

Frequently Asked Questions

Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer (P-EBT) Program

School Year 2021-22 and Summer 2022

Children in School

1. What is P-EBT?

P-EBT refers to the Pandemic-Electronic Benefit Transfer, which provides eligible children with EBT benefits that can be used to purchase food or food items, similar to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as food stamps). Kindergarten through grade 12 students within eligible school buildings who are eligible for free or reduced-price meals through the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) or School breakfast Program (SBP) may be eligible for P-EBT benefits.

2. How is this third round of P-EBT different from the previous two rounds?

The first round of P-EBT was a reimbursement for the meals children ate at home during March, April, and May 2020 while schools were closed due to COVID. The second round of P-EBT was a reimbursement for the meals children ate at home while participating in hybrid or virtual learning methods. This third round of benefits is a reimbursement for only the meals the student ate at home due to a COVID-19 related absence that occurred September 2021 through the end of the regular school year.

3. Who is eligible for school year 2021-22 P-EBT?

Children in school:

- must be enrolled in free or reduced-price school meals at a school operating the National School Lunch Program; **OR**
- must be enrolled in a school operating a Community Eligibility Program (CEP) or Provision II school, which offers breakfast and/or lunch free to all students;
- must be enrolled in K-12; **AND,**
- must be without access to consuming a meal at school due to a COVID-19 related absence that was on file at the school.

Your Child's School:

- must operate the National School Lunch Program **AND**
- must have been operating at reduced attendance for at least five consecutive days at some point during the 2021-22 school year.

4. How was my child eligible for free or reduced-price school meals?

Eligibility for free and reduced-price school meals is determined either by a family submitting a free or reduced-price meal application directly to their child's school; or by receiving Direct Certification benefits (DC) through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); or by being deemed homeless or considered a foster child through the state.

Many schools took advantage of nationwide waivers that allowed schools to operate the Seamless Summer Option (SSO), which is a provision that allowed all meals to be served at no cost to all students during the start of the pandemic through school year 2021-22. This provision allowed all meals to be served at no cost, but this **did not** qualify your child as "free or reduced-price eligible." Schools continued to distribute free or reduced-price meal applications and conduct direct certification processes to determine students as free or reduced-price eligible. Documentation must have been on-file at the school during the 2021-22 school year to determine your child as free or reduced-price eligible.

If your child was NOT eligible for free and reduced-price lunch in the 2021-22 school year your child may not be eligible for this round of P-EBT benefits.

Children in Child Care: Children under age 6 who were not in grades K-12 and enrolled in SNAP will be issued benefits through Missouri Department of Social Services. These benefits will be uploaded to an active EBT card and are not included in school year 2021-22 and summer 2022 P-EBT.

5. How do I apply for P-EBT?

There is NO application process. There is no application.

DO NOT submit an old application by email or by mail to the office of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education or the office of the Missouri Department of Social Services. You will get a denial letter if you send in an old application.

For children in school — in November 2022 your child’s school district will begin submitting absence data from the 2021-22 school year. This absence data will be used to determine the level of benefits your child is eligible to receive. Benefits are based on the number of days the school has a COVID-19 related absence on file for your student. Only absence data for free or reduced-price eligible students will be submitted for benefits. Your student had to have been approved eligible for free or reduced-price meals during the 2021-22 school year and approved documentation on-file at the school.

If you have questions about the number of days your child was absent from September 1, 2021, through the end of the school year, please contact your child’s school.

6. If I chose to have my children learning virtually for the year, will they receive the benefit even if the school wasn’t closed?

No. Students who chose to learn virtually for the entire school year are not eligible for benefits.

Benefits are provided based on the days the child was absent due to COVID-19 or the child was not at school due to a school closure because of COVID-19.

7. How much will my child in school will receive?

Below is the benefit levels table:

Number of days out of school	Number of days used for the benefit amount	Monthly benefit amount
Tier 1: 1-5	3 days x \$7.10	\$21.30
Tier 2: 6-15	10 days x \$7.10	\$71.00
Tier 3: 16 + fully virtual	19 days x \$7.10	\$120.70
Summer 2022	55 days	\$391.00

Note: A school will be considered eligible once the school has operated at reduced attendance due to COVID-related absences for a five-day threshold. Once this five-day threshold is met then any subsequent absences due to COVID make students eligible for P-EBT benefits for those days the student had a COVID-19 related absence on-file at the school district.

