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New York State Pandemic-EBT (P-EBT) Payments Policy Report

Hundreds of thousands of New Yorker's are struggling with food insecurity. A new Summer P-EBT \$511 distribution per eligible child will make a big difference. However, unless there is more outreach and publicity, families may end up not spending an estimated \$352 million. A comparison of California and New York P-EBT programs shows a big difference in efforts to ensure all eligible families spend down their P-EBT funds. Targeted outreach and publicity will maximize participation while costing NYS-Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (NYS-OTDA) and school districts only a few dollars.

1. **When School Year 2021-22, Summer 2022 and Summer 2023 are added together, it's a total of \$2.2 billion. An unexpected, much needed help going to New York families:** However, Federal and State records indicate that several hundred thousand New Yorkers may have unused P-EBT¹ dollars waiting for them to spend on groceries. Beginning in May, around \$1.2 billion in Summer P-EBT (2022 and 2023) in two payments are being distributed to families based on 2.2 million eligible children across New York State (Summer 2022: \$391 and Summer 2023: \$120 for a total of \$511).

Summer 2022 and 2023	1 Child	2 Children	3 Children	4 Children
Total P-EBT Card amount	\$511	\$1,022	\$1,583	\$2,044

New York State-Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (NYS-OTDA) estimates another \$1 billion will be distributed during this spring and summer covering payments based on School Year 2021-22 payments for families with children that missed five or more school days due to COVID-19.

2. **P-EBT means a family can buy the food they want, if they know about it:** There are thousands of struggling families in NYS that would be thrilled to know they have \$511 to \$2,044 (1 to 4 children) in Summer P-EBT dollars to spend on food. Parents can spend the money on at a grocery store for the food they want. However, families were never told more P-EBT dollars were coming and many threw away or lost their P-EBT cards. Unless a vigorous outreach and publicity campaign is launched, it's highly likely several hundred thousand families will leave the money unspent on their card.
3. **With \$352 million in unspent funds at stake, targeted outreach and publicity will make the difference.** There is an estimated \$352 million worth of P-EBT cards that may go unspent in New York State without a targeted outreach and publicity campaign². Given that food insecurity is the number one issue in New York State, this makes little sense.

¹ Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) is a COVID-19 emergency program that began in the summer of 2020. P-EBT helps families cover the cost of breakfasts and lunches their children would have been eligible to receive for free or at reduced price through the National School Lunch Program. Parents get a P-EBT card that can be used at local grocery stores to buy food.

² The \$352 million estimate figure is based on 16% of the total three P-EBT distributions (school year 2021-22, Summer 2022 and Summer 2023) that began in April 2023 and continue into September, 2023. See page 10 for formula and supporting documentation used for \$352 million estimate.

4. **Non-SNAP households comprise 70% of the total number of P-EBT recipients.**³ Non-SNAP households require targeted outreach. A SNAP household will automatically have P-EBT funds added to their EBT card. Since they are already using the card for grocery shopping, it doesn't matter if they know that P-EBT funds are added to their card. P-EBT is one of the very few government supports available for moderate income families. For non-SNAP households, publicity is urgently needed.
5. **Current publicity is not adequate:** New York State Office of Temporary Disability Assistance (NYS-OTDA) maintains a thorough [P-EBT FAQ](#) covering all aspects of P-EBT with daily updates on its website. It's FAQ is a great resource but much more is needed to get the word out about \$511 in newly issued Summer P-EBT 2022 and 2023 funds. Families that are eligible for school year 2021-22 P-EBT also need their own targeted and sustained outreach. To begin, OTDA should offer a translated version in seven most commonly spoken languages after English. Where is the messaging on social media? NYC-Department of Education (NYC-DOE) sends out an email blast to the families of its 950,000 students every few weeks. The NYC-DOE can use its parents email system to inform its families of the two new P-EBT fund distributions totaling \$511. How will eligible NYC families know they have \$511 waiting to be spent on food if no one tells them?⁴

New York State-OTDA and NYS school districts can do much more to alert eligible families of their P-EBT benefit; and it will only cost a few dollars. For example, California is undertaking a family user friendly approach to ensure all P-EBT dollars get spent.



