



## **P-EBT 2021-2022 School Year Questions and Answers**

(Answers are based on what is known as of 2.8.2022)

### **Q: What is P-EBT?**

A: Pandemic EBT is a special Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (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 had 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 school age children 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. What should I do?**

A: You can call the number on the back of the P-EBT card, 1-888-979-9939, to request a new card for instances when a card is 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 9 months after they were issued. For example, if you received P-EBT benefits in December 2021 and those benefits have not been used, they will no longer be available on your card as of September 2022.

### **Q: My child is 3 years old and in a preschool classroom at their day care, do I get an increase?**

A: At this time, we have not yet received federal approval to issue P-EBT for children under age 6 who are not attending school. Once guidance is received, if your child is eligible for benefits, you will be notified.

### **Q: How much will the benefit be?**

A: For school age children, 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 updated from **\$6.82 to \$7.10 per child each**

**school day in Rhode Island.** If your child is learning virtually every day of the week, they will receive \$7.10 per day for each day that school is in session each month (excluding vacations and holidays). If your child is temporarily absent for COVID-related reasons, they will receive \$7.10 per day of absence (as reported by your child's school).

You can check your benefit issuance and amount by calling 1-888-979-9939.

**Q: What is considered a COVID-related absence for purposes of P-EBT eligibility?**

A: A COVID-related absence includes absences required by the school due to exposure to COVID-19 (quarantines) as well as an absence initiated by the parent that is recognized and accepted by school officials as COVID-related, such as a parent's decision to keep their child home after a positive test or possible exposure to COVID. These will be counted as P-EBT-eligible days if the school records them as excused absences and recognizes/accepts them as COVID-related.

**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 to be in a hybrid learning schedule. All students who are eligible for free and reduced lunch AND are in a hybrid learning schedule will receive \$7.10 in P-EBT benefits for each day the student is learning virtually.

**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 \$7.10 per child per school day?**

A: RIDE will share monthly data with 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 information, that student should continue to receive \$7.10 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 **September 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022**. 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 this 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: The Department may not have an exact match with the records from RIDE. 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 benefits 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 and whose school participates in the NSLP.

**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 NSLP will be eligible for P-EBT. That program is different from the Universal Breakfast program.

**Q: Will everyone in Community Eligibility Provision schools get an EBT card?**

A: Everyone in Community Eligibility Provision schools is entitled to P-EBT benefits if they are learning virtually (full-time or hybrid) or absent from school for COVID-related reasons. 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 P-EBT 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 as described in the answered question above. 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 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 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 Rhode Island.

**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 RI 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. Am I going to get those benefits and when?**

A. We will need to collect your information as well as 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 the child's school, 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 to 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: My son/daughter has special needs and is age 18 or older but still in school. Does he/she get P-EBT?**

A. If your child has special needs and is age 18 or older, but still in school, they may be eligible for P-EBT benefits. As long as they meet all the criteria, such as being eligible for free or reduced priced meals through the NSLP and they also have COVID related absences reported by the school, then your child is eligible for P-EBT benefits.