



NC DEPARTMENT OF
**HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES**

ROY COOPER • Governor

MANDY COHEN, MD, MPH • Secretary

SUSAN OSBORNE • Assistant Secretary for County Operations for Human Services

September 24, 2020

Dear County Directors of Social Services:

Attention: Food and Nutrition Services Managers and Supervisors

Subject: Pandemic EBT Card Issuance for School Year 2020-2021

Priority: Information and Action

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act of 2020 provides the Secretary of Agriculture authority to approve State agency plans for temporary emergency standards of eligibility and levels of benefits under the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008. One option is to issue Pandemic EBT (P-EBT) benefits to households with children who would receive free or reduced-price meals under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act if not for the school closure and remote learning. The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) in collaboration with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (DPI) has submitted a plan and received approval from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to implement a P-EBT for school year 2020-2021.

II. POLICY PROCEDURES

A. Eligible Households:

The State proposes to provide P-EBT benefits for the months of August and September 2020 to FNS and non-FNS households with one or more children in their household who:

- The school is eligible to provide free or reduce-priced meals for the 2020-2021 school year; and
- The entire school district or charter school utilized virtual learning for all students for at least five consecutive school days between August 17th and September 30th; and
 - Had access to free or reduced-priced meals during the 2019-2020 school year; or
 - Was Directly Certified for free or reduced-priced meals at the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year; or
 - Currently attends a Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) school

NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES • DIVISION OF SOCIAL SERVICES • ECONOMIC AND FAMILY SERVICES

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AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY / AFFIRMATIVE ACTION EMPLOYER

B. Household Selection:

NC DHHS will utilize a file from DPI that contains a list of children who qualify to receive free or reduced-price lunch and breakfast across the state (based on 2019-2020 eligibility + current school enrollment information), including all children who currently attend Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) schools. The list will include charter school data if the charter school participates in free and reduced priced meals. The list will not include homeschooled children. The Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) is a non-pricing meal service option for schools and school districts in low-income areas. CEP allows the nation's highest poverty schools and districts to serve breakfast and lunch at no cost to all enrolled students without collecting household applications.

The benefit timeframe set by the USDA is very limited. To ensure we are helping as many families as possible, we are utilizing data received from the Department of Public Instruction to verify eligibility. P-EBT benefits will be limited to:

- Those students who were issued PEBT benefits for any part of the 2019-2020 school year and remain enrolled at a school that participates in the National Free and Reduced Lunch Program (and that school utilized virtual learning for all students for at least five consecutive school days between August 17th and September 30th); or
- Those students who were determined newly eligible for free or reduced meal programs for the 2020-2021 school year through the statewide "Direct Certification" process at the time of PEBT benefit administration (and that school utilized virtual learning for all students for at least five consecutive school days between August 17th and September 30th).

There is no application for NC P-EBT benefits. P-EBT eligibility information for August and September 2020 benefits comes from the Department of Public Instruction based off enrollment in free and reduced-price meals at schools participating in the National Free and Reduced Lunch Program at the time of P-EBT and those school districts or charter schools having a qualifying event that causes 5 consecutive days of virtual learning in those benefit months for all students. DHHS will continue to work with DPI to identify as many eligible families as possible within the time frames established by USDA to administer the P-EBT benefits.

C. Allotment Amount:

The daily rate for of benefits for P-EBT is \$5.86 per eligible student. Allotment amounts will be calculated based on the number of days the student is not at school due to COVID-19 closures.

- Those eligible students who have returned to school full time, face-to-face instruction, will not receive allotments for P-EBT benefits as the program is designed to help feed children not afforded the opportunity to receive free and reduced lunches at school during the day.
- Those eligible students who are in a hybrid attendance model, where they may attend some days but not every day will receive allotment for any 5 consecutive days they are virtually learning and not able to receive free and reduced lunch benefits in a school district or charter school who has utilized virtual learning for all students for at least five consecutive school days between August 17th and September 30th. P-EBT is not

available for virtual learning periods which are less than five consecutive days in duration.