Missouri will use a three-tiered benefit level to determine benefit amounts once a school has met the five-consecutive days for P-EBT eligibility.

8. How will my child in school get P-EBT benefits?

Your school-aged child can receive benefits once the school submits your child’s absence data. The data from schools will be sent to the Missouri Department of Social Services to distribute P-EBT benefit cards.

9. What time period will P-EBT benefits cover?

This P-EBT benefit will be for COVID related absences that occurred September 2021 through the end of the

regular school year. If your child's school submits absence data, your child's P-EBT benefit will be loaded as a one-time deposit to provide benefits onto a new or existing P-EBT card.

10. How long will it take to receive my benefits after my child's school submits the appropriate data to DESE?

At this time, we are not able to estimate the turnaround time. DESE reviews the data, and then shares it with DSS to process the benefit amount. Teams at both DESE and DSS are working to administer these benefits while also fulfilling their existing duties.

11. How long will P-EBT benefits stay on my P-EBT card and how long is my P-EBT card active?

P-EBT benefits are good for 274 days or nine months from the date the benefits are placed on your P-EBT card. After 274 days the benefits will be removed from your card. The P-EBT card will be inactive after 365 days. Please call the number on the back of the card to check benefits remaining on the card and if the card is active or inactive.

12. Can my student still participate in meals provided by the school if I receive P-EBT benefits?

Yes, students can receive P-EBT and also get meals provided by the school district if the district provided grab-n-go meals for students who could not consume a meal at school due to a COVID-related absence.

13. What if I did not receive benefits for my child, or I disagree with the benefit amount?

Schools will begin submitting student absence data in November 2022. Please remain patient as we have been working to develop a system to collect this data. If you have questions concerning your child's absences on-file please contact the school your child attended during the 2021-22 school year.

Once you receive the P-EBT card and you have questions about how to use the P-EBT card call the Family Support Division at 855-FSD-INFO (855-373-4636).

14. What if I did not apply for free or reduced priced meals through the application provided by the school district during the 2021-22 school year? How can I apply for free or reduced price meals so that I can be eligible to receive the P-EBT benefit?

Each local school district will accept new Free or Reduced-Meal Program applications throughout the school year. Schools are no longer accepting free or reduced-price applications for the 2021-22 school year. You can contact the school to determine what your student's eligibility was during the 2021-22 school year if you are not sure. If you did not apply for free or reduced-priced meals you are not eligible for this round of P-EBT benefits.

15. Last school year, I sent in an application. Can I apply online this year or how do I find the application?

No, there is not a paper or online application for this round of P-EBT benefits. Schools will be submitting student absences to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

16. If I currently receive SNAP, will I automatically receive benefits or do I have to apply?

No, P-EBT benefits will not be added automatically. This round of P-EBT benefits is specifically related to each COVID-related absence your child experienced during the 2021-22 school year. Schools will be submitting student absences to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

17. At my school, all students receive free meals during the 2021-22 school year, so my child received free meals even though we don't usually qualify for free or reduced meals. Does this make my children eligible for the P-EBT benefit?

No, this does not make your child automatically eligible for free or reduced-price meals. In general, households must have been certified for free or reduced-price meals on an individual or household basis to be eligible for free or reduced-price meals. If your school does not usually offer free meals, and has just started offering free meals for all this school year, then you will likely need to qualify on your own. You can contact your local school district for questions related to free or reduced price meal status.

However, if all students are free because the school is participating in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) or Provision 2, then those students are eligible for P-EBT benefits if the child had a COVID-related absence.

18. What if my child's school did not track COVID-related absences?

Your Child's School:

- must operate the National School Lunch Program **AND**
- must have been operating at reduced attendance for at least five consecutive days at some point during the 2021-22 school year.

If your child's school did not have, a mechanism to track COVID-related absences you should contact the school and review your child's attendance records. If the child's attendance records indicate the child was absent from school for a minimum of five days then the parent must attest that the child's absence was COVID-related. The child must have a record on file to document a minimum excused absence of five consecutive days. The school can then assume the five-day absence was COVID-related. The parent must attest verbally with the school that the five-day absence was COVID-related. The school will then submit the number of days the child was absent through the secure portal to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The absence must be five school days (Monday-Friday). Weekends do not count in the five consecutive day threshold.