6. **California is doing it right:** In contrast to New York State, California is taking a much more proactive approach to ensure that every struggling family spends down their P-EBT card dollars. Because California engaged in a thorough analysis (and state conducted audit⁵) of why P-EBT funds were not getting used, valuable lessons were learned and acted on. California state agencies, school districts and anti-hunger groups have launched a publicity campaign to reach families with unspent P-EBT funds.
7. **California was approved for a waiver to allow families more time to apply:** When school year 2020-21 P-EBT dollars were distributed (P-EBT 2.0), nearly \$1 billion in P-EBT funds went unused in California⁶ (Round 2.0 was worth \$1,200 per eligible child). These families were caught in the expungement rule. If a family does not activate the P-EBT funds within one year, the funds are automatically expunged from the card. In November 2022, California applied for a waiver from the US-Department of Agriculture (USDA) to allow this group of affected families to request a new P-EBT card so they could spend down the \$1,200. USDA approved the waiver in December 2022.

“As eligibility for P-EBT 2.0 was automatically confirmed and no client application was required, some eligible recipients were unfamiliar with P-EBT 2.0 or otherwise unaware of P-EBT benefits provided to them. In addition to this amendment request,

³ For the 2019-20 school year, New York State issued P-EBT benefits to almost 2.5 million children, and 28.7% of those children were in SNAP households. NYS SNAP-non-SNAP breakdown is similar to California's: 24% to 76%. Source: New York State Plan for Pandemic EBT Children in School and Child Care, 2020-2021

⁴ The author exchanged several emails with the New York City Department of Education (NYC-DOE). As a result of the exchange, NYC-DOE has been posting on social media and sent out a Summer P-EBT letter to all of its families.

⁵ <https://www.auditor.ca.gov/reports/2021-613/index.html#section5>

⁶ <https://ca-times.brightspotcdn.com/14/09/c4cc07b740328e21b6b02c1683a4/p-ebt-2-0-outcomes-report.pdf>

the state is undergoing extensive client education efforts to inform families of available food benefits to maximize participation in P-EBT 2.0.”⁷

With the Federal waiver approved, California estimates between \$241 and \$481 million will now be used by families requesting a new P-EBT card.

“California estimates that 30 percent to 60 percent of eligible households will request a reissuance. That would result in a reissuance of \$241 million to \$481 million to between 205,000 and 410,000 children.

FNS approves California’s P-EBT plan amendment to reissue expunged benefits under these limited terms for school year 2020-2021 and the summer of 2021.”⁸

Massachusetts undertook a similar effort, allowing families that did not use their P-EBT cards (issued from Spring 2020 through March 2021) to reapply for a new card⁹. If New York State had applied for the USDA waiver, out of an estimated \$500 million in unused P-EBT funds, at least \$120 to \$240 million could have been claimed by families (extrapolating from California’s figures).

8. **California is showing the way by operating a family user friendly program.** For the latest California P-EBT payment (3.0 and 4.0), all eligible families will receive a new P-EBT card in the mail¹⁰. This action will help the hundreds of thousands of families that may have lost or thrown away their old card. California is also actively publicizing its P-EBT program with alerts available in seven languages. A side by side comparison between California and New York State Summer P-EBT Plans show different approaches to making sure all funds are spent (see page 3).
9. **When a family does not spend its P-EBT card dollars, they are removed after 274 days in NYS.** All P-EBT funds are removed within 274 days of issuance. A just issued Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) P-EBT Survey Report shows many families did not receive their P-EBT card or were not aware that more funds have been added onto their card. “Of the 22 individuals that reported having benefits expunged, 17 (or 77 percent) were never notified that their benefits were going to be removed.”¹¹
10. **Will New York follow the P-EBT best practices example set by California?** So far, for NYS-OTDA and 700 school districts, the publicity has been less than minimal. At stake is an estimated \$352 million that may never get spent on food despite the tremendous need. The \$352 million is also money that supports the state economy. Low cost publicity mechanisms such as social media should be used to get the word out.



