

## Important Notice About Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT)

### **This notice is intended for households with children age 5 and younger AND for school age children who are enrolled in traditional, in-person schools.**

Pandemic EBT (P-EBT) is a federally funded, temporary food assistance program that helps families during the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (PHE). P-EBT is administered by the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS). School-age children (students) and children 5 years old and younger can qualify, but eligibility requirements are different for both groups. Eligibility is based on guidelines set by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The P-EBT program will continue to run until May 11, 2023 (when the federal COVID-19 public health emergency ends).

### **P-EBT FOR CHILDREN 5 YEARS OLD AND YOUNGER: 2022-2023 SCHOOL YEAR**

To be eligible for P-EBT, a young child who does not receive P-EBT as a student must meet **both** of the following criteria:

1. **The child must be 5 years old or younger** as of September 1, 2022. **AND**
2. **The child must receive Food and Nutrition Services (FNS / food stamps)** at some point between September 1, 2022 and May 11, 2023 (when the federal COVID-19 public health emergency ends).

**Young children will get the P-EBT benefits on their family's current FNS EBT card.** If your child turns 6 years old during the school year and is not part of the Student P-EBT group, they will continue to receive P-EBT *ONLY IF* they are still on an active FNS case. All eligible young children will receive a statewide benefit amount set by NCDHHS each month which is calculated according to USDA rules. That benefit amount will likely change every month depending on COVID-19's current impact across the state. Check the [P-EBT website](#) where the statewide monthly benefit amounts will be posted as they are calculated.

### **STUDENT P-EBT: 2022-2023 SCHOOL YEAR**

To be eligible for P-EBT, a student must be approved for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) free or reduced-price meals (FRP).

- You **DO need to apply** for NSLP free or reduced-price meals through your school if:
  - Your child attends a school that participates in the NSLP and is **not** in any of the categories listed below. Find out if your school participates in the NSLP [here](#).
- You **do NOT need to apply** and are automatically eligible for NSLP if your child is in any of these categories:
  - Your child attends a Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) school. [Check here](#) to see if your child's school is a CEP school.
  - Your household receives FNS. You should automatically be approved for NSLP free or reduced-price school meals through Direct Certification (automatic enrollment) between NCDHHS and the Department of Public Instruction (DPI).
  - Your child is categorically eligible for NSLP through circumstances such as when children are experiencing homelessness, in foster care, or a member of a migrant family. Children in these circumstances are automatically eligible for NSLP free or reduced-price meals when the school knows about these situations. If you would like to report that your child is experiencing any of these situations, please contact your child's school.

If you have questions about the NSLP free or reduced-price school meal program or to apply, please contact your child's school for more information. **Make sure you apply for FNS or the FRP program at your child's school before May 1. The deadline for becoming eligible for P-EBT is May 31, and these applications can take at least a month to process.**

Before P-EBT benefits can be issued to students that qualify for P-EBT, their school must meet a threshold of reduced attendance because of COVID-19 this school year. P-EBT benefits are not issued to any student until the reduced attendance requirement is met. [Check here](#) to see if your school has met the requirement yet. This list is updated monthly as additional schools meet the requirement.

**To receive benefits**, all of the following criteria must be met:

- 1) A student must participate in the NSLP Free or Reduced Price meal program,
- 2) Their school must have met the requirement of having pandemic related reduced attendance or hours, and **AFTER** both of these criteria are met,
- 3) The student is absent from school due to COVID-19 (sick with COVID, need to quarantine, or temporarily attend virtual school while enrolled in a physical school). Students will get P-EBT benefits for absent days only when the school records the absences as COVID-19-related.

**Student P-EBT benefit amount:**

P-EBT eligibility and benefit amount will be determined each month using school records and benefits will be issued retroactively to students who are eligible for benefits. Your household will receive \$8.18 in benefits per eligible day of COVID-related absence in quarantine or temporary virtual instruction (as recognized by your school) based on their school attendance to help buy food for your school-aged child. You can receive this benefit in addition to other benefits that you may currently receive.

See categories below for how you will receive P-EBT if you are eligible:

**Category #1: You have NOT received P-EBT before.**

Be on the lookout in the coming week(s) for your P-EBT card (see #3 if you get FNS benefits), which will arrive by mail. Your card is linked to your P-EBT account with food benefits. This notice provides instructions on how to activate and use your P-EBT card.

**Category #2: You HAVE received P-EBT before.**

You may continue to use the P-EBT card you previously received to access your P-EBT benefits in most cases. If you receive a new P-EBT card, your benefits will be added to the new card.

**Category #3: You are a current Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) recipient with an FNS EBT card.**

If you already receive FNS, the P-EBT benefits will be added to your active FNS EBT card. Most FNS recipients will not receive a separate P-EBT card. If you do receive a P-EBT card, your P-EBT benefits will be on the P-EBT card.

**ACTIVATING A NEW P-EBT CARD:****How to activate a new card OR order a new card if you have lost or destroyed your P-EBT card:**

The card works just like a debit card. Before you can use your card, **you must first activate your card** and select a Personal Identification Number (PIN). There are three ways to activate, check your balance, or replace your card:

1. Visit [www.ebtedge.com](http://www.ebtedge.com). Click on "More Information" under EBT Cardholder, then login and/or register your account.
2. Download and use the **ebtEDGE** mobile app (available on Google Play or Apple Store).
3. Contact the North Carolina **EBT Call Center at 1-888-622-7328** and follow the automated instructions.

**IMPORTANT:** Your activation code to create your PIN will be the date of birth (DOB) of the youngest school-aged child in your household. It may be necessary to try the DOB for each child in your household. Enter the DOB using two digits for the month, two digits for the day, and four digits for the year. For example, if the date of birth is June 1, 2008, you would enter 06012008.

The P-EBT card can be used to purchase food items at EBT authorized retailers, including most major grocery stores.

**Items you CAN Buy with a P-EBT Card:**

- Breads, cereals, fruits, vegetables
- Meats, fish, poultry, dairy products
- Bottled water and non-alcoholic beverages
- Seeds and plants that produce food

**Items you CANNOT Buy with a P-EBT Card:**

- Beer, wine, liquor, cigarettes, tobacco
- Any nonfood items, such as: pet foods, soaps, household supplies, vitamins, medicine
- Hot foods or food that is already prepared

**Other Key Information and Questions**

You may decline this benefit by destroying your P-EBT card. Receiving P-EBT benefits does not impact your immigration status and will not impact a future immigration application you may file. Selling FNS or P-EBT benefits for cash is illegal and punishable by criminal prosecution. You do not have to spend all benefits at once. The benefits you receive will remain available up to 274 days.

If you have questions about P-EBT, visit North Carolina's P-EBT website at [ncdhhs.gov/PEBT](http://ncdhhs.gov/PEBT) and view answers to [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#). If your question is not answered on the website, you can call the **EBT Call Center at 1-866-719-0141** and select option X.