

Initial Notice to NSLP Sponsors Regarding School Year 2020-21 P-EBT Benefits

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), in partnership with the Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS) would like to thank you for your continued support and collaboration as we work together to provide supplemental food assistance, known as Pandemic Electronic Benefits (P-EBT), to eligible families during the current public health emergency. The purpose of P-EBT is to provide food assistance to families with students who would have received free or reduced-price lunch while attending school but are not consuming these meals in school buildings due to remote learning.

Federal regulations for P-EBT eligibility for SY2020-21 are significantly different from the spring and fall requirements. ISBE and DHS need to improve data collection in order to maximize benefits for eligible students. Most significantly for public schools, student attendance and students' free or reduced-price lunch eligibility **must be submitted on a monthly basis**. This more frequent data submission is critical to help Illinois families in the greatest need during this crisis. Please find more information about data submission below. Without monthly data, ISBE cannot meet the new federal regulations and cannot determine eligibility for students and families to receive this much-needed assistance.

P-EBT Eligibility

As a result of the new P-EBT guidance and Illinois' approved plan, two types of eligibility exist: School Eligibility and Student Eligibility.

School Eligibility for SY2020-21 P-EBT

- Schools must be a provider of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) as of February 2020 and;
- The school building was closed to students or had reduced hours or attendance for at least 5 consecutive days, excluding non-school days such as holidays and weekends.

Student Eligibility for SY2020-21 P-EBT

- Students must be enrolled in an eligible NSLP participating Illinois school and;
- Students must be determined eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunch for the 2020-21 school year (schools may use 2019-20 data if 2020-21 data has not yet been determined) and;
- Students are P-EBT eligible on school days in which a reimbursable meal was not provided to the student to consume at school. If "grab and go meals" are provided to students, this does not exclude these students from participating or being eligible for the P-EBT program.

P-EBT Data Submission

Data for P-EBT for public school students will be captured in the Student Information System (SIS). The following data is needed to issue P-EBT benefits to eligible public-school students:

- **Student Eligibility** – Student FR Indicator in SIS for non-CEP schools. This is not a factor if the school is participating in CEP, as all students enrolled in CEP schools are eligible.
- **P-EBT Eligible School Days** – ISBE will use the Illinois P-EBT Qualified Sponsor Survey in WINS and *monthly* student attendance data in SIS to determine eligible P-EBT benefit days. ISBE strongly encourages school districts to update attendance data in SIS *on a monthly basis* so that P-EBT benefits may be regularly provided to students in need.
- **Student Mailing Address** – Student’s current mailing address in SIS will be used to mail the P-EBT card to the student directly. Please ensure that the address provided is the current mailing address for the student.

Data for P-EBT for nonpublic school students will be captured in the Web-Based Illinois Nutrition System (WINS). The following data is needed to issue P-EBT benefits to eligible nonpublic school students:

- **Student Eligibility** – Nonpublic schools will be asked to create a monthly file for only eligible P-EBT students. For non-CEP schools, this will include students eligible for free or reduced-price meals. For any CEP school, as all enrolled students are P-EBT eligible, please upload all enrolled students.
- **P-EBT Eligible School Days** – ISBE will use the Illinois P-EBT Qualified Sponsor Survey in WINS and the number of P-EBT eligible days as submitted in WINS to determine eligible P-EBT benefit days.
- **Student Mailing Address** – Student’s current mailing address, as submitted in WINS for eligible students, will be used to mail the P-EBT card to the student directly. Please ensure that the address provided is the current mailing address for the student.

We ask eligible schools to begin outreach with families to update student eligibility, attendance and mailing address to prepare for this data collection. The data collection will begin no later than February 1, 2021, and any data submitted to ISBE by February 25, 2021 will be included in the first data shared with DHS for processing the first issuances for this round of P-EBT. Students included in this first data share should expect to receive their P-EBT benefit card in the mail in March 2021. Data collection will be ongoing through the end of the school year, with ISBE sharing data monthly collected through the 25th of each month with DHS on the 1st of the following month. Families in need successfully receiving P-EBT benefits depends on accurate and timely data from eligible schools.

More guidance, sample notification to families, and instructional webinars will be made available in the next few weeks.

P-EBT benefits were first issued in the spring (March through June 2020), as well as in the fall (August through September 2020), to more than 620,000 Illinois students, totaling more than \$339 million. P-EBT is authorized by the Families First Coronavirus Response Act Public Law 116-159 (Continuing Resolution), for Federal Fiscal Year 2021 (ending September 30, 2021). The P-EBT program will remain active as long as the Federal Public Health Emergency exists. When the Federal Public Health Emergency ends, the P-EBT program will also end. Thank you for your

continued partnership to serve and support Illinois' students and families during this time of hardship.

Should you or your staff have any questions about P-EBT, please reach out to ISBE at pebt@isbe.net.

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