⁷ <https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/CA-P-EBT-20-21-Plan-Amendment-Expungement.pdf>

⁸ <https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/California-P-EBT-amendment-approval-SY-2020-2021-12-14-22.pdf>

⁹ <https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/olg%20docs/olgtm/2022/34.pdf>

¹⁰ https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/P-EBT_3-0_Schoolchild_Plan_FINAL.pdf

¹¹ Ibid

Easy to implement recommendations with little cost:

11. **NYS-Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (NYS-OTDA) can share the unclaimed P-EBT card data with all stakeholders.** According to NYS-OTDA P-EBT School Year 2021-22 Plan¹², the agency is in possession of the unclaimed funds data. A snapshot of data, four or more months after the funds were initially distributed, will let all stakeholders (school districts, local elected officials, anti-hunger organizations) know how many families have not claimed any P-EBT funds. Targeted publicity will help get the word out.
12. **A New York State and New York City publicity campaign will cost very little.** NYS-OTDA will not be issuing new P-EBT cards for Summer 2022 and Summer 2023. With the money saved from not having to produce new cards, why not spend it on a robust targeted outreach and publicity campaign? In addition to social media postings every week, NYS-OTDA and every NYS school district can send out an email to all eligible parents tomorrow morning. *This easy to do step will cost next to nothing and ensure eligible families know.*
13. **There's good news here for NYS P-EBT card recipients that need an extension.** Based on an email exchange with NYS-OTDA, the agency wrote the following: "If a family needs a P-EBT replacement card, they will have time to request one even after the P-EBT program ends on September 30, 2023. OTDA recommends anyone in need of a replacement card should apply asap." Even if families learn about their P-EBT card eligibility status five or six months from today, they can still apply for a replacement card, *if they know to request one.*
14. **ALL 50 STATES!** While the focus here is on New York State, the analysis and recommendations apply to all 50 states. With California is showing the way, other states have much to learn from California's example. If families do not spend the P-EBT card money, it goes back to the Federal Government. An estimated several billion dollars in unclaimed P-EBT are at stake¹³. It's money for free groceries that will help millions of families struggling to make ends meet.....if they know about it. The United States Department of Agriculture-Food and Nutrition Services can make the same information, the number of families with claimed and unclaimed P-EBT card funds, available for the other 49 states.



¹² "During the first and second phases of P-EBT, the state used text messaging blasts successfully to contact recipients who had failed to redeem benefits to make sure that they were aware of the benefits and to provide them with a link to information, including videos, to help them PIN their P-EBT cards and request new cards, if needed. We plan on using text or email blasts, to the extent possible, for messaging about various aspects of this next phase of P-EBT." Source: https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/SY-2021-2022-State-Plan-for-Pandemic-EBT-school-age-children-01_12_20231.pdf Same language was found in the Summer 2022 and 2023 plans.

¹³ See page 6 for P-EBT spending for 2022 and 2023. <https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/data-files/keydata-may-2023.pdf>

Section 2.

NYS Pandemic-EBT (P-EBT) Payments Policy Report

California and New York: two states with different approaches to P-EBT success

Supporting Documentation

1. Comparison of California and New York State Plans for Pandemic EBT Summer 2022 and 2023

To receive P-EBT funds from the US Department of Agriculture (USDA), every state must submit a Plan that details how the funds will be distributed and steps to ensure maximum participation. A separate template provided plan must be submitted for the school year and summer. There were four rounds of P-EBT and a new plan was required for each round. Every state responds to the same USDA questions in its Plan. Below is a cut and paste from the plans submitted by California and New York¹⁴ to USDA. The responses to key questions below shows how different California and New York approaches are. California is showing the way to ensure maximum participation/benefit, not only for New York, but all states administering a P-EBT Summer 2022 and Summer 2023 program.

USDA Application Question	California	New York
<p>Will you issue new P-EBT cards to existing P-EBT households? If so, who will receive these cards? Non-SNAP households only? Or also SNAP households? If not, how will you handle cases where the P-EBT household no longer has their P-EBT card?</p>	<p>California will issue P-EBT benefits on dedicated P-EBT cards for all P-EBT recipients. All school children, including those previously issued a P-EBT card and those that are newly eligible, will receive benefits on a newly issued card. The newly issued P-EBT card will be distinguishable as a "P-EBT 3.0" card. All P-EBT cards will be issued in the name of the eligible child and each child will receive their own P-EBT card.¹⁵</p>	<p>New York State will not be issuing new P-EBT cards to existing P-EBT households, except for those whose cards were returned and never successfully delivered during the first and second phases of P-EBT, or those who didn't access their P-EBT benefits using that card. For existing household requesting replacement cards our P-EBT helpline Integrated Voice Response (IVR) system will have special prompts to direct clients how to request replacement cards. During the first and second phases of P-EBT, card replacement requests were processed manually by helpline agents.</p> <p>Manually issuing a replacement card is a simple and quick process, however, we are exploring ways of capturing cardholder information and automating the replacement process in expectation of a greater volume of replacement requests.</p>

