



P-EBT 2020-2021 School Year Questions and Answers

(Answers are based on what is known as of 2.12.2021. *New information added on 2.12.2021 are highlighted in yellow and can be found on page 2.*)

Q: What is P-EBT?

A: Pandemic EBT is a special SNAP benefit that may be issued to households with school age children who receive free and reduced-price meals at school through the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), but whose school has been closed or has reduced hours for at least 5 consecutive days in the current school year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Q: How will those benefits be distributed?

A: If you are receiving SNAP benefits, your P-EBT benefits will be added to your current SNAP EBT card. If you are not receiving SNAP benefits and you received these benefits on a P-EBT card during the last school year, your benefits will be issued to that same card. If you have never received P-EBT benefits before, you will be mailed a P-EBT card at the address on file at the school of your child(ren).

Q: How will DHS send EBT cards to families that don't have SNAP benefits?

A: The RI Department of Education (RIDE) and DHS have worked on a data match to accomplish this. Cards will be mailed to the addresses that are on file at each student's school district.

Q: I received a P-EBT card in the mail, but I've lost it or it doesn't seem to work?

A: You can call the number on the back of the P-EBT card, 1-888-979-9939, to request a new card to replace the card lost or not working.

Q: Will the P-EBT benefits expire if they aren't spent?

A: P-EBT benefits will expire if they have not been spent one-year after they were issued. For example, if you received P-EBT benefits in January 2021 and those benefits have not been used, they will no longer be available on your card as of January 2022.

Q: I don't have children, or, my child is 3 years old and in a preschool classroom at their day care, do I get an increase?

A: At this time, this benefit is meant to provide additional purchasing power to families whose children usually eat meals at school and now need to eat those meals at home. We are waiting for federal guidance about issuing P-EBT benefits for children in child care.

Q: How much will the benefit be?

A: The amount of benefits issued is equal to the value of school breakfast and lunch each day that a child is not attending school in person, which was recently updated from **\$5.86 to \$6.82 per child per school day in Rhode Island**. Children in a hybrid learning schedule (some days in-person at school and some days learning virtually at home), will receive a benefit amount equal to **\$75.02 (an increase from \$64.46) per month**. Children on an all-virtual learning schedule will receive a benefit amount of \$6.82 for each day of the month that school is in session (excludes holidays and vacations). Retroactive benefits for October, November and December 2020 was given in January 2021. DHS is working as quickly as possible with the RI Department of Education (RIDE) and schools to issue payments to additional children who may not have been on the initial monthly lists given to the Department, but it could take four to six weeks to resolve.

To reflect the new rates, P-EBT benefits for January 2021 is now anticipated to be given out during **the third week in February, which is a slight delay from what the Department previously planned. It may be come as early as Sunday, February 14th, 2021.**

Also during the third week of February, on or about February 19th, we plan to give a supplement payment to those eligible children who already received P-EBT retroactively for October, November and December 2020. That is also due to the change in rates. Therefore, some families may receive two payments during that week – one for January P-EBT benefits and one as a supplement to the retroactive benefits families already received in the late January. Please note future P-EBT payments will be issued during the second week of each month for the previous month. For example, benefits for February 2021 will be issued by on or before March 13, 2021. You can check your benefit issuance and amount by calling 1-888-979-9939.

Q: What does “hybrid learning schedule” mean?

A: The definition of hybrid is the student is attending school in-person on some days and virtually on other days. Anyone who is not attending school completely virtually or completely in-person is considered in a hybrid learning schedule. All students who are eligible for free and reduced lunch AND are in a hybrid learning schedule, regardless of the number of days per month, will receive \$64.46 per month in P-EBT benefits.

Q: My child’s school is changing from completely virtual to a hybrid schedule, but I plan to keep my child completely virtual. Do I get the \$5.86 per child per school day or the \$64.46 per month?

A: The Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) will share monthly data to DHS relating to each student’s learning schedule. If a student’s school moves from completely virtual to a hybrid schedule, but the individual’s student’s learning status remains completely virtual and RIDE tells DHS that, that student should continue to receive \$5.86 for each day that school is in session.

Q: My child is home schooled. Can I get P-EBT?

A: Children who are home schooled are not eligible for P-EBT.

Q: Is the P-EBT benefit the same amount regardless of how many kids are in the household?

A: The benefit amount may be different for each eligible child in the household if the learning schedule for each child is different.

Q: Will these benefits be received every month?

A: Yes, benefits are available for each month that school is in session and is closed to in-person learning or operating at reduced attendance or hours for the period of **October 1, 2020 – September 30, 2021**. Please keep your card as benefits will be added to the same card every month. You can call 1-888-979-9939 at any time to check your benefits or available balance.

Q: What can I buy with is money?

A: This is a SNAP benefit, which means it can only be used to purchase food or seeds that will become food. Hot, prepared foods cannot be purchased.

Q: I get SNAP and have school aged children, but didn't get any extra benefits, what do I do now?

