



*Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Transitional Assistance*


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**Online Guide Transmittal 2020-33B
October 1, 2020**

To: Department of Transitional Assistance Staff
From:  Sarah Stuart, Associate Commissioner for Change Management
Re: Cross Program: Pandemic EBT Benefits

Overview

In response to the COVID-19 public health crisis, the Governor closed all schools in Massachusetts for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year. School closures disproportionately impact low-income children who rely on free and reduced-price school meals for adequate nutrition.

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act includes a provision called Pandemic EBT (P-EBT). This is a food benefit for families with school-age children who qualify for free or reduced-price school meals through the federal School Breakfast Program and/or National School Lunch Program. These food benefits are meant to compensate for the value of school lunch and breakfast for each eligible child.

P-EBT can be used anywhere that SNAP EBT benefits are used. These benefits were issued to active DTA households as well as households that do not currently receive DTA benefits but include children who receive free or reduced-price school meals.

Purpose

The purpose of this Transmittal is to advise staff of the up-to-date clean-up processing and issuance of Spring Pandemic EBT (P-EBT) for existing DTA households and Non-DTA households.

**DTA
Households**

A child who is a member of a household actively receiving DTA benefits is automatically certified to receive free school meals. DTA identified all students in these households that are age five but under nineteen. P-EBT benefits were issued for students, in these active households, on their existing EBT cards.

Receipt of P-EBT benefits has no impact on a household's monthly SNAP and/or cash benefit amount.

Non-DTA Households

The Department received files from each individual school district identifying students in Massachusetts who were eligible for free or reduced price school meals through the School Breakfast Program and/or National School Lunch Program in the 2019-2020 school year. This conferred eligibility for P-EBT benefits for those children not receiving DTA benefits. These students received benefits individually on a P-EBT card created for each eligible child.

Note: Some school districts are classified as Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) districts. CEP districts provide free meals to all students in the district. All CEP students, regardless of income, are eligible to receive P-EBT benefits.

Non-DTA households receiving P-EBT benefits do not have a case in BEACON. Non-DTA households were advised to contact the DTA Assistance Line or Project Bread's FoodSource Hotline for assistance with questions on P-EBT.

Important: Receipt of P-EBT does not impact the participating member's immigration status.

**P-EBT Benefit
Issuance
Groups and
Schedule**

Eligible households received P-EBT benefits for the period beginning March 16, 2020 to June 19, 2020 (70 school days). These payments were classified as a new supplemental issuance type to facilitate easy tracking and reporting on P-EBT benefits. Expungement rules for P-EBT are the same as SNAP; if P-EBT benefits are not used within 365 days, they will be expunged.

All households actively receiving DTA benefits as of April 28, 2020 and confirmed eligible for free/reduced price meals received the full P-EBT benefit amount accounting for the 70 closed school days occurring between March 16, 2020 – June 19, 2020. Two equal payments were issued to this group: the first payment representing the first 35 days of school closure was issued in late April or early May; the second payment representing an additional 35 days of school closure was issued in late May or early June.

UPDATE:

P-EBT benefits for clean-up cases (held back from April to June) were issued and made available to eligible households on **September 20th**.

These cases include the original list of children sent from DESE for whom the Department was not able to validate their addresses.

Any remaining children in a DTA household that did not have a SASID (e.g. due to being in private or Catholic school) were issued their full 70 days of P-EBT benefits in one payment onto the household EBT card.

Note: Previously only children with a SASID were issued P-EBT benefits on their EBT card. Therefore there are DTA households where the P-EBT benefits were issued on both an EBT card and a P-EBT card.

**P-EBT Benefit
Issuance
Groups and
Schedule
(Continued)**

For households that subsequently become eligible for DTA benefits or for free or reduced-price meals after May 10, 2020, P-EBT benefits were prorated based on their month of application. These households received only one P-EBT issuance inclusive of all school days from the date of their application (for either DTA benefits or school meals program) until June 19, 2020.

Children who received prorated benefits had their benefits either calculated based on **36 or 15 days**.

New households that became eligible for DTA benefits or free/reduced- price meals between May 10th to May 31st are eligible for P-EBT benefits for all school days from May 1st to June 19th (**36 schools days**) per child.

New households that became eligible for DTA benefits or free/reduced- price meals between June 1st to June 19th are eligible for P-EBT benefits for all school days from June 1st to June 19th (**15 schools days**) per child.

