

Frequently-Asked Questions About Pandemic EBT (P-EBT)

2020-2021 School Year *(February 8, 2021)*

Q1: What is P-EBT?

A: It is a temporary food benefit approved by the federal government to help households affected by COVID-19-related school closures.

Q2: Who is eligible for P-EBT benefits?

A: Vermont households with students who would normally receive free or reduced-price meals at school under the National School Lunch Program. Benefits are available for a month if the student spent most of the month learning through either a remote or hybrid learning model.

Q3. How do I find out if my household is eligible?

A: Your student's school will determine if your student is eligible, based on criteria provided by the state. The school may contact you to make sure they have the correct information on file. Please respond to their request. If you are eligible, you'll get a letter from DCF that explains how and when you'll get the benefit.

Q4: If we are eligible, how will we receive these benefits?

A: If you currently get 3SquaresVT on an EBT card, you will be issued the P-EBT benefit on that card. If not, you will receive a special P-EBT card. Please note that the federal *Families First Coronavirus Response Act* authorized your student's school to share needed data with the Department for Children and Families (DCF) for this purpose.

Q5: I received a P-EBT card last spring, but no longer have it. Is that a problem?

A: No. New cards are being issued. If you'll be getting your benefit on a special P-EBT card, please keep the new card you get. Additional benefits may be added to it in April and July 2021.

Q6: When will benefits be issued?

A: The first round of benefits (for September -December 2020) is expected to be issued in late March 2021. Benefits for January-March 2021 are expected to be issued in late April 2021. Benefits for April-June 2021 are expected to be issued in late July 2021. The State is still developing the system to distribute these benefits so the timing may change.

Q7: How much is the P-EBT benefit?

A: Benefits are based on your student's learning model for the month:

- \$119.35 for a remote learning month.
- A partial benefit for a hybrid learning month (some days at school, some days remote). *The partial benefit for September through December 2020 will be \$71.61 per month. This may be higher or lower for January through June 2021.*
- No benefit for an in-person learning month.

Q8: Is the P-EBT benefit the same regardless of how many kids are in the household?

A: No. The benefit is calculated based on each student's learning model and eligibility for free and reduced meals. The benefit may vary from student to student.

Q9: Custody for my student is split between two households. Who gets the benefit?

A: The benefit will be sent to the adult who is listed as Head of Household by the student's school. This may be the adult who submitted a free and reduced application for the student, or the adult listed as the primary contact in the school's system. The school will likely be contacting households in February to confirm who should be listed as Head of Household. Please contact the school if the Head of Household needs to be updated.

Q10: What can I buy with this benefit?

A: See the [list of eligible food items](#) on the USDA website.

Q11: Where can I use my P-EBT card?

A: You can use it to buy food at any location that accepts 3SquaresVT. This includes grocery stores, supermarkets, convenience stores, and many farmers markets in Vermont. Learn more on DCF's [EBT web page](#).

Q12: I don't have children in school. Do I get this benefit?

A: No. This benefit is only for households whose children usually get free or reduced-priced meals at school through the National School Lunch Program and now need to eat those meals at home because they are learning remotely or in a hybrid learning model.

Q13: Is this just for kids in public school?

A: No. Some independent schools participate in the National School Lunch Program, and children at those schools may be eligible for this benefit. However, many independent schools do not participate in the National School Lunch Program, and their students are not eligible for this benefit.

Q14: What about schools that offer free breakfast and lunch to all students using the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) or Provision 2?

A: All students in these schools will get a P-EBT benefit for months that they are learning in a hybrid or remote learning model. You can see a [list of these schools](#) on the AOE website.

Q15: Everyone in my child's school normally gets free breakfast through Provision 2. Will everyone get a P-EBT benefit? A: No. The benefit is only available to students at schools that normally offer both breakfast and lunch for free using Provision 2 or CEP. If your school normally only offers free breakfast using Provision 2, eligibility for P-EBT will be based on each student's eligibility for free and reduced-price lunch.

