



Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer (PEBT)

Interim Joint Committee on Health, Welfare, and Family Services
Department for Community Based Services
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What is PEBT?

- PEBT is designed to provide a reimbursement equivalent to the value of free meals that students would have received in the school setting if not for the measures put in place to control the spread of COVID-19 (school closures).
- PEBT was made available to states through the bipartisan Families First Coronavirus Response Act (PL 116-127) passed by Congress on 3/18/2020; the reimbursement is 100% federally funded.
- PEBT is a very different type of benefit than the better-known Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

Eligibility for Free/Reduced-Price Meals

To be eligible for free or reduced-price meals, students are:

- Certified through an eligibility process (application);
- Automatically certified because they receive assistance through a public assistance program such as Medicaid, SNAP, or cash assistance (directly certified); or
- Attending a school that has a high percentage of students receiving free or reduced-price meals, allowing ALL students (regardless of income) to receive free meals through the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) under federal law.

Eligibility for PEBT

- All students are eligible for PEBT if they are:
 - Eligible for free or reduced-price meals, including all students attending CEP schools; and
 - Unable to attend school in-person due to efforts to control the spread of COVID-19.



More about PEBT

- PEBT can only serve students served by the National School Lunch Program, which includes almost all public schools, Kentucky's military base schools, and some private schools.
- Traditionally homeschooled students are not eligible under federal rules.
- PEBT can be used to purchase the same types of foods as SNAP.
- Again, PEBT is 100% federally funded; benefits do not flow through the state or to any individual, but are paid to grocers, farmers' markets, and other USDA-approved businesses only when the card is used to purchase eligible food items.
- If a family believes they are not eligible for PEBT and destroys the card, funds remain with the federal government.

Spring 2020 (first phase)

- For March, April, and May, all schools were closed to in-person instruction, so all students eligible for free or reduced-price meals were eligible for PEBT.
- DCBS, working closely with the Kentucky Dept. of Education (KDE), was able to:
 - Provide PEBT to all students who were current SNAP beneficiaries directly to existing SNAP EBT cards; and
 - Establish an application process for all other non-SNAP students who were eligible for PEBT.
- All students eligible for the same amount: \$313.50 for all three months.
- Served over 540,000 students.

Fall 2020 (second phase)

- Guidance for issuing PEBT for August and September was provided to states on August 20th, and included a mandate that all benefits be issued prior to the end of FFY 20 (September 30), which ended the authority of the FFRCA.
- Eligibility was complicated by the different methods of instruction from district to district and sometimes even school to school, including in-person, completely virtual, and hybrid.
- Many school districts were operating under USDA waivers that exempt them from data reporting for this school year; hence, full data was not available for this phase

Fall 2020 (cont'd)

- DCBS again worked in close partnership with KDE, school districts, private schools, schools on military bases, and individual public schools.
- With such a short deadline, implementing an application process was not practical.
- In the midst of a 100-year pandemic, DCBS provided PEBT to all potentially-eligible children using the best data available at the time.

Fall 2020 (cont'd)

- As stated earlier in this presentation, any child attending a school covered by the Community Eligibility Standard and in NTI was eligible to receive P-EBT Benefits. This could include those that would not normally receive these kinds of benefits (e.g. children of doctors, etc...).
- There is no mandate to use these benefits, so those that do not require this support can simply destroy the card as instructed in the accompanying letter.
- Another alternative would be for families to make equivalent donations to local food banks or charity of their choice.
- Amount per student varied based on in-person school schedule.

Fall 2020 (cont'd)

- We recently learned that some schools were inadvertently omitted from the dataset for August and September PEBT.
- We have identified those schools and issued PEBT cards to those students last week.

PEBT for October and Beyond

- PEBT is re-authorized from October 2020 through September 2021 (if needed) by the Continuing Appropriations Act, 2021 and Other Extensions Act (PL 116-159), signed on October 1, 2020.
- Eligibility is similar to past phases, except that states can use “simplifying assumptions” to average and standardize benefit amounts. Guidance is being received now from USDA.
- The Act also adds some children in childcare centers to the list of eligible PEBT recipients; more guidance from the USDA is expected soon.
- We continue to learn and make improvements along with our federal partners. CBS has just begun that process this week.

Questions?



For questions or information related to this presentation,
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