

Recently, emails were sent to authorized representatives, food service directors, and district administrators regarding how schools or school districts should distribute [Pandemic EBT \(P-EBT\)](#) information to households. The communications included a link to the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) online P-EBT application. A copy of the email sent by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) School Nutrition Team (SNT) on May 12, 2020 is attached. Please work with the necessary school staff members to ensure the attached “P-EBT Letter to Households” is sent to households with children eligible for free or reduced-price meals. The deadline for households to apply for P-EBT benefits is June 30, 2020, so prompt distribution of the program information and application link is crucial.

To mitigate the issues arising with P-EBT, we have created a Q&A to assist in understanding and troubleshooting why households may not receive P-EBT benefits or may receive an incorrect amount of benefits. We appreciate your time helping these families as we aid the DHS in administering their program.

1. Is the child’s school participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP)?

To receive any P-EBT benefits, the children must attend a school participating in the NSLP. Check to make sure the school the children are enrolled at is ‘In Program’ on the [school nutrition contract](#) with the DPI SNT.

2. Do all free or reduced-price eligible students qualify for P-EBT?

The children must be eligible for free or reduced-price meals prior to the COVID-19 school closures to receive the P-EBT benefits. It is currently not known whether DHS will be able to issue P-EBT benefits to children who are newly eligible (first certified after COVID-19 school closures) for free or reduced-price meals. However, School Food Authorities (SFAs) should continue to run Direct Certification and determine free and reduced-price meal applications as households submit them. All students enrolled in Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) schools prior to the COVID-19 school closures are eligible for P-EBT benefits, but will need to complete the DHS online P-EBT application if they are not automatically issued benefits.

3. How are P-EBT benefits issued?

P-EBT benefits are issued on an individual basis--not by household. For this reason, children in the same household may receive benefits at different times, and some may receive them automatically while others will need to be certified through completion of the DHS online P-EBT application. More information about P-EBT can be found here: <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/forwardhealth-foodshare.htm>.

4. What should be done if a household has not received P-EBT benefits for all of their eligible children?

If the household has children eligible for P-EBT benefits but has not received them or they have received benefits for some, but not all of their eligible children, they should be directed to fill out the [DHS online P-EBT application](#) (available in English and Spanish) for *all* of their children: https://access.wi.gov/s/pebt?language=en_US.

5. What should be done for students attending a CEP school?

All students enrolled at a CEP school are eligible for P-EBT benefits, however not all of them will automatically receive these benefits.

Students should automatically be issued P-EBT benefits if they have been directly certified as S, T, O, M, E, G, or Z code and that information can be matched with information from the Department of Health Services. Sometimes the available data does not match, so benefits are unable to be issued automatically and parents of students enrolled at CEP schools may need to complete the DHS online P-EBT application.

When an application is submitted, it is matched to available WISEdata. If the school is a public school or choice school that has correctly submitted the “food services eligibility” in WISEdata, the application should be approved upon submission as long as the child’s birthdate, first name, and last name entered are an exact match to what is in WISEdata. If the school is a private school, did not correctly submit “food service eligibility” in WISEdata, or the child’s birthdate, first name, and last name are not an exact match, the application will not be verified. See question #8 below for more details.

6. What should be done for students attending a private school?

Students should automatically be issued P-EBT benefits if they have been directly certified as S, T, O, M, E, G, or Z code. Parents of eligible students enrolled at private schools that have not been issued benefits automatically must complete the DHS online P-EBT application.

When an application is submitted, it is matched to available WISEdata. If the school is a choice school that has correctly submitted the “food services eligibility” in WISEdata, the application should be approved upon submission as long as the child’s birthdate, first name, and last name entered are an exact match to what is in WISEdata. If the school is a private school (excluding choice schools), there will not be WISEdata available to match with and the application may not be verified. See question #8 below for more details.

7. What happens when a DHS online P-EBT application is approved?

If the application is approved, a “Thank You” message will appear with additional details, including a tracking number. Applications are processed daily and P-EBT cards will be mailed out. The card may take several days to arrive. More information about P-EBT can be found here: <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/forwardhealth-foodshare.htm>.

8. What should be done if an application cannot be verified?

When an application is submitted, it is matched to WISEdata. If the data the parent submits in the application does not match WISEdata exactly (specifically the children’s first name, last name, and birthdate), the application will not be verified. The children must have a “food services eligibility” code indicating Free or Reduced-price in WISEdata to be successfully matched for P-EBT benefits as well. If neither of these codes is listed, a match will not occur and the P-EBT benefits will not be approved automatically at the time of submission. Applications may also fail to be verified if no information for the children exists in WISEdata.

All public schools and choice schools are required to have access to WISEdata to submit individual data for each student. Private schools do not have access to WISEdata.

For the families that have filled out the DHS online P-EBT application and could not be verified, first work with the person at your school or district who has access to WISEdata to verify the information in WISEdata is what the family is using to complete the DHS online P-EBT application (children’s first name, last name, and birthdate). If you find a discrepancy in the name or birthdate, advise the parent to fill out the DHS online P-EBT application again using what is listed in WISEdata for their child or children so that a match can take place.

9. Why did the DPI SNT request Benefit Issuance (BI) Lists?

BI lists were requested to help DPI SNT staff further troubleshoot the influx of questions surrounding P-EBT eligibility, primarily for verifying free or reduced-price meal eligibility when specific questions arise. DHS will not receive copies of the BI lists. All children on the lists indicated to be eligible for free or reduced-price meals will not automatically be issued P-EBT benefits simply because the BI list was submitted.

10. If all of the items above have been verified and the student seems to be eligible, what is the next step?

If the troubleshooting steps above have been completed and there are remaining questions, please contact us at the snt.pebt@dpi.wi.gov email address. In the message, please explain the steps that have already been taken and we will further assist to the best of our ability.

11. When are payments going out?

Please refer households to the DHS website, <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/forwardhealth-foodshare.htm> for details on payments.