¹⁴ <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/state-guidance-coronavirus-pandemic-ebt-pebt> . The State Plan had the same questions in P-EBT Summer 2022 and 2023. NYS and California provided the same answer (see above) to the question regarding new P-EBT cards in Summer 2022 and 2023 will be issued. California issued new P-EBT cards for both Summer 2022 and 2023 while NYS did not.

¹⁵ California issued new P-EBT cards to all eligible households also for P-EBT 4.0. New York did not issue new cards.

<p>Describe the State’s public information campaign. That is, the information you will provide to the general public (i.e., not directly to P-EBT participants), and how you will provide that information (i.e., print or broadcast advertising, social media, mailers to the general population).</p>	<p>Client Education and Communications Campaign</p> <p>California will take a multi-faceted approach to ensuring robust and accurate communication to all eligible households by launching a public information campaign through the length of the State’s P-EBT operation to reach both the general public and P-EBT eligible families directly.</p> <p>General communications strategies will include a dedicated P-EBT website and wide range of media, as well as resources for partners including schools and community- based organizations to engage in client education. Resources include flyers, fact sheets, communication templates, and informational videos. The P-EBT website and materials will be available in multiple languages (including English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Mandarin, Arabic, Cantonese, Tagalog, Korean, Punjabi, Russian, Farsi, and Armenian), reflecting the primary languages spoken at home by the California student population; and the corresponding media strategies will also be multilingual. The website will be Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant. Paid media will include radio (with live reads), digital (connected TV, YouTube, Steaming Audio) paid search, and paid social media (Facebook, Instagram). Partner materials will include flyers, template text/email language and sample social media posts and graphics in multiple languages. These outreach materials will be shared broadly with schools and community organizations.</p> <p>California will issue a series of direct mail communications to P-EBT eligible families. This will include both SNAP and non-SNAP households. Ahead of the first issuance, P-EBT eligible families will receive a flyer that will provide general information and direct them to the P-EBT website for more information. The flyer will include an explanation of P-EBT, eligibility for the program, and updates on implementation and issuance timelines. A second direct flyer will be delivered to eligible households prior to the second benefit issuance. This second flyer will include an explanation of the availability of upcoming benefits and will direct clients to the P-EBT website or P-EBT Helpline for more information.</p> <p>A notice will also be sent with each P-EBT card and will include information about how to check balances, how to request a replacement card, how to use P-EBT benefits, where P- EBT can be used, who to contact for questions, and how to opt out if they do not want P- EBT benefits. The mailer will also include details on where to go for step-by-step instructions on how to PIN your P-EBT card. Families will also be advised that P-EBT benefits are non-transferable. The information notice will be available in English and Spanish and will be accompanied by language assistance information.</p>	<p>As with the first and second phases of P-EBT, the State will post information to the OTDA website, and use press releases, social media and community partners to provide general information about P-EBT. We also will work closely with schools and school districts to disseminate general information about P-EBT</p>
<p>P-EBT Helpline</p>	<p>P-EBT Helpline The P-EBT Helpline will serve as first line customer support. To support P-EBT eligible families, California has significantly expanded its P-EBT Helpline EBT Helpline agents will assist callers with general information, PIN set-up, address changes, and card replacements. The Tier II P-EBT Helpline will assist callers who were denied benefits, explaining P-EBT rules and conducting an additional search for the child in the P-EBT lookup system. CDSS will work directly with CDE to confirm information for school children who may have been missed in the initial eligibility collection.</p>	<p>As with the first and second phases of P-EBT, our P-EBT helpline will assist customers in languages other than English either by routing the client to an agent who speaks the customer’s native language or by engaging a Language Line translator. P-EBT instructional and informational videos are available in English and Spanish, and all printed materials are posted to our agency website and are available in multiple languages by using the translation function available at the bottom of every webpage.</p>