Please note while all students received full allotments for the period at the end of the 2019-2020 year, USDA has determined that allotment amounts are determined by a student's opportunity to receive free and reduced benefits at school during the school day for school year 2020-2021.

D. Months of Assistance Tentative Issuance Schedule:

As part of the requirements for August and September benefit issuance, the USDA has required that NC submit all benefits for issuance by September 30. Benefits should be available on or shortly after that date depending on processing volume by the vendor. Notices will be sent to households notifying them of allotment amounts and when to expect benefits.

E. Issuing P-EBT Benefits to Households:

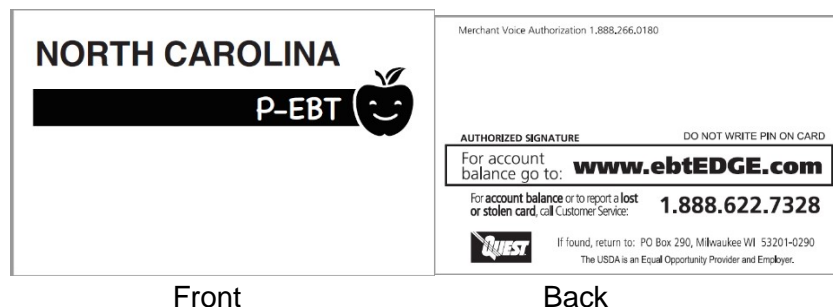
1. Children currently in an active FNS case for one of the P-EBT benefit months:

- The associated NC FAST case numbers for each child/group of siblings will be identified. These FNS cases will receive a supplement based on the household's existing EBT card/account information and the number of children in the household that matched with the DPI file. The calculated benefit amount is based on the number of children in the household and the daily cost rate for school breakfast and lunch.
- That file will be submitted to NC DHHS' EBT vendor and the total benefit will be loaded onto that household's existing EBT account.
- Some households will receive benefits on an existing EBT card and some benefits on a new P-EBT card. The P-EBT benefits cannot be moved to the existing EBT card.

2. Children not in an active FNS case for the given P-EBT benefit month:

- NC DHHS will utilize the data contained in the DPI file to roll confirmed sibling sets and groups of siblings into consolidated "household" records.
- Those household records will then be batched and sent directly to our EBT vendor to create new EBT accounts.
- The calculated benefit amount for the associated benefit month will then be loaded onto the P-EBT cards via a batch file to the EBT vendor.

3. Example of the P-EBT card.



Front

Back

Note: P-EBT issuances for nonactive FNS households will be available in ebtEDGE. This information will not be available in NC FAST.

F. Notices:

1. P-EBT children that did not receive P-EBT for school year 2019-2020 will receive the P-EBT notice for new P-EBT households (notice attached) to inform them of:

- How the benefit amount was determined.
- The Household's phone number.
- How to activate the P-EBT card.
- How to pin or check the P-EBT card balance.
- Things that can or cannot be purchased with the P-EBT card.
- How the P-EBT card works.
- Households that wish to decline the benefits may simply destroy the cards.
- Expungement of unused benefits will occur at the end of 365 days.

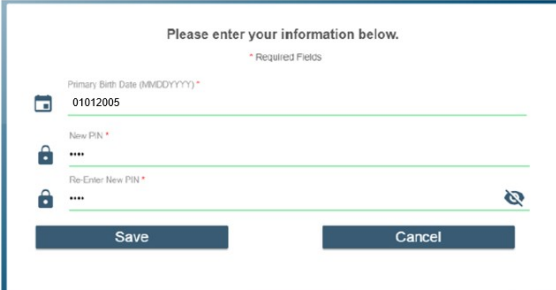
2. Children that previously received P-EBT for School year 2019-2020 will receive the P-EBT notice for existing P-EBT households (notice attached) to inform them of:

- The P-EBT benefits will be loaded on the same card that was received during the 2019-2020 P-EBT. The household may continue to use the same card.
- If the household lost or destroyed their previous card, they may order a new card following the instructions provided on the notice.
- How to activate the P-EBT card.
- How to pin or check the P-EBT card balance.
- Things that can or cannot be purchased with the P-EBT card.
- How the P-EBT card works.
- Households that wish to decline the benefits may simply destroy the cards.
- Expungement of unused benefits will occur at the end of 365 days.