A: If families don't see the benefit by January 31st, the Department may not have an exact match with the records from the Rhode Island Department of Education. Call 2-1-1, and they will take your information down to give to DHS staff to look into it. You will need to give the following: Your name, first and last name of the school age child, name of school the child attends, grade the child is in, child's learning schedule (fully virtual or hybrid), month(s) requesting benefits, mailing address and a Phone number. DHS will re-issue if necessary. If you did not receive benefits due to an incorrect address, you should contact your child's school and provide an updated address.

Q: Is this just for kids in public school who get free and reduced-price meals? What about private, parochial, charter schools?

A: This is for all children, regardless of the type of school, who received free or reduced-price meals while attending a school in Rhode Island.

Q: In my child's school, everyone gets free breakfast through Universal Breakfast. Will everyone get an EBT card?

A: Only those eligible for free and reduced priced meals, both breakfast and lunch, through the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) will be eligible for P-EBT. That program is different from the Universal Breakfast program.

Q: What about Community Eligibility Provision schools, will everyone get an EBT card?

A: Everyone in Community Eligibility Provision schools are entitled to P-EBT benefits. If individuals receive SNAP benefits, they will receive the P-EBT benefit on their existing EBT card. If individuals are not receiving SNAP benefits, they will receive the P-EBT benefit on their existing P-EBT card or a new P-EBT card that will be mailed to them at the address on file at the school your child(ren) attend.

Q: How do I activate the card?

A: Call the phone number on the back of the P-EBT card. You will need the EBT card number on the front of the card, your zip code, and the date of birth of the child named on the card. You will need to set a four-digit pin number.

Q: How do I use the P-EBT card?

A: First you have to activate the card by selecting a PIN. Call the phone number on the back of the P-EBT card. You will need the EBT card number on the front of the card, your zip code, and the date of birth of the child named on the card. You will need to set-up a four-digit pin number.

Once the card is activated, you may use it to purchase any non-prepared food (or seeds that can be used to grow food) at any store that accepts Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Benefits (SNAP) benefits. Swipe the P-EBT card at the register and enter the PIN you selected, like you would if you used a debit card. If you are purchasing food and non-food items while shopping, swipe your P-EBT card, the cost of the food items will be deducted, and then the cashier will ask for a different form of payment for the remaining items.

Q: What if I don't want this benefit?

A: Participation in the program is voluntary. If you choose not to participate in the program, please dispose of your card by cutting through the magnetic stripe on the card and discard the card in a secure manner. You will not be able to redeem the food benefits, nor can you transfer the card to someone else. The money will be returned to the federal government.

Q: I've been getting bagged lunches at my school's grab and go location, can I still do that?

A: Yes, if you get a P-EBT card, you can use those benefits to buy food and you can still get meals in your community. For more information on "Grab and Go" meals, please go to: <https://covid.ri.gov/public/food-sites-children>

Q: I haven't applied for public benefits because I'm afraid about public charge issues, does P-EBT jeopardize my immigration status?

A: If you get a P-EBT card because your child gets free or reduced-price meals at school, there is no impact on your immigration status.

Q: Where can I use my P-EBT card?

A: P-EBT can be used to buy food at any location that accepts SNAP benefits. That includes grocery stores, supermarkets, convenience stores, and many farmers markets in RI.

Q: My children did not qualify for free or reduced-price meals at school but since COVID-19 I've lost my job. Can I get P-EBT?

A: If you have a change in your financial circumstances due to COVID-19, we encourage you to apply for SNAP benefits and submit an application for free or reduced priced meals at your child's school. Our website has resources to help you with the Customer Portal here: <http://www.dhs.ri.gov/TechHelp/index.php> You can find an application for free or reduced priced meals on the Rhode Island Department of Education's website and more at: <https://www.ride.ri.gov/CNP/NutritionPrograms/ForParentsFamilies.aspx>

Q: I still haven't received my P-EBT benefits for the last school year or in September. Am I going to those benefits and when?

A. We will need to collect your and the student's information to look into this. We will need the following: Your name, first and last name of the school age child, name of school the child attends, grade the child is in, child's learning schedule (fully virtual or hybrid), month(s) requesting benefits, mailing address where the card should be sent, whether you receive SNAP and a Phone number. If we find that you are eligible for these benefits, we will issue them to your P-EBT or EBT card within 4 – 6 weeks. You may be asked to provide documentation if we are unable to verify your eligibility. If you did not receive benefits due to an incorrect address, you should contact your child's school and provide an updated address.

Q: I am already on a list with DHS for P-EBT in September (or from the last school year). Do I need to do anything more to finally get P-EBT?

A. If you were eligible for P-EBT for the last school year, you should be eligible for P-EBT for this school year as well. If you do not receive benefits on your card by January 31, please call back and we will collect your information to look into it.

Q: My son/daughter has special needs and is older but still in school. Does he/she get P-EBT?

A. If your child attends a school where he/she would have received free and reduced-price meals at school through the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) if the school wasn't closed or operating at reduced hours or attendance for at least 5 consecutive days due to the COVID-19 pandemic, your child can be eligible for P-EBT benefits.