Live chat	Additionally, California will make available a live chat feature on its P-EBT website. The live chat feature will be an additional avenue for families to receive P-EBT customer service. The P-EBT Tier II helpline agents will staff the P-EBT Live Chat. Helpline agents will assist families through the live chat by providing answers to general P-EBT questions. This can include questions related to PIN setup, providing eligibility details, where and how to use the P-EBT card, etc. The P-EBT Live Chat will also be utilized to issue card replacements or process address changes. For inquiries in the P-EBT Live Chat related to card replacements or address changes, the user will be asked to provide the child's name, date of birth, and current mailing address prior to entering the chat.	None
Benefits Expungement	"P-EBT benefits will be subject to an expungement rule of 365 days . This allows families that may not be initially aware of their eligibility for P-EBT 4.0 to receive and use their P-EBT benefits. P-EBT cards will not become dormant at 180 days. This exception is warranted because P-EBT families will not be issued a dormancy notice. Removing dormancy balances the need for client access and the administrative burden associated with requests for card reactivation processed by the P-EBT Helpline."	274 days.

2. California was approved for a Federal USDA waiver to extend the P-EBT 2.0 card deadline to August 1, 2023 (extended again to August 18).

The P-EBT card 2.0 (second round of P-EBT) is worth \$1,200 based on school year 2020-21. However, California Department of Social Services reported that 660,000 P-EBT cards were never activated. After one year, if the P-EBT card is not used, the money is taken back, known as the "expungement rule" (in New York State, the expungement rule is 274 days). California applied for a waiver in November 2022 and received USDA waiver approval the following month. The waiver allows families to apply for a new P-EBT 2.0 card so they have a new opportunity to spend down the \$1,200. The waiver was allowed families up to August 1 to apply (the deadline was extended again to August 18). "California estimates that 30 percent to 60 percent of eligible households will request a reissuance. That would result in a reissuance of \$241 million to \$481 million to between 205,000 and 410,000 children."¹⁶

Reclaim Your Eligible P-EBT 2.0 Benefits Now!



IF YOU DIDN'T ACTIVATE YOUR **P-EBT 2.0** CARD AND DIDN'T USE YOUR BENEFITS, YOU HAVE UNTIL **AUGUST 18** TO FILE A REQUEST TO **RECLAIM THEM**.

To file your request, call **1-800-887-8230**, Monday-Friday 6 a.m. – 8 p.m. OR use the online chat feature at www.ca.p-ebt.org.

Ensure to have the first name, last name, and date of birth of each eligible child along with the address on file during the P-EBT 2.0 issuance in 2021.

For details about P-EBT 2.0, visit www.ca.p-ebt.org.

dpss.lacounty.gov


¹⁶ <https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/California-P-EBT-amendment-approval-SY-2020-2021-12-14-22.pdf>

YOUR FAMILY MAY BE ELIGIBLE FOR **P-EBT 2.0 BENEFITS**

UP TO \$1200 PER CHILD/STUDENT



If your child or student was eligible for free or reduced-priced meals in school year 2020-2021 and you did NOT receive or use your P-EBT 2.0 card

**CALL THE P-EBT 2.0 HELPLINE
1(800)887-8230**

To check your eligibility and request to have your P-EBT 2.0 benefit reissued: Call by August 1!

Call 1(800)887-8230 between 6a-8pm M-F

Have the following information ready:

Child's First/Last Name, Date of Birth,

Address on File for the 2020/2021 school year

For more information on P-EBT visit:
www.sdhunger.org/p-ebt



P-EBT 2.0 Outreach Toolkit

August 18th Extension

CREATED FOR

school staff, administration, and
nutrition services departments,
community based organizations, elected officials

CREATED BY



Date: August 2, 2023



United States Department of Agriculture

Food and Nutrition
Service

1320 Braddock Place
Alexandria, VA
22314

December 14, 2022

**SUBJECT: Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer Program (P-EBT)
Approval of California's State Plan Amendment,
School Year 2020-2021 and Summer 2021**

**TO: Jesus Mendoza, Jr.
Regional Administrator
Western Regional Office**

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (P.L. 116-127) (the Act) authorized a temporary assistance program for households with children affected by school closures during the public health emergency declared on January 27, 2020. Pursuant to the authority granted under Section 1101 of the Act, FNS approved California's plan to operate P-EBT for school year 2020-2021 on June 3, 2021. FNS approved the state's P-EBT plan for the summer of 2021 on July 2, 2021.