Q16: Our school is offering free meals to all children this year. Does that mean all students will get the benefit?

A: No. If your student's school does not normally offer "Universal Meals" through CEP or Provision 2 then eligibility will be based on individual student eligibility for free and reduced school meals. Schools may offer free meals to all children this year using USDA's Summer Food Service Program, but that does not qualify all students at the school for P-EBT.

Q17: My child is being homeschooled this year. Do we qualify for the benefit?

A: No. The P-EBT benefit is available only for students who are enrolled at a school that normally participates in the National School Lunch Program. The benefit is available for enrolled students who are learning remotely, but not for students who have unenrolled from their school and enrolled in home study for this year. Students enrolled in home study may still receive meals from open meal sites. Visit the [USDA's Meal Finder](#) to find an open meal site near you.

Q18: I've been picking up lunches for my child at our school's *Grab and Go* location or they've been delivering them to us. Do I have to stop doing that if I get a P-EBT benefit? Does that disqualify us from the benefit?

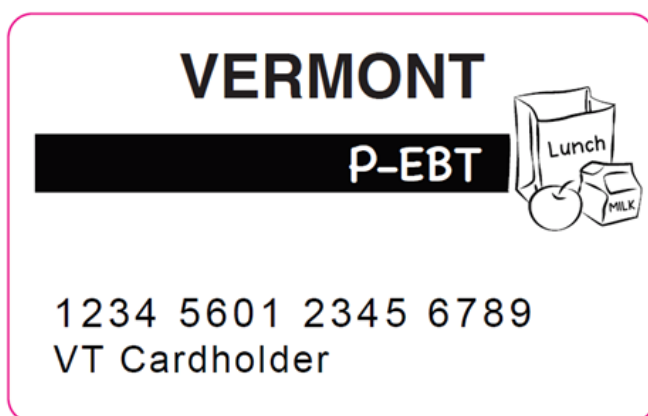
A: No. Students receiving meals for remote learning days are still eligible for the P-EBT benefit. You can still get those meals and qualify for this benefit.

Q19: I have other children not enrolled in school. Are they eligible for the benefit?

A: No. The benefit is only available to children who are enrolled in a school that normally participates in the National School Lunch Program. Younger children or children who are not enrolled in school are not eligible. The federal government is working on extending the benefit to some children enrolled in some child cares, however information on how that will work is not yet available.

Q20: What does the P-EBT card look like?

A. Here's an example of the front of a card.



Q21: My children did not qualify for free or reduced-price meals before COVID-19, but I've lost my job since then. Can I get P-EBT?

A: If your financial situation has changed, we encourage you to apply for:

- [3SquaresVT Benefits](#). If you get a monthly benefit, your child qualifies for free meals at school and you may receive a P-EBT benefit.
- [Free or reduced-price meals](#) by contacting your child's school. You may also get the form on [AOE's website](#). If your household is determined to be eligible, you'll receive a P-EBT benefit the months your student was learning in a hybrid or remote learning model. Approved applications submitted to your school by April 1, 2021 may qualify for benefits back to September 2020. After April 1, approved applications will qualify the student only for the current and future months' benefits.

Q22: What if I don't want this benefit?

A: Participation is voluntary. If you choose not to participate, either:

- Don't use the extra benefits issued on your 3SquaresVT EBT card. *OR*
- Dispose of your specially issued P-EBT card by cutting through the magnetic strip and discarding the card in a secure manner. You may NOT give your card to someone else.

Q23: I have more questions. Where can I learn more?

A: Go to <https://dcf.vermont.gov/esd/covid19/P-EBT> for more information. The state is currently setting up a call center for P-EBT questions. When it is available, the phone number will be listed on the webpage above. Please contact your student's school if you have specific concerns about your student's eligibility for free and reduced meals, or would like to change the head of household or mailing address that will be used to issue the card.