



# Frequently Asked Questions about Pandemic-EBT For Households and Recipients

Updated May 20, 2020

*Note: This information will be updated as additional information becomes available.*

## **1. What is Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT)?**

P-EBT is a temporary food benefit available in Virginia to families with students who would have received free or reduced-price meals if schools were open. The program is authorized through the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food and Nutrition Service. The Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) and the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) are working together to operate the program.

## **2. What is the purpose of P-EBT?**

The purpose of the P-EBT benefit is to supplement existing nutrition programs for low-income households during the pandemic. It does not replace meals provided through the school programs during unexpected closures, such as meals currently provided by schools or the summer meal programs that will begin when the school year is over. The P-EBT benefits are calculated at the rate of \$5.70 per day per student for the 66 days Virginia's schools will be closed. The VDSS will issue benefits to eligible households with a maximum total benefit of \$376 per eligible student. Students who became eligible after March 13 will receive a lower amount. Benefits will be provided for eligible students only and not for other children in the household.

## **3. Who is eligible for P-EBT benefits?**

Households are eligible because they:

- include an eligible student(s) who, if not for the closure of their school, would receive free or reduced-price school meals and
- the student's school or school division has been closed for at least five consecutive days.

Virginia households are eligible if they have students who are either eligible for free or reduced-price school meals or enrolled in a school that provides free meals to all students through the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) or another provision.

**4. How do I know if I am eligible?**

Schools will provide information for all eligible students directly to VDSS. Households do not have to apply for P-EBT. If you believe there are eligible students in your household but you do not receive P-EBT by the middle of June, call (804) 726-7000.

**5. My family needs food now, what can we do?**

Many schools and community locations are distributing meals to school-aged children now. To find locations in your area, text FOOD or COMIDA to 877-877 or visit your local school division website. Students and families who receive P-EBT should continue to participate in other food assistance programs, such as meals provided by schools. P-EBT does not replace other assistance. If your family does not already receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits (food assistance), you should apply for assistance immediately by visiting the [CommonHelp website](#) or by calling 1-855-635-4370. For information about other food assistance in your area, call 2-1-1.

**6. If eligible, how much P-EBT will I get?**

Households will receive \$5.70 per eligible student, per day, up to a maximum of 66 days of school closure. If a student became eligible for free or reduced-price meals after March 13, they will receive a lower amount. If your family is currently receiving SNAP benefits and you are eligible for P-EBT, it will be added to your EBT card in the next two weeks. If your family is not receiving SNAP, you will receive a P-EBT card in the mail in the next four to six weeks. If you are the parent or guardian of multiple eligible students living in the same household at the same address, you may receive one P-EBT card with benefits for all eligible students.

**7. When will P-EBT benefits be available?**

If your family is currently receiving SNAP benefits and you are eligible for P-EBT, additional benefits will be added to your EBT card in the next two weeks. If your family is not receiving SNAP, you will receive a P-EBT card in the mail in the next four to six weeks.

People living in the same area with children who attend the same schools may not receive benefits at the same time. Eligible households will receive benefits for the entire period their students were eligible, even if they do not receive benefits until the end of May or June.

**8. What will happen to my P-EBT card if my family has moved?**

The VDSS will use the current mailing address from your student's school record. If that address is not correct, the P-EBT card will be recorded as undeliverable in the VDSS system. VDSS will work with local school divisions and will attempt to contact you for corrected mailing address information. If possible, contact your local school now or go online to update the address in your student's school record. If you do not receive your P-EBT card by mid-June and you have not been contacted, call (804) 726-7000.

**9. If eligible, how often will I get P-EBT benefits?**

Virginia will issue the total P-EBT benefit one time for each eligible student. Households will receive the total benefit they are eligible for once in the next four to six weeks.

**10. Where can I use my P-EBT benefits?**

You can use your P-EBT benefits at any store that accepts SNAP. Most retailers have signs stating they accept SNAP or EBT.

**11. What can I buy with P-EBT benefits?**

You can buy any SNAP eligible food with P-EBT. Most foods are SNAP eligible, except prepared foods and foods sold hot. A list of SNAP eligible foods is available on the [USDA website](#).

Farmers' markets that accept SNAP also welcome P-EBT. Many markets also offer Virginia Fresh Match incentives that double the value of your P-EBT dollars. You can use these free "matching" dollars to buy additional fruits and vegetables for your family. Visit the [Virginia Fresh Match website](#) to find a participating farmers market near you. Also, check the individual market's website for changes in hours or location.

**12. Do I have to use all my P-EBT benefits at once?**

No. The money will carry over from month to month. After one year, unused P-EBT benefits will be removed from the card.

**13. What should I do if I do not want the P-EBT benefits?**

Households that do not want to use their P-EBT benefits must destroy the P-EBT card when they receive it. P-EBT benefits are not transferable. Do not give the card to anyone else. Destroy the card by cutting through the magnetic stripe and disposing of it securely. If you change your mind, the P-EBT benefits will be available to you for 365 days. You may call 1-866-281-2448 to access your P-EBT benefits for up to one year.

**14. What do I do if my P-EBT card is lost?**

There are three possible ways to request a replacement card. You may call 1-866-281-2448 to report your card lost and ask for a replacement; if you have registered through **ConnectEBT**, you may order your card through your logon; or, if you have downloaded the ConnectEBT app on your mobile device, you may order after you logon.

A replacement card may take up to seven mailing days to reach you.

**15. How do I PIN my card?**

There are three ways to PIN your P-EBT card and manage your benefits account. You may call 1-866-281-2448, logon to your **ConnectEBT** account, or on your mobile device download the ConnectEBT app. Secure information detailing how to PIN your card will be included in the envelope with your card.