



# PANDEMIC ELECTRONIC BENEFIT TRANSFER (P-EBT) NEBRASKA SCHOOLS TOOLKIT

Round Three: Benefits for October 2020-May/June 2021

Updated: 04.12.21



## P-EBT Basics

### What is P-EBT?

Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) is part of the U.S. government response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Families First Coronavirus Response Act of 2020 (PL 116-127), as amended by the Continuing Appropriations Act, 2021 and Other Extensions Act (PL 116-159), provides the Secretary of Agriculture authority to approve state agency plans to administer P-EBT. On January 22, USDA announced that it is increasing the P-EBT benefit by approximately 15 percent, providing more money for low-income families and millions of children missing meals due to school closures.

Through P-EBT, eligible school children receive temporary emergency nutrition benefits loaded onto EBT cards that are used to purchase food. Children who would have received free or reduced-price meals under the National School Lunch Act if their schools were not closed or operating with reduced hours or attendance for at least 5 consecutive days between August 2020-May/ June 2021, are eligible to receive P-EBT benefits.

### Nebraska's P-EBT Plan

Based on updated USDA guidance, the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) and the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) have teamed up to simplify the administration and distribution of P-EBT funds. The simplified approach aims to identify eligible students by using the [Launch Nebraska website](#) in addition to student eligibility data provided by school districts to the P-EBT File Upload App in the [NDE Portal](#). The updated USDA guidance allowed states to make simplifying assumptions to help ease the distribution of these benefits. Nebraska's simplifying assumptions include:

- All elementary, middle, and high schools within a district are following the classroom learning mode identified in Launch Nebraska.
- A split/hybrid schedule is 3/2 with 3 days in school during week one and 2 days in school during week two.
- Students who follow a split/hybrid learning mode did not have access to school meals – even if the district provided the opportunity to receive meals.

To simplify P-EBT distribution, individual student attendance data will ONLY be used for enrolled students that have opted-in for remote learning during the entire 2020-2021 school year and for students who have been quarantined. All other eligible students will be issued benefits based on the school's identified classroom learning mode in Launch Nebraska. If a district has identified their elementary schools as split/hybrid learning mode for at least five consecutive days, all free or reduced-price students in the elementary school(s) are eligible for P-EBT benefits.

## **Student Eligibility**

Unless identified as a special case, a student must meet both of the following criteria to be eligible for P-EBT benefits:

- The student must attend a school which has been closed or operated at reduced attendance or hours for at least 5 consecutive days during the 2020-21 school year.
- The student must be eligible for free or reduced-price meals for the 2020-21 school year *either based on an application or direct certification*. If 2020-21 data is unavailable, 2019-20 free and reduced-priced meals data can be used.

Students who are eligible for free or reduced-price meals are eligible for P-EBT benefits even if they received free meals through the SFSP or the NSLP for the 2020-21 school year.

## **Learning Mode**

Districts are required to update the [Launch Nebraska Status website](#) as classroom learning mode changes. The Launch Nebraska website lists three classroom learning modes: in school, remote, or split. Districts that are operating with 100% of their students in the building (excluding students who have opted to be fully remote or are quarantined) are listed as "in school." Districts that are operating with all students learning remotely 100% of the time are listed as "remote." Districts that are operating with either reduced attendance or a reduction in student's hours of attendance are listed as "split."

Districts are expected to update Launch Nebraska as the classroom learning mode changes. For example, if the district was operating with a "split" schedule in August but changed to an "in school" status in September, the district will need to update the Launch Nebraska website to reflect classroom learning mode changes.

P-EBT benefits will be issued to eligible students for October 2020 through the end of the 2020-21 school year. It is important that districts make sure the information in Launch Nebraska is accurate and up to date for all months of the 2020-21 school year. Please view the [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\)](#) document for clarification on school status definitions.

## Special Cases

NDE has identified two special cases which will need to be reported through the P-EBT File Upload App in the NDE portal.