19. If I have other children in my household who are not school-aged, can I receive benefits for them?

Children in school are eligible for a benefit due to COVID-related absences. A child care benefit is available for children under age six in child care enrolled in SNAP.

20. Where can I use my P-EBT benefits?

You can use your P-EBT card in any grocery store or retail location anywhere in the United States that displays the QUEST Mark®.

21. What can I buy with P-EBT benefits?

P-EBT benefits can be used to buy food and food products, such as plants and seeds to grow food, just like SNAP benefits.

22. Are there any restrictions when using a P-EBT card?

Yes, the same restrictions that apply for regular EBT cards will also apply to P-EBT cards. P-EBT benefits cannot buy any of the following:

- Hot prepared foods
- Foods prepared to be immediately eaten
- Vitamins, medicine, supplements
- Non-food items such as paper products, soap, or pet food
- Alcohol

- Tobacco

Please review **EBT Cardholder Information** for more information.

23. I applied for P-EBT, how long will it take to get approved?

There is no application for this third round of P-EBT benefits. If you sent in an old application, you may receive a denial letter.

24. What if I disagree with the benefit amount?

Please contact the school your child was enrolled in during school year 2021-22 to review the days your child was absent due to COVID-19. Please do not call the Family Support Division or Department of Elementary and Secondary Education with questions concerning the benefit amount.

Number of days out of school	Number of days used for the benefit amount	Monthly benefit amount
Tier 1: 1-5	3 days x \$7.10	\$21.30
Tier 2: 6-15	10 days x \$7.10	\$71.00
Tier 3: 16 + fully virtual	19 days x \$7.10	\$120.70
Summer 2022	55 days	\$391.00

25. What should I do if I did not get P-EBT benefits for all of my children?

You may contact your school and have them review the absent files for your children that were submitted for a P-EBT benefit. If you do not get P-EBT benefits for all of your children and you believe you should have, please call the Family Support Division at 855-FSD-INFO (855-373-4636) and ask our team to review your case.

26. How do I know if my child’s school submitted absence data for my child’s P-EBT?

Please contact the school your child was enrolled in for questions related to the number of days the school has absence data on-file for your child during the 2021-22 school year.

27. How did my school communicate to families about P-EBT?

Your school district should have sent a form of communication similar to DESE’s sample communication sent to schools to share with families. The sample letter here <https://dese.mo.gov/media/pdf/p-ebt-letter-families-pdf> provides information to families about P-EBT benefits for the 2021-22 school year and summer 2022. Although your school may not have sent this exact letter you should contact your child’s school district to obtain information on your child’s COVID absence records and P-EBT eligibility.

28. What is Summer P-EBT?

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (the FFCRA), as amended by the American Rescue Plan Act 2021, authorizes The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to approve an extension of the state P-EBT plan during a “covered summer period.” The statute defines a covered summer period to mean “a summer period that follows a school year during which there was a federal public health emergency declaration.” Schools participating in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program “shall be deemed closed” for purposes of the covered summer period. As a practical matter, that means that states with an approved extension for a covered summer period may issue P-EBT benefits during the covered summer period without regard to students’ school status, individual COVID-related absences and virtual learning days, or the operating status of covered child care facilities

Missouri’s plan for Summer P-EBT was approved by USDA on October 20, 2022. The approved plan included children in school and Child Care. Approval is posted publically at <https://dese.mo.gov/financial-admin-services/food-nutrition-services/news-and-updates-2>

29. How is my child eligible for Summer P-EBT?

All school children who were eligible for free or reduced-price school meals in May 2022, at a school under the NSLP or SBP, are eligible for P-EBT benefits in the summer of 2022. If your child attended a school participating in CEP and/or Provision 2, your child will receive benefits. School children are eligible for P-EBT benefits during the entire 2022 covered summer period (55 days). School children who were enrolled in K-12 during the school year 2021-22 and eligible for free or reduced-price meals are eligible for a summer benefit of \$391.00.

30. How do I apply for Summer P-EBT?

There is no application process for Summer P-EBT. Benefits will be issued by school reported data. For questions about child care P-EBT Summer contact the Family Support Division at 855-FSD-INFO (855-373-4636).

31. Is summer P-EBT being processed before or after school year benefits?

Both summer and school year benefit programs are being administered at the same time, so it is not guaranteed which benefit a family will receive first.

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- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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