G. Activating and Pinning P-EBT cards, Replacing Lost, Stolen or Damaged EBT Cards.

1. Pinning P-EBT cards:

P-EBT cards will have a mailer insert that gives the households instructions on how to activate and PIN their card upon receipt. When activating the P-EBT card the client will be asked for the Date of Birth of their youngest school age child who receives free or reduced Lunch. Note: If there are multiple children in the household it may be necessary to try each child's date of birth to successfully activate the P-EBT card.



The screenshot shows a form titled "Please enter your information below." with a red asterisk indicating required fields. The form contains three input fields: "Primary Birth Date (MM/DD/YYYY)*" with the value "01012005", "New PIN*" with three asterisks, and "Re-Enter New PIN*" with three asterisks. There are "Save" and "Cancel" buttons at the bottom. A small eye icon is visible next to the "Re-Enter New PIN*" field.

This is the screen the clients will see using the mobile app or the cardholder portal.

Example: The household consist of 2 school age children; one is 13 years old (DOB:04/04/2007) and one is 15 years old (DOB: 01/01/2005) and both receive Free or Reduced Lunch. The Date of Birth used would be the Date of Birth of the 13-year-old.

2. Replacing Lost, Stolen, or Damaged P-EBT Cards by one of the following methods:

- a. Visiting www.ebtedge.com if they created an account prior to losing or destroying the card.
- b. Using the EBT Edge mobile app (can be downloaded on Google Play or Apple Store) if they registered their phone prior to losing or destroying the card.
- c. Contacting the North Carolina EBT Call Center at 1-888-622-7328 to order a replacement card. Follow the instructions on how to activate and use your new P-EBT card when your new card arrives.

H. Reports and Household Inquiries.

1. Reports.

NC FAST Report: The report listing all households that received P-EBT benefits will be housed in NC FAST Help. The name of the report is **“PHASE 4 FNS and Non-FNS PEBT Issuances September 2020”**. The P-EBT reports will contain a special password, the password is the same as one provided for the Spring P-EBT. The report contains the following information:

- County
- Benefit Month
- DPI Family ID
- SUI Number
- School Name
- Child SSN
- Child First Name
- Child Last Name
- Child Date of Birth • Phone Number
- Parent First Name
- Parent Last Name
- Street Address
- City
- State
- Zip

Note: The information provided on the P-EBT reports is for county use only and cannot be released to callers or to clients who come into the office.

2. Non-FNS household does not want to participate in the P-EBT program.

Inform the household to destroy the P-EBT card and that the benefits will be available for 365 days, if they change their mind, they may call the call center to request a replacement card at any time prior to the expungement of the benefits. Document on the P-EBT log that the client does not wish to participate and was instructed to destroy the P-EBT card.

3. Additional information.

Additional information is available on the COVID-19 Questions and Answers attached to the Dear County Director Letter EFS-FNSEP-07-2020 at <https://files.nc.gov/ncdhhs/documents/files/dss/dcdl/economicservices/EFSFNSEP-07-2020.pdf>

III. IMPLEMENTATION INSTRUCTIONS

This policy is effective upon receipt for all active FNS households and all non-active FNS households matched from the Department of Public Instruction. NC FAST will submit the file to FIS on Thursday, September 24, 2020 and benefits would be available on Friday, September 25, 2020. Submit any questions regarding this information to the DHHS Operational Support Team (OST) at DSS.Policy.Questions@dhhs.nc.gov.

Sincerely,



David Locklear, Deputy Director
Economic and Family Services

DL/rc

EFS-FNSEP-24-2020

Attachments (9)

- P-EBT Notice for Existing Households English
- P-EBT Notice for Existing Households Spanish
- P-EBT Notice for New Households English
- P-EBT Notice for New Households Spanish
- P-EBT FAQ
- P-EBT Fall 2020 FAQ Call Center Condensed
- North Carolina School Districts & Charter Schools Eligible for P-EBT Benefits for August & September
- P-EBT Fact Sheet Narrative
- P-EBT Information Sheet