date. This aligns with data validation certification timelines.

Q15: Our school is a CEP school so our students should all qualify for P-EBT. However, some of our families are being directed from the P-EBT call center back to our school. What should we do?

A: Students that attend CEP schools are eligible for P-EBT. Families should not be directed back to the school unless they need to apply via the FARM Application. In response to this issue, call center staff have been trained not to direct families to schools in any other case. If LEAs receive these calls, please notify your nutrition program specialist.

Q16: How frequently will benefits be provided for eligible children?

A: Benefits will be issued for the coverage period all at one time.

Q17: Are resources available for families on P-EBT in translated languages?

A: Yes, please visit <https://dhs.dc.gov/page/resources-translated-languages> for resources on P-EBT, as well as other benefit programs such as SNAP, TANF and the economic stimulus package.



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF

EDUCATION

Q18: What resources do you recommend if families need food immediately?

A: If families need food immediately, the following resources are recommended:

- **District Food Resources:** coronavirus.dc.gov/food
- **Capital Area Food Bank:** capitalareafoodbank.org or (202) 644-9800
- **So Others Might Eat (SOME):** some.org or (202) 797-8806
- **Bread for the City:** breadforthecity.org or (202) 265-2400

Sending Benefits

Q19: How long will the data take to be processed after information is updated in SIS?

A: The SIS is updated and synched daily, and DHS and OSSE staff are working each day to process any added information. However, because there are multiple systems that must be updated, the process is taking longer than anticipated. DHS will continue to process all information until benefits are received by all eligible families. We appreciate your patience as we implement this brand new program.

Q20: When will the P-EBT benefits be sent out, and in what form will they be issued?

A: P-EBT benefits began to be issued in May 2020. Families with children participating in SNAP or TANF will have P-EBT benefits automatically added onto the household's EBT card. Eligible households not participating in SNAP and/or TANF, or not in possession of an active EBT card, will receive an EBT card via US mail with P-EBT benefits already added to the card.

Q21: If a family does not have a current permanent address, can the SFA change a family's address to the school address, for the cards be sent there?

A: DHS will mail the EBT card to the address that the family provides. If a family wishes to use a school address, this must be determined in partnership with the school on a case-by-case basis, to ensure that the school is able to provide the EBT card to the family during school closures.

Utilizing Benefits

Q22: How can families spend P-EBT benefits for their children?

A: P-EBT benefits can be used to purchase food, and work like SNAP benefits.

- Parents/guardians can use P-EBT benefits to purchase food for their child(ren) at any store that accepts SNAP. Most retailers have signs stating they accept SNAP or EBT, and Authorized SNAP Retailers can be found at fns.usda.gov/snap/retailer-locator. They can also visit ebtedge.com or download the EBT Edge Mobile app from the Apple or Google Play store to find retailers that accept EBT cards.
- In addition, families can use P-EBT benefits to purchase food online for delivery at Amazon, at amazon.com/snap-ebt.

P-EBT benefits are not transferable. Families cannot provide their card to someone else.



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF

EDUCATION

Q23: Will participating in P-EBT impact a family's 'public charge' status?

A: No. Using P-EBT benefits does not impact a parent or child's immigration status. The Public Charge rule does not apply to P-EBT benefits.

Q24: Will participating in P-EBT benefits mean a child can no longer receive meals at open sites?

A: No. Children who receive P-EBT benefits can still receive meals at open sites or through other programs.

Q25: Do families have to use all their P-EBT benefits immediately?

A: No. Money will carry over from month to month, but benefits that are not used within 365 days will be removed from the card.

Q26: Who should parents/guardians contact with further questions?

A: Please call the P-EBT Call Center, staffed by the DC Department of Human Services (DHS) at (202) 868-6663 from 7:30 a.m. – 4:45 p.m., Monday – Friday.