UPDATE:

Prorated P-EBT benefits were issued in waves and made available to eligible households beginning on **August 27th**.

**P-EBT Benefit
Calculation**

P-EBT benefits were calculated using a daily rate of \$5.70 per day, per child multiplied by the number of days school was closed (March 16, 2020 through June 19, 2020; 70 days in total).

Example:

Household of 4, two school aged children:
\$5.70 per child x 2 children = \$11.40 per day x 70 school days =
\$798.00.

Note: Depending on whether the family was issued the P-EBT benefits as an active DTA household on their regular EBT card or was issued to a non-DTA household on the unique P-EBT card impacted how the benefit issuances occurred behind the scenes, but not the total amount a family received. In this example a non-DTA household would have received two individual P-EBT cards, one per child.

**P-EBT Benefit
Calculation
(Proration Group)**

P-EBT benefits were calculated using the daily rate of \$5.70 per day, per child; however, it was multiplied by the prorated number of school days the child was confirmed eligible for (i.e. either 36 or 15 school days)

Example 1:

DTA Household of 5, two school-aged children

*HH SNAP application date = 05/18/20

\$5.70 per child x 2 children = \$11.40 per day x 36 school days =
\$410.40

Example 2:

Non-DTA Household, one school-aged child

*Household school meal application = May

\$5.70 per child x 1 child = \$5.70 per day x 36 school days =
\$205.20

Example 3:

Non-DTA Household, one school-aged child

*Household school meal application = June

\$5.70 per child x 1 child = \$5.70 per day x 15 school days =
\$85.50

**P-EBT
Communication**

DTA Households were advised to contact either the DTA Assistance Line or Project Bread for any questions related to P-EBT. If you receive any calls from existing clients asking about P-EBT, you can advise them of their P-EBT issuance date and amount noted in BEACON. If their questions require follow-up, write a detailed narrative in BEACON and ask your SIS or manager to email the new DTA P-EBT Mailbox at DTA.P-EBT@mass.gov.

All non-DTA households were previously advised to contact the DTA Assistance Line or Project Bread's FoodSource Hotline (1-800-645-8333) for questions and assistance related to P-EBT. **Please do not direct clients back to Project Bread if they call the DTA Assistance Line.** If you receive calls from a non-DTA household about their P-EBT benefits and/or about not having received them, ask the caller for their child's full name, DOB, mailing address, State Assigned Student Identifier (SASID), reachable phone number, assigned P-EBT case number and/or P-EBT card number (if they have it). Their P-EBT case number will be included on a notice being sent by DTA.

If a client calls to ask for their child's case number needed to PIN their P-EBT card, you can help the client find the case number via <http://www.DTAConnect.com/pebt>. The client can also go to the DTAConnect page to find the case number themselves. Instructions on how to PIN the P-EBT card are available along with the case number on the webpage.

Since non-DTA households do not have an active BEACON case, send a secure email with the information collected from the caller to the new P-EBT Mailbox at: DTA.P-EBT@mass.gov if you need further assistance to help the client, such as submitting a P-EBT replacement card on their behalf.

In order for the DTA Outreach Unit to assist, you must do your best to obtain the P-EBT case number, P-EBT card number, and/or the student's SASID from the caller.

As a reminder, you can also use EPPIC to check on a client's P-EBT case, such as see if the card has been pinned, transacted on, or if a replacement card has been sent.

**Communication Plan
and Notices
(Continued)**

Both DTA and non-DTA households were sent a notice advising of their eligibility for and receipt of P-EBT benefits. Special instructions for non-DTA households to set up a PIN were included in this notice. Non-DTA households must use the child's DOB and the last four digits of their assigned P-EBT case number, provided on the initial notice, to create a PIN.

Existing DTA households received notice of P-EBT benefits through text messaging, Twitter and DTA Connect. A special P-EBT website has been established at <https://www.MAp-ebt.org/>. The Department also conducted a public information campaign in multiple languages to alert those eligible of the purpose of P-EBT and how it is to be used.

Questions

If you have any policy or procedural questions, after conferring with the appropriate TAO personnel, please have your Systems Information Specialists or TAO management email them to DTA.P-EBT@mass.gov

Systems issues should be directed to the Systems Support Help Desk.