California proposes to amend its school year 2020-2021 and summer 2021 P-EBT plans to reissue certain expunged benefits at the request of households. The state will only consider requests for reissuance in cases where the household spent none of the benefit. Households will submit requests for reissuance through California's P-EBT Helpline. The state will accept requests through August 1, 2023 and will reissue no benefits after September 30, 2023. California will expunge reissued benefits after 365 days.

California estimates that 30 percent to 60 percent of eligible households will request a reissuance. That would result in a reissuance of \$241 million to \$481 million to between 205,000 and 410,000 children.

FNS approves California's P-EBT plan amendment to reissue expunged benefits under these limited terms for school year 2020-2021 and the summer of 2021.

FNS reminds California of the importance of accurate reporting of P-EBT benefits on forms FNS-292B, FNS-46, and FNS-388. Please refer to FNS's [April 27, 2020 memo on P-EBT reporting](#), and do not hesitate to contact your Regional Office if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

**CYNTHIA
LONG**

Digitally signed by
CYNTHIA LONG
Date: 2022.12.15
09:08:43 -05'00'

Cindy Long
Administrator

Massachusetts also offered a similar effort, alerting all families with unspent P-EBT cards, to activate their card before funds are automatically expunged.¹⁷

¹⁷ <https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/olg%20docs/olgtm/2022/34.pdf>

3. Formula for estimating \$352 million in unspent P-EBT funds in NYS:

As much as \$352 million in unspent P-EBT funds is at stake. If the dollars are not spent, they will go back to the Federal Government. According to California P-EBT Statewide Data Outcomes¹⁸, 16% of all P-EBT dollars went unclaimed for P-EBT 2.0.

P-EBT 2.0 Statewide Data Outcomes

The table below summarizes aggregate P-EBT 2.0 data statewide. All data is up to date as of November 2022.

Summary of Statewide P-EBT 2.0 Data	Value
Total Eligible School-Aged Children	4,197,677
Total Benefits Issued School-Aged Children	\$5,335,938,038
Total Number of Pinned School-Aged P-EBT 2.0 Cards ¹	3,640,534
School-Aged P-EBT 2.0 PIN Rate	86.7%
Total Eligible Young Children	796,219
Total Benefits Issued Young Children	\$772,145,262
Total Number of Pinned Young Child P-EBT 2.0 Cards	692,719
Young Child P-EBT 2.0 PIN Rate	87%
Total P-EBT Benefits Used (School-Aged and Young Child)	\$5,122,980,337

Extrapolating from P-EBT 2.0 user data from California Department of Social Services, there is an estimated at least \$352 million in P-EBT benefits that may go unspent in New York State based on the three distributions that began in April 2023. The three distributions are P-EBT School Year 2021-22¹⁹, P-EBT Summer 2022 and P-EBT Summer 2023 for a total of \$2.2 billion. $\$2.2 \text{ billion} \times 16\% = \352 million .

4. Two P-EBT reports highlight the importance of targeted outreach and publicity:



California Association of Food Banks (CAFB) issued a 40 page report on the first year of the P-EBT program. One of its main findings was that families learned about their P-EBT benefit from their school or school district. "Most survey respondents first heard about P-EBT through an announcement from their child's school or school district, underscoring the importance of schools as trusted, effective messengers for P-EBT".