- **Students who have opted to be fully remote:** Students who have opted to be fully remote for the 2020-21 school year may qualify for P-EBT benefits. Free or reduced-price students who have opted to remain fully remote should be included in the P-EBT File Upload App in the NDE Portal. All eligible students would be identified as fully remote on the P-EBT template by entering a “Y” in the remote learner column (column 16).
- **Students who are quarantined:** Students who are quarantined may be eligible for hybrid P-EBT benefits. Free or reduced-priced students who have been quarantined for at least five consecutive school days would be identified as quarantine on the P-EBT template by entering a “Y” in the quarantined student column (column 17). Find additional information and guidance regarding quarantined students in the [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\)](#) document.

## P-EBT Benefit Amounts

Enrolled, eligible students will be issued P-EBT benefits based on their classroom learning mode or special case designation:

- Split Schedule/Hybrid: **\$62** per month, per eligible student
  - The split schedule/hybrid status assumes students are following a 3-2 schedule.
  - This benefit amount is 50% of the monthly benefit issued to fully remote students.
- Special Case Quarantined: **\$62** per month, per eligible student
- Special Case Fully Remote: **\$116** per month, per eligible student

## School's Responsibility Breakdown

1. Keep [Launch Nebraska School Classroom Learning Mode](#) updated
2. Upload Eligible Students to the [NDE Portal](#)
3. Communicate P-EBT Information to Families

## Updating Launch Nebraska

It is important that Launch Nebraska reflects the classroom learning mode for the entire 2020-21 school year since P-EBT benefits will be issued based on this information. After the initial status is entered, schools need only update their classroom learning mode when a change is made. Districts that have been in-school since the start of 2020-21 school year, only need to enter the first day of school.

For guidance on how to update Launch Nebraska, visit the [District Status Instructions](#) webpage.

## Uploading Eligible Students into the NDE Portal

The P-EBT File Upload App is available in the NDE Portal for schools to upload eligible student data. Student data is entered monthly to account for students that have transferred in or out of the district or have become newly eligible (i.e., new free or reduced determinations through application or direct certification or students in quarantine). For families to receive the first issuance of funds, schools should upload student data for October and November 2020 by April 5th, 2021.

Files that are uploaded can be deleted and corrected until the time that the file is processed for issuing benefits. Please see the FAQ document for further clarification on what needs to be uploaded to the NDE Portal.

## Data Portal Upload Instructions

Public and nonpublic schools are required to add student data to the NDE Portal monthly to ensure all eligible students are being issued P-EBT benefits.

The portal can be accessed [here](#). Returning users can enter their credentials however, new users will need to complete the registration process. Follow the instructions listed on the [Setting Up a Portal Account Guide](#) to establish an account.

Upon successful login, users will need to navigate to the Data Collections tab and **ADD** an activation code for the P-EBT File Upload collection. Detailed instructions for both retrieving the activation code (District Admins only) and entering the activation code (all users) can be found in the [Activation Codes](#) guide. You know that you have correctly activated the P-EBT File Upload collection when the collection name moves up to the top Available table on the main Data Collection tab page. Error messages you might encounter during this process are found on page 7 of the [Activation Codes](#) guide.

Users can click on the collection name in the Available table to enter the data upload portal. Navigate to the Instructions link in the top right corner of the screen for more information of the data upload process. This [PEBT Instructions webpage](#) includes details of file types for uploading, required data column headers and a template file.

All questions related to access the portal or data uploads can be directed to the NDE Helpdesk at [ADVISERHelp@NebraskaCloud.org](mailto:ADVISERHelp@NebraskaCloud.org) or **888-285-0556**.

P-EBT benefits will be issued monthly following this schedule:

- By the 5<sup>th</sup> of the Month: Schools upload eligible student list.
- 5<sup>th</sup> -15<sup>th</sup> of the month: Files are prepared by NDE and given to DHHS.
- On or about 15<sup>th</sup> of the month: Benefits are issued by DHHS.

