



Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) Program Questions and Answers for School Districts 6-11-2020

The New Jersey Department of Human Services, Division of Family Development (DHS-DFD) is the State agency authorized to administer economic assistance programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) in the State of New Jersey. The New Jersey Department of Agriculture (NJDA) is the State agency authorized by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to administer and enforce the School Meals Programs in New Jersey. While DHS-DFD is the lead agency for the implementation of the special P-EBT benefit, both departments are working together to disseminate information and address frequently asked questions received from school districts.

1.) What is P-EBT?

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act of 2020 (FFCRA) (P.L. 116-127) included authorization for a program called Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) that seeks to address food insecurity by allowing a State to provide food assistance benefits to help students during extended school closures.

The USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) approved the New Jersey Department of Human Services, Division of Family Development's plan to provide households with children eligible for free and reduced-priced meals under the National School Lunch Program (NLSP) with P-EBT benefits due to COVID-19 related school closures. The Division of Family Development has been working with individual School Food Authorities (SFAs) to identify eligible children and issue P-EBT benefits. The P-EBT benefit for individuals is the value of school breakfast and lunch, which equates to \$5.70 per day for each student for each day that school was closed. The full benefit amount is \$416.10, which covers the 73 days that schools were closed due to COVID-19.

The P-EBT program creates access to a special benefit provided through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) agency. P-EBT is a one-time benefit for families that have lost access to free or reduced-price meals because of school closures related to COVID-19.

2.) Who is eligible for P-EBT?

All children who were approved to receive free or reduced-price meals as of March 18, 2020, if not for their school closure due to COVID-19, are eligible to receive P-EBT.

3.) Are children who receive reduced-price meals eligible for P-EBT?

Yes, all children who were approved to receive free or reduced-price meals as of March 18, 2020, if not for their school closure due to COVID-19, are eligible to receive P-EBT. All eligible children, whether they would normally receive free or reduced price meals, will receive the value of free meals through P-EBT.

4.) Are children receiving school meals through the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) eligible for P-EBT?



Yes, all children who would receive free or reduced-price (FRP) meals, if not for their school closure due to COVID-19, are eligible to receive P-EBT. As such, students attending schools that participate in CEP are eligible to receive P-EBT if they attend a school that closed for at least 5 consecutive days due to the public health emergency.

5.) Are students residing in Juvenile Detention Centers and/or Residential Childcare Institutions eligible for P-EBT benefits?

No. The FFCRA Act of 2020 stipulates that P-EBT benefits are for eligible children attending schools that are closed for at least 5 consecutive days during a public health emergency designation during which the school would otherwise be in session. Juvenile Detention Centers and Residential Childcare Institutions were not mandated to close; therefore, students residing in these institutions did not lose access to meals.

6.) My district was affected by the Direct Certification Technical Error. Do I include these students on the Department of Human Service's P-EBT spreadsheet?

Of the students who were identified on the Affected Students DC List, include those students whose eligibility was confirmed as of March 18, 2020 (through either the updated Direct Cert file upload match, updated Categorically Eligibility (Migrant, Homeless, Runaway, Foster with a Letter) or updated School Meals Application, on the P-EBT spreadsheet.

Include any impacted students who remained Free or Reduced due to subsequent eligibility determination on the Final Eligibility Determination Report (the top section of the CEP Eligibility Determination SY 2021 report) in SNEARS. These students should be included on your P-EBT spreadsheet.

Students who did not respond were still receiving free meals as of March 18, 2020 and should still be included on your P-EBT spreadsheet. (The cut-off date to terminate their benefits was not until March 20, 2020.)

Finally, do not include any impacted students who were Changed to Paid due to Denied/Over Income or who Withdrew from the District.

7.) Can State educational agencies and school food authorities administering a school lunch program under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (42. U.S.C. 1751 et seq.) share participant data for the purpose of P-EBT?

Yes, under the statute, data sharing is allowable. Section 1101(e) of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA, P.L. 116-127) states "Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Secretary of Agriculture may authorize State educational agencies and school food authorities administering a school lunch program under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (42 U.S.C. 1751 et seq.) to release to appropriate officials administering the supplemental nutrition assistance program such information as may be necessary to carry out this section." FNS recognizes that information sharing is critical to the success of P-EBT and encourages States to make full use of the data sharing authority provided through the FFCRA. When FNS approves a State plan for P-EBT, the Secretary is authorizing the release of the information to appropriate officials as detailed in the State plan.



8.) In a state that issues P-EBT, can school food authorities (SFAs) continue to provide meals through the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and Seamless Summer Option (SSO)?

Yes, SFAs can continue to operate other Federal nutrition programs while participating in P-EBT. The statute does not prohibit children from participating in SFSP or SSO. The P-EBT program is in addition to any meal programs already available to students.

9.) Where do I direct families that have questions about P-EBT benefits?

If families have questions about New Jersey's P-EBT program, they should call **1-800-997-3333** or go to <https://www.nj.gov/humanservices/njsnap/pebt.shtml>