¹⁸ <https://ca-times.brightspotcdn.com/14/09/c4cc07b740328e21b6b02c1683a4/p-ebt-2-0-outcomes-report.pdf>

¹⁹ "New York State's best estimate based on prior issuances and the available data is that it will issue \$1 billion in P-EBT benefits to 1.25 million school children for the 2021-22 school year." Source: https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/SY-2021-2022-State-Plan-for-Pandemic-EBT-school-age-children-01_12_20231.pdf



A June 2023 released Survey of 155 P-EBT, [A Snapshot of Families' Experience with the Pandemic-EBT Program](#) from Food Research Action Center (FRAC) has an important takeaway for targeted outreach and publicity:

Outreach and communication: “Outreach and communication were important to supporting the success of Pandemic EBT. The most common ways that families found out about Pandemic EBT was from their school (56 respondents), the state (43 respondents), through social media (34 respondents), or through a case-worker (19 respondents). Others found out about it through informal channels such as friends, family, or neighbors (34 respondents), but 15 respondents stated that they had not received information on Pandemic EBT from any source. These responses highlight the need for a comprehensive outreach and communications plan by states to ensure that all eligible families know about the program.”

“Of the 22 individuals that reported having benefits expunged, 17 (or 77 percent) were never notified that their benefits were going to be removed.”

5. Following California P-EBT audit recommendations will ensure all eligible NYS households are aware of their P-EBT benefits

A state audit of the California P-EBT program found that in its first year, 5 percent of the school year 2019–20 P-EBT cards—about 174,000 —were returned as undeliverable²⁰.

The following recommendations were made:

- To ensure that all eligible families are aware of and have the opportunity to participate in P-EBT, CDSS should—in coordination with CDE as necessary—begin doing the following by no later than February 2022:
- Identify the schools attended by children eligible for P-EBT whose families have not yet received their P-EBT cards or have not used their P-EBT cards.
- Request that such schools contact those families to inform them of their eligibility for payments and to provide them with both general information about P-EBT and contact information for CDSS.

“Given that some families may not be using their payments because they are unaware of them or have mistaken concerns related to their use, CDSS could better meet the intent of P-EBT if it implemented additional outreach efforts. In particular, CDSS could notify families or schools when it determines that a family has not used any of its P-EBT assistance after a certain period of time.” Source:

<https://www.auditor.ca.gov/reports/2021-613/index.html#section5>

²⁰ <https://www.bsa.ca.gov/reports/2021-613/index.html>

6. California examples of government outreach and media coverage:



YOUR FAMILY MAY HAVE UNUSED P-EBT MONEY FOR GROCERIES

July 10, 2023

Pandemic EBT (P-EBT) is a federal nutrition program that offers food benefits for eligible families with school-aged children, and for young children 0-6, who did not attend school or childcare in person due to COVID-19 closures during the 2020-2021 school year.

An estimated 32,000 families in San Diego County never received or never used their P-EBT 2.0 benefit amount and now can get reissued cards with an average \$1,192 per child.

Families must call the state's P-EBT 2.0 Helpline at 1-800-887-8230 to request a new card before Aug. 1, 2023. The P-EBT 2.0 Helpline is open from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday to Friday.

Families must have the following information ready for each child when they call:

- First and last name of the student/child you believe is eligible
- Date of birth of the student/child
- The address (or partial address with street name) where your student/child lived at the beginning of the 2020-21 school year

It's important to know that using P-EBT Benefits is completely safe. P-EBT will not affect your immigration status or make you a public charge. P-EBT will not impact other benefits and will never have to be paid back.

<https://www.sdcoe.net/about-sdcoe/news/post/~board/news/post/unused-p-ebt-funds-available>

The San Diego Union-Tribune

Tens of thousands of San Diegans missed out on pandemic EBT funds. But you can still claim them

Statewide, close to \$1 billion in such funds went unused. If you think your child qualified but never received a card, you can call a state hotline this month only to get benefits reissued.

BY [KRISTEN TAKETA](#)

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Hundreds of thousands of California families whose children qualified for free money for food under a federal pandemic program, including tens of thousands in San Diego County, didn't end up using any of it — in some cases because they never received the benefit cards.

Now local advocates are urging families statewide to claim the money before they lose their chance.

Two years ago, California had \$6.1 billion worth of electronic benefit transfer (EBT) funds mailed to 5 million children across the state to use for food. The EBT cards, which averaged \$1,200 in benefits each, were part of a federal program called [Pandemic EBT 2.0](#) meant to compensate low-income children for the on-campus meals they missed while their schools were closed during the pandemic.