Districts can submit data as soon as student eligibility has been determined for the months of October 2020- May/June 2021. Monthly files submitted prior to the distribution dates identified in the P-EBT Issuance Schedule will not be distributed until their scheduled date. For example, if a student file for February is submitted to the NDE portal in May, the P-EBT benefits won't be issued until June.

## PEBT Issuance Schedule

<b>Nebraska PEBT Round 3 Benefit Issuance</b>	
April 5	Deadline for student data and update classroom learning mode.
April 5 – 15	NDE prepares lists and DHHS receives lists and prepares for issuance.
April 15	Benefits issued (October/November)
May 5	Deadline for student data and update classroom learning mode.
May 5 – 15	NDE prepares lists and DHHS receives lists and prepares for issuance.
May 15	Benefits issued (December/January)
June 5	Deadline for student data and update classroom learning mode.
June 5 – 10	NDE prepares lists and DHHS receives lists and prepares for issuance.
June 15	Benefits issued (February/March)
July 5	Deadline for student data and update classroom learning mode.
July 5 – 10	NDE prepares lists and DHHS receives lists and prepares for issuance.
July 15	Benefits issued (April/May)
August 5	Deadline for student data and update classroom learning mode.
August 5 - 10	NDE prepares lists and DHHS receives lists and prepares for issuance.
August 15	Benefits issued (clean up)

## Notify and communicate with families

It is important for your district to communicate information about P-EBT benefit information to families.

The [NDE Nutrition Services website](#) contains sample templates for schools who are communicating with families through robo-calls, email blasts, webpage updates, text messaging and social media posts. Please feel free to modify these templates as you see fit.

## Other Important Information

### Issuing Benefits

Eligible students can receive monthly P-EBT benefits from October 1, 2020 through the end of the 2020-2021 school year. The first issuance of P-EBT benefits for October and November 2020 will be after *April 15, 2021* if schools have submitted their student data. P-EBT issuances will be made retroactively for previous months as needed.

### Card Distribution and Loading

P-EBT benefits will be issued onto an EBT card. **Families who currently receive SNAP benefits or who received P-EBT benefits for August & September, WILL NOT receive a new card.** EBT cards must be activated on the date of benefit issuance for funds to be deposited on that card.

**Households who do not currently receive SNAP benefits WILL receive a new EBT card.** Cards will be delivered by mail and are expected to arrive to eligible students' homes within three weeks of their initial benefit issuance. Along with the card, families will receive information and instructions for its use (see the Toolkit for the mailer that accompanies the card, sent by the card vendor FIS).

Once a student has an active card, future issuances will be automatically added to that card. Benefits will be issued on 15th of the month and available for use between the 16th and 18th.

Questions can be directed to DHHS at 1-800-383-4278. Additional call center support is being provided by DHHS to accommodate calls regarding P-EBT.

### P-EBT Questions

- Questions related to student eligibility should be directed to the student's school district.
- For instructions to update the Launch Nebraska website and classroom learning mode see [District Status Instructions](#).
- Questions related to data uploads to NDE's portal should be submitted through the Adviser Help Desk at [ADVISERHelp@NebraskaCloud.org](mailto:ADVISERHelp@NebraskaCloud.org).
- Questions related to P-EBT cards and benefit issuance should be submitted to DHHS. DHHS can be contacted via phone at 800-383-4278 or 402-471-9043 or emailed to [DHHS.NebraskaPEBT@nebraska.gov](mailto:DHHS.NebraskaPEBT@nebraska.gov).

### Toolkit Attachments

- Communications Templates
- DHHS PEBT Card Information and Instructions
- DHHS FAQ Document
- PEBT Eligibility
- NDE Communication Templates
- NDE Data Portal Upload Instructions
- NDE Launch Nebraska Instructions
- FAQ's