

DATE:	March 3, 2022
SUBJECT:	School Year 2021-2022 Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) Program
CATEGORY:	P-EBT Submissions & Information Update
NEXT STEPS:	Share with child nutrition directors and TSDS PEIMS coordinators

School Year 2021-2022 P-EBT Approval

The Texas state plan for the school year 2021-2022 Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) program has been approved by the US Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service (FNS). P-EBT provides food benefits to families with enrolled National School Lunch Program (NSLP)-eligible students who temporarily lose access to free or reduced-price school meals for the 2021–2022 school year due to COVID-19-related absences, virtual attendance, or school closures.

For school year 2021-2022, P-EBT benefit amounts will be different for each NSLP-eligible student. Per federal regulations, amounts are based on the number of COVID-19-related absences a student has, the number of days the student participated in virtual learning offered because of COVID-19, or the number of days a school was closed because of COVID-19. (This is different from previous P-EBT programs that provided the same benefit amount to all eligible students at the same school.) P-EBT for this school year relies on schools tracking and reporting COVID-19-related student absences, virtual attendance, and school closures for the entire year. Local educational agencies (LEAs) with NSLP-eligible schools should use whatever data is available, dating back to the start of the school year. Alternatively, if COVID-19-related absences have not been tracked, you may include students if they have five or more consecutive excused absences. (Reporting for each semester would need to be entirely based on actual absences/virtual attendance/school closures OR five or more consecutive excused absences. A combination of both cannot be used within the same semester.)

Only students attending a school approved to operate NSLP may be eligible for P-EBT. NSLP- approved schools include those operating the Seamless Summer Option (SSO) and those NSLP schools electing the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) or Provision 2 (P2).

To be eligible for P-EBT, students must be eligible for free or reduced-price meals through NSLP. NSLP meal eligibility is determined in the following ways:

- Certified NSLP household application
- Direct certification
- Enrollment at a CEP or P2 school

There is no online P-EBT application for the 2021-2022 school year. Student eligibility for P-EBT is based on student status in the 2021-2022 school year. Families must have an approved NSLP Household application or be eligible through direct certification. In anticipation of P-EBT for this school year, it is recommended that you encourage all families that may be eligible to complete an NSLP household application by the week of March 21 to give the child nutrition team adequate time to process the application.

Additional information and materials that can be shared with families about P-EBT will be available in the coming weeks.

School Eligibility

A school must meet the following criteria first before students may be eligible to receive P-EBT for this school year:

The school is closed OR has been operating with reduced attendance or hours for at least five (5) consecutive days due to the COVID-19 emergency in the 2021-2022 school year. (This could be a single student at the school with five consecutive days of COVID-19-related absences or virtual attendance.) Refer to the November 11, 2021, message, [School Year 2021-2022 P-EBT: Recording COVID-19 Related Absences](#), for examples of scenarios of how a school becomes eligible.

Student Eligibility

LEAs must upload students that meet the following criteria ***once school eligibility has been met***:

1. The child is enrolled in an NSLP-eligible Texas school. (This includes schools that are operating the SSO during the school year.)
2. Student must be eligible for free or reduced-price meals and identified as economically disadvantaged via PEIMS codes 01 or 02 or attend a CEP or P2 school.
 - a. 01 – Eligible for Free Meals Under the National School Lunch and Child Nutrition Program
 - b. 02 – Eligible for Reduced-price Meals Under the National School Lunch and Child Nutrition Program
 - c. All students who are enrolled in a CEP or P2 school are eligible regardless of the student's economic disadvantage PEIMS code.
3. Economically Disadvantaged student (01, 02, CEP/P2) must have had COVID-19-related absences, received virtual instruction or did not have access to meals at school due to a COVID-19 school closure.
 - a. Any school closures in response to concerns about a COVID-19 related outbreak would be included in the upload file in addition to any COVID-19-related absences or days of virtual instruction.
4. The child would have received free or reduced-price school meals under the NSLP and School Breakfast Program (SBP) if not for the COVID-19 health emergency. This includes children who are directly certified, certified by NSLP household application, or children enrolled in a school operating under CEP or P2.

The P-EBT eligibility requirement to be certified for free or reduced-price meals through direct certification or through the NSLP household application also applies to children attending a school that is operating SSO.

It is recommended that LEA child nutrition and PEIMS staff work in coordination in advance of the P-EBT upload to identify students who have had a change in income status that makes them eligible for free or reduced-price meals through NSLP and to ensure appropriate PEIMS coding. Child nutrition staff must review enrolled students and notify PEIMS coordinators of a change in status on a regular basis. This includes a regular review of state and local direct certification lists.

Once a school is closed for five consecutive days for a COVID-19-related reason, has one student who is absent for at least five consecutive days for a COVID-19-related reason OR they offer virtual attendance for at least five consecutive days for a COVID-19-related reason, all NSLP-eligible students at that school become eligible for P-EBT. Eligibility for students at the school begins with the first day of the eligible event (for example, first day of a 5-day COVID-related absence) and continues through the end of the school year.

COVID-19 Absences & Virtual Attendance

Refer to the November 11, 2021, message, [School Year 2021-2022 P-EBT: Recording COVID-19 Related Absences](#), for examples of circumstances that should be counted as days a child lost access to free or reduced-price meals due to COVID-19.

Tracking P-EBT-Eligible Days

P-EBT benefits will be issued based on the number of school days a student is absent due to COVID-19 or the number of school days they participate in a virtual learning option provided by their school in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is recommended that schools track the following information in their attendance records:

- Whether an in-person learning student's absence is due to COVID-19 and the school day dates.
- Number of school days and dates a student is enrolled in a virtual learning model offered because of COVID-19 precautions or because the student received virtual learning due to COVID-19 quarantine.
- Number of school days the school was closed due to COVID-19 exposures or increased case counts

P-EBT File Upload Timeline

Eligible students must be uploaded to the Health and Human Services YourTexasBenefits.com portal within two upload timeframes:

- April 4-14, 2022 – Upload students for Semester 1 (August-December 2021)
- May 30-July 15, 2022 – Upload students for Semester 2 (January-June 2022)

Training for the P-EBT upload process was provided to Education Service Centers (ESCs) on February 24, 2022. Training and materials will be provided to LEAs by their ESC.

NSLP Household Application for Free and Reduced-Price Meals

Receiving free meals at school does not automatically make a student eligible for P-EBT. While NSLP-participating schools have the option to serve free meals to all students this school year through SSO, it is important to note that P-EBT benefits require individual income eligibility unless a child attends a CEP or P2 school. Income eligibility must be determined through direct certification or through completion of the NSLP household application. For this reason, districts that operate the SSO must continue to make the NSLP form available to families.