But as of this week, \$921 million of the pandemic EBT money issued statewide remained unspent, according to data requested from the state Department of Social Services by the San Diego Union-Tribune.

More than 651,000 eligible California children never activated their EBT cards, meaning they used none of their benefits. That includes about 69,000 eligible children in San Diego County, according to a November 2022 state [report](#) — nearly one out of five eligible children.

Families who qualified but never activated a Pandemic EBT 2.0 card can call a state hotline at 1-800-887-8230 to get one reissued. The deadline to call is Aug. 1. “The summer hunger cliff is real, food prices continue to be high, and there is an average of \$1,200 out there for students that are eligible,” said Amanda Mascia, director of programs for the San Diego Hunger Coalition.

What happened to the cards?

Many pandemic EBT cards were never activated not because families didn't need them but because families never got them, Mascia said. The Hunger Coalition conducted audits at two local schools where all children qualified for pandemic EBT to investigate why families didn't use the cards. “They really and truly didn't know that these cards existed for them,” Mascia said. The main issue, the coalition found, was that many cards were sent to outdated addresses.

California used students' home addresses that were on file at their schools at the start of the academic year in 2020 to mail the cards, Mascia said. But many students had moved amid the instability of the pandemic or were experiencing homelessness, so their addresses may have changed by the time the benefits were mailed during the second half of 2021.

Some families also may have received the cards but never opened the envelopes they came in because they didn't know what they were. The cards came in plain white envelopes that confused some families who mistook them for [junk mail](#).

And some families told the Hunger Coalition they did not use the cards because of fear around using public benefits, worrying it might affect their immigration status, Mascia said.

"One hundred percent of the families we were able to reach through the school who did not activate their cards, when made aware, were absolutely interested in receiving and using these benefits," she said.

Other families may have received the cards but never activated them because they didn't need the money or didn't think they qualified for EBT benefits.

Cards were sent [not just](#) to low-income families but also to higher-income families whose children attended schools where all students had access to free meals, regardless of income.

The state Department of Social Services said it made several efforts to get families to use their pandemic EBT funds, including making a dedicated [website](#) and a helpline families could call to activate cards, request replacements or report lost ones.

The department also [told](#) federal officials that it distributed tool kits to school districts containing educational materials for families and sent reminder postcards to families with children under age 6 who had not yet activated their cards.

The Hunger Coalition took its findings to state Assemblymember Chris Ward (D-San Diego). Together they got elected officials' support for the social services department to ask the federal government to let families request new cards if their original ones were never activated. That request was granted in December.

California was the only state that applied for and received federal approval for such re-issuances, said Jesus Mendoza, regional administrator for the federal Food and Nutrition Service.

How to get your benefits reissued

If you think your child was eligible for pandemic EBT but you did not receive or activate a card, you can call the state's hotline at 1-800-887-8230 to request a new one. The hotline is open Monday through Friday from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Families only have until Aug. 1 to call and request.

Children qualified for Pandemic EBT 2.0 if they were eligible to receive free or reduced-price meals and if their school was closed for some time between October 2020 and August 2021. That includes children whose families had filled out an application for free or reduced-price meals or were enrolled in CalFresh.

However, families who [weren't considered](#) low-income also qualified for benefits if their children attended schools that provided universal free meals through a federal program called the Pandemic EBT 2.0 program applied not only to school-age children but also children under 6 who were receiving CalFresh at the time.

When calling the hotline, families should have the following information on hand, according to the Hunger Coalition:

- First and last name of each child who qualified
- Child's date of birth
- At least a partial address of where the child lived at the start of the 2020-2021 school year

The Hunger Coalition also recommends families have an address from the 2019-2020 school year on hand. EBT benefits are safe to use, will not affect immigration status and do not have to be paid back, the Hunger Coalition advises families. If a family is experiencing homelessness and has no fixed address, they can request the reissued card to be sent to their child's school, Mascia said.

Families can request a reissued card even if they now live out of state, according to the social services department. Benefits can be used to buy food at most grocery stores, farmers markets and online retailers such as Amazon.

Source: <https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/education/story/2023-07-09/tens-of-thousands-of-san-diegans-missed-out-on-pandemic-ebt>

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