



# Montana Families Need P-EBT Food Assistance

## What is Pandemic EBT (P-EBT)?

P-EBT has been a successful program for the last several years, helping families to keep food on the table during difficult times. It is a federally-funded program that states administer, designed to fill gaps in the food budgets of families with kids.

Eligible families receive grocery money on a new or existing EBT (Electronic Benefits Transfer) card. To distribute each round of P-EBT, the state must submit a plan to the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) for approval.

P-EBT is designed to mitigate food insecurity during uncertain times. Last year, Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services estimated that P-EBT would reach 73,424 kids during the school year and summer. According to USDA, P-EBT brought \$27 million into the state economy last school year and summer. These resources have been critical for food security and economic stability, and they are important now as inflation further strains household budgets.

## What impact has P-EBT had in Montana and beyond?

Montana has taken advantage of every P-EBT iteration since March of 2020. Montana provided a total of over \$94 million in benefits to eligible families from 2020-2022.

Not only have these benefits helped families afford the rising cost of food, they are stimulating local economies and food systems. P-EBT benefits can be spent at more than 750 SNAP retailers across Montana, including many farmers markets.

Additionally, according to a study by the Brookings Institute, nationwide, P-EBT reduced food insufficiency among SNAP households by 28 percent.

## Why is P-EBT for the 2022-2023 School Year Necessary?

One in seven children in Montana lives in a food insecure household. This means that those families sometimes don't know how they will put food on the table.

Inflation, housing prices, and challenges accessing childcare are making it difficult for many Montana families to afford enough food each month. More families are turning to food banks for the first time, because of these mounting costs. P-EBT is a federally-funded program that can help feed Montana's children during this period of rapidly rising costs of living.

P-EBT is not only money that can provide nutrition to children, but these benefits are federal dollars that are infused into Montana's economy. Last school year and summer alone, about \$27 million entered our state economy through P-EBT. This economic stimulus is needed this year for both families living on low incomes, and the grocers who depend on dollars circulating in our communities.

## Why Summer P-EBT?

No child should face hunger over the summer. Struggling families face difficulties every summer when they lose access to school meals and are more at-risk for hunger. Providing Summer P-EBT benefits has been piloted in other states for more than 10 years, and the USDA during the Trump Administration stated that the pilots “have shown that providing a benefit...during the summer to low-income households with school-aged children can reduce severe food insecurity among children.”

In rural states like Montana, access to summer meal sites is a huge barrier to participation. Providing Summer P-EBT benefits along with traditional summer meal sites ensures all students can access adequate nutrition while they are not in school. These programs work in a complementary fashion and allow for improved nutrition all summer long.