

P-EBT Frequently Asked Questions

For Schools and Districts

September 2021

What is P-EBT?

The Mississippi Department of Human Services (MDHS) and the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) have been authorized by the USDA to provide Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) payments to eligible Mississippi families for the 2020-21 school year and Summer 2021.

These benefits are meant to help families with additional food costs that their household may have experienced due to school closures during the last school year.

Only children who were eligible to receive free or reduced priced lunch under the National School Lunch Program are eligible to receive P-EBT benefits.

How much money will families receive?

MDE and MDHS expect to issue P-EBT benefits through **two lump-sum payments**: one for Summer 2021 and one for the 2020-21 school year.

Summer 2021 Payment

- Each child in the state who was eligible to receive free or reduced priced lunch under the National School Lunch Program during the 2020-21 school year will receive a payment of **\$375**.

School Year 2020-21 Payment

- The amount that children eligible for 2020-21 school year P-EBT benefits will receive will depend on their school's reported schedule during that school year.

Who should families contact if they have questions or concerns?

Families can call the P-EBT hotline at **1-833-316-2423** between the hours of 10:00am and 7:00pm, Monday-Friday.

How are 2020-21 School Year benefits calculated?

- Benefits for eligible children (those who qualify for free or reduced price lunch) will be calculated for each month of the 2020-21 school year based on the mode of learning used by the majority of students in the child's school during that month.
 - If the child was enrolled in a school where a majority of the student body was attending based on a **fully virtual learning schedule** during that month due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the child will receive **\$122.76** for that month.
 - If the child was enrolled in a school where a majority of the student body was attending based on a **hybrid learning schedule** (some in-person, some virtual) during that month due to the COVID-19 pandemic, they will receive **\$61.38** for that month.
 - If the child was enrolled in a school with a **majority in-person learning schedule** during that month, **the child will NOT receive any benefits for that month.**
- The monthly amounts that the child is eligible to receive will be added together and issued as a single lump-sum payment for the 2020-21 school year.

How can I find out how much money children in my district/school will receive?

- All children in the state who were eligible for free or reduced priced lunch under the National School Lunch Program will receive a one-time payment of **\$375** for Summer 2021 P-EBT benefits.
- Each child's eligibility and amount for School Year 2020-21 P-EBT benefits was determined for each month of that school year (August 2020-May 2021) using information received from school districts about their school schedules.
- To review how much children in your district or school will receive for the 2020-21 school year, please find your school on the P-EBT School list available here:

<https://www.mdhs.ms.gov/pandemic-ebt-p-ebt/p-ebt-schools-2/>

Why is it taking so long to get P-EBT benefits out?

There have been delays in card production and manufacturing. MDE and MDHS are working with our state and federal partners and outside contractors to get these benefits issued as quickly and as accurately as possible.

When will benefits be issued?

Based on current projections, we estimate that P-EBT benefit cards will be mailed between late September and late October. Families will receive funds through two lump-sum payments.

- **Payment One:** Summer 2021 P-EBT benefits
 - \$375 to every eligible child in the state
- **Payment Two:** School Year 2020-21 P-EBT benefits
 - Variable amounts to eligible children based on their school's reported schedule

Families are contacting me saying their address has changed, what should I do?

We will be able to accept requests for address updates beginning in late September.

Families will need their child's **MSIS number** to request an update to their address for P-EBT.

If a child's address has changed since June 2021, the child's parent or guardian should do two things:

1. **Contact the P-EBT hotline at 1-833-316-2423.**
2. **Contact their child's 2020-21 school district to ensure their address is up-to-date.**

We cannot send a P-EBT card to an address that has not been confirmed through MDE data or by the child's school district.

Please update your student records when families call to report a new mailing address.

Under some circumstances, the P-EBT call center staff may be able to update an address for the parent over the phone if staff is able to verify the address through available MDE data.

If the change cannot be made over the phone, the call center will record the new address for the student and submit the new address to the district's MSIS contact for review and verification.

Can schools or districts tell parents if their child is on the list of eligible students?

The best way for parents to check the eligibility of their child is to contact the P-EBT hotline at **1-833-316-2423**.

How will families receive their benefits?

Each eligible child in the household, including SNAP recipient households, will receive a new P-EBT card with the child's name on it. The P-EBT card will look like this:



What about students who have graduated? Are they receiving benefits?

If the child was an NSLP-eligible child during the 2020-21 school year, they will receive P-EBT benefits.

What about foster children or children who changed custody?

We are providing P-EBT benefits to the child at the address provided for the parent/guardian in MDE records for that child for the 2020-21 school year.

What if a child transferred into or out of our school in the middle of the school year? What school will their benefits be based on?

We collected student records from districts in June 2021. The child will receive benefits based on the school listed in the records submitted to MDHS. We are also reviewing data files to ensure that students are not listed under multiple school districts.

How long do families have to spend P-EBT benefits?

P-EBT benefits will expire after a minimum of 12 months of inactivity on the card. If a family uses their P-EBT card at least once every 365 days, the card will remain active.

This means that if a family receives a P-EBT payment on October 15, 2021 they have until at least October 14, 2022 to spend those funds.

What can families purchase with P-EBT benefits?

Based on USDA regulations, P-EBT funds can purchase any food for the household, such as:

- Fruits and vegetables;
- Meat, poultry, and fish;
- Dairy products;
- Breads and cereals;
- Other foods such as snack foods and non-alcoholic beverages; and
- Seeds and plants, which produce food for the household to eat.

Households CANNOT use P-EBT benefits to buy:

- Beer, wine, liquor, cigarettes, or tobacco
- Vitamins, medicines, and supplements. If an item has a Supplement Facts label, it is considered a supplement and is not eligible for SNAP purchase.
- Live animals (except shellfish, fish removed from water, and animals slaughtered prior to pick-up from the store).
- Foods that are hot at the point of sale
- Any nonfood items such as:
 - Pet foods
 - Cleaning supplies, paper products, and other household supplies.
 - Hygiene items, cosmetics

These are the same guidelines that apply to SNAP benefits.

What if the parent says they never received the first round of P-EBT benefits for the 2019-20 school year?

P-EBT Round 1 has ended. We are working to correct a small number of cases with agency-caused errors. If families experienced issues receiving their first round of P-EBT benefits, they should call the P-EBT hotline at **1-833-316-2423** to ensure that their correct mailing address is listed.