

# Massachusetts Pandemic EBT – Extra Food Benefits for Children

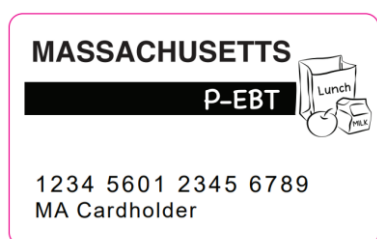
(Information updated April 23, 2020)



As part of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act that Congress passed on March 18<sup>th</sup>, many children are eligible for “Pandemic EBT” Food benefits while schools are closed, also called **P-EBT**. These are “electronic benefits transfer” benefits – emergency money to buy food at local grocery stores.

Starting in late April or early May, many Massachusetts low-income families will receive P-EBT for their school-aged children.

- Families **receiving SNAP benefits** (food stamps) will have P-EBT benefits issued directly onto their SNAP EBT card.
- Low-income families **approved for free or reduced-price meal status** will get special P-EBT Food Cards in the mail in the name of each eligible child. The family will need to PIN the card with the child’s date of birth. The cards will look like this:



This P-EBT card is used like a debit card to buy food at grocery stores. This P-EBT food benefit is available for eligible school age children, **in addition** to any food pantry or free school meal pick-up that children receive.

## How do families get the P-EBT Food benefit?

- Families already **getting SNAP** do not need to do anything. The Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) will let them know when P-EBT will be issued on their EBT card. They can also check their EBT account by calling 1 (800) 997-2555.
- Families already **approved for Free or Reduced-Price meals** for their children do not have to do anything. Schools will send the state Department of Early and Secondary Education (DESE) a list of children eligible for P-EBT Food Card benefits. Families should receive information from the state about the P-EBT Food Card and how to use it.
- Families who recently lost a job or work hours have the **right to apply for SNAP benefits any time**. If approved for SNAP, the family will get SNAP benefits for all household members **and** P-EBT benefits for their school-age children. The best and fastest way to apply for SNAP is by applying online or with a smartphone through [DTAConnect.com](https://www.dtaconnect.com).

- Families also have the **right to apply for Free or Reduced-Price school meal status** *any time*. This is important for families not eligible for SNAP or who do not want to apply for SNAP. Children approved for free or reduce-price meals qualify for the P-EBT Food benefits. Many schools have meal applications online or forms that can be printed and returned to the school by email, mail or fax. Families should check out their school’s website or call the Food Services Department for information.

## When will families receive the P-EBT food benefits?

The Massachusetts state plan on P-EBT was approved by [USDA on April 17, 2020](#). DTA will begin issuing P-EBT benefits very soon, likely late April or early May. Benefits will be issued first to families already getting SNAP (put on their SNAP EBT cards), and then P-EBT cards will be sent to families who are not getting SNAP.

[Project Bread](#) and the Shah’s Foundation will be producing family-friendly outreach materials and coordinating with school districts as this rolls out. Please stay tuned for updated materials.

**Special note regarding P-EBT and immigrant families:** Using P-EBT food benefits does **not** impact a parent or child's immigration status. And “public charge” does not apply to P-EBT benefits. See information from immigration experts here: [Protectingimmigrantfamilies.org/immigrant-eligibility-for-public-programs-during-covid-19/](https://protectingimmigrantfamilies.org/immigrant-eligibility-for-public-programs-during-covid-19/)

## More Information:

Project Bread will be sharing P-EBT client friendly materials as they become available. <http://www.projectbread.org/>

The Food Research and Action Center has produced information that states and school districts need to do to prepare for P-EBT benefits: [FRAC.org/research/resource-library/pandemic-ebt](https://frac.org/research/resource-library/pandemic-ebt)

The Center for Budget and Policy Priorities has also issued a blog posting on P-EBT with additional resources: <https://www.cbpp.org/blog/states-can-help-low-income-children-get-enough-to-eat-during-the-pandemic>

For more information about **DTA SNAP and cash benefits** during COVID-19, visit [MassLegalServices.org/DTA-COVID-19](https://masslegalservices.org/DTA-COVID-19) or [Mass.gov/DTA/COVID-19](https://mass.gov/DTA/COVID-19)

If you have questions: Pat Baker, [PBaker@mlri.org](mailto:PBaker@mlri.org) or Beth Capstick, [BCapstick@mlri.org](mailto:BCapstick@mlri.org)

Information on this FAQ updated as of April 23, 2020