



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

CHARLES D. BAKER  
Governor


MARYLOU SUDDERS  
Secretary

KARYN POLITO  
Lieutenant Governor

AMY KERSHAW  
Commissioner

**Online Guide Transmittal 2020-33**  
**April 30, 2020**

**To:** Department of Transitional Assistance Staff

**From:**  Sarah Stuart, Associate Commissioner for Change Management

**Re:** Cross Program: Pandemic EBT Benefits

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**Overview**

In response to the COVID-19 public health crisis, the Governor has closed all schools in Massachusetts for the remainder of the 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. 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 will be issued to active DTA households as well as households that do not currently receive DTA benefits but include children who receive free or reduced school meals.

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**Purpose**

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

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**DTA  
Households**

A child who is a member of a household actively receiving DTA benefits is automatically certified to receive free school meals. DTA will identify all students in these households that are age five but under nineteen. P-EBT benefits will be 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.

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**Non-DTA Households**

The Department will receive files from each individual school district identifying students in Massachusetts who receive free or reduced-price school meals. This will confer eligibility for P-EBT benefits for those children not receiving DTA benefits. These students will receive 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 will not have a case in BEACON. Non-DTA households have been advised to contact 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.

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

Eligible households will receive P-EBT benefits for the period beginning March 16, 2020 to June 19, 2020 (70 school days). These payments will be 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 priced meals will receive the full P-EBT benefit amount accounting for the 70 closed school days occurring between March 16, 2020 – June 19, 2020. Two equal payments will be issued to this group: the first payment representing the first 35 days of school closure will be issued in late April or early May; the second payment representing an additional 35 days of school closure will be issued in late May or early June.

**Important:** P-EBT benefits will go on an active household's EBT card **only** if the case record contains the State Assigned Student Identifier Number (SASID). If the child's SASID is not known to BEACON, that child's P-EBT benefit will be issued to the household on a unique P-EBT card. If an active household contacts the Department inquiring about this, please update the Education page with as much information as possible, including the SASID.

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

For households that subsequently become eligible for DTA benefits or for free or reduced priced meals after April 28, 2020 P-EBT benefits will be prorated based on their date of application. These households will receive only one P-EBT issuance inclusive of all school days from the date of their application (for either program) until June 19, 2020.

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**P-EBT Benefit  
Calculation**

P-EBT benefits are calculated using a daily rate of \$5.70 per day, per child multiplied by the number of days school is 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 is being issued the P-EBT benefits as an active DTA household on their regular EBT card or are issued to a non-DTA household on the unique P-EBT card will impact how the benefit issuances occur behind the scenes, but not the total amount a family receives. In this example a non-DTA household would receive two individual P-EBT cards, one per child.

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**P-EBT  
Communication**

DTA Households have been 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 Procedural Mailbox.

All non-DTA households have been advised to contact Project Bread's FoodSource Hotline (1-800-645-8333) for questions and assistance related to P-EBT. However, if you receive calls from a non-DTA households 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 and assigned P-EBT case number (if they have it). Their P-EBT case number will be included on a notice being sent by DTA.

Since non-DTA households will not have an active BEACON case, send a secure email with the information collected from the caller to the SNAP Outreach Mailbox at:

[DTA.SNAPOutreach@MassMail.State.MA.US](mailto:DTA.SNAPOutreach@MassMail.State.MA.US)

The SNAP Outreach team will follow-up with the household. In order for the DTA Outreach Unit to assist, you must do your best to obtain the P-EBT case number and the student's SASID from the caller.

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**Communication Plan  
and Notices  
(Continued)**

Both DTA and non-DTA households will be 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 are 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. For assistance in obtaining this case number please contact the SNAP Outreach unit at [DTA.SNAPOutreach@MassMail.State.MA.US](mailto:DTA.SNAPOutreach@MassMail.State.MA.US)

**Important:** A sub-group of DTA clients have been sent a specialized notice requesting additional information for one or more of the eligible children in their household. The information requested from these households includes the child's State Assigned Student Identifier Number (SASID) and is required for the household to receive the eligible child's P-EBT benefit on their existing EBT card.

Existing DTA households will also receive 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 has plans to conduct a public information campaign in multiple languages to alert those eligible of the purpose of P-EBT and how it is to be used.

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**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.Procedural Issues](mailto:DTA.ProceduralIssues).

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

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