



# PANDEMIC EBT

## COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT

The Pandemic Electronic Benefit (P-EBT) program provides critical assistance for families with children who are missing out on free and reduced-price school meals due to virtual learning or hybrid schedules that reduce the number of days or hours that students are in the school building. While many families with school-age children have been participating in P-EBT, many more are not.

Last year, FRAC provided a P-EBT Communication Toolkit to help states, cities, school districts, and community organizations with templates to help with their outreach to the families who were receiving emergency meals. Based on lessons learned this past spring and summer, FRAC has recently updated this toolkit to include the most current information and resources available to ensure that every family that can benefit from P-EBT is able to do so in order to help families receive these benefits.



# Table of Contents



## **I. State Agency: Communications and Outreach Plan**

1. Components of a Robust State Agency Communications and Outreach Plan
2. Components of an Informative P-EBT Website



## **II. School District: Communications and Outreach Resources**

1. Opportunities for School Districts to Spread the Word About P-EBT
2. Template: School District Communications Materials



## **III. City and Community Partners: Communications and Outreach Tips**

1. City and Community Partners' Roles in P-EBT Communications



## **IV. Additional P-EBT Resources**



# I. State Agency: Communications and Outreach Plan

As part of each states' P-EBT plan, states must develop a public information campaign to ensure that students and families know about P-EBT and how to access the program. As states develop their plan, states should work in collaboration with partners to think about how to provide information to the general public and directly to participants.

## 1. Components of a Robust State Agency Communications and Outreach Plan

- ▶ **Engage community partners** to help with communications and outreach to ensure eligible families utilize P-EBT.
- ▶ **Create a state-specific P-EBT communications toolkit** to share state-specific information about the program with state and community partners.

*Promising practice: Make it a Google Drive/Doc that you can continuously update with the latest information.*

- » [California P-EBT Communication Tools](#)
- » [Colorado P-EBT Outreach Materials](#)
- ▶ **Host a statewide webinar** to share information about P-EBT with community partners, and outline steps they can take to ensure eligible families use P-EBT. Make sure to leave time for Q&A!
  - » [Texas Education Agency Summer 2022 P-EBT webinar](#)
  - » [Nebraska Department of Education 2021-2022 P-EBT webinar](#)
- ▶ **Ask school districts to share information about P-EBT with families.** Create sample communications with necessary and consistent information for districts to send out.
- ▶ **Ensure school districts know how families enroll in P-EBT,** the state's troubleshooting process, and who families should contact if they need help.
  - » [New Mexico P-EBT website](#)
- ▶ **Make sure school districts are collecting and processing free or reduced-price school meal applications** in a timely manner if that is how the state is identifying newly

eligible students. See [Section II](#) for school district-level ideas and resources.

- ▶ **Provide outreach materials** (including, if applicable, the free and reduced-price school meal application) in multiple languages to school districts and community partners. Guidance about how P-EBT does not impact public charge should be included in all materials.
  - » [P-EBT information in other languages](#)
  - » [MA P-EBT Outreach Resources](#)
- ▶ **Provide a clear, adequately staffed troubleshooting process** for families who have questions or believe there is an issue with their benefits. This may be in the form of an online inquiry form or a staffed call center with the ability to troubleshoot P-EBT issues in real time.
  - » **Example:**
    - [Maryland has an online P-EBT inquiry form.](#)
    - [Virginia DSS issued a press release to address delays in issuance and provide additional resources.](#)
    - For more examples, see the [Center on Budget and Policy Priorities \(CBPP\)](#) and [FRAC's Pandemic EBT Resource Library.](#)
- ▶ **Notify families who are participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) when P-EBT benefits will be added to their EBT card,** e.g., via letter, text, or call (any of these options could be automated. Explain what the benefit is, how much the family will receive for each child, and the total benefit amount.
- ▶ **Work closely with the EBT vendor** to ensure that information to families explains clearly when and how P-EBT cards will be sent and how to activate them.
- ▶ **Design identifiable envelopes for mailing cards** (which also protects privacy), and show families what to look out for so they do not dispose of the cards. It is important for families to understand the cards' purpose and to not suspect that they are a scam.



- ▶ **Share P-EBT data with community partners.** Identify areas with a high incidence of unactivated P-EBT cards for additional outreach. This can help increase access to much-needed benefits and ensure that the positive economic impact from P-EBT funding will be realized in your community.

» **Examples:**

- Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance shared data with community partners and municipal governments on cities and areas within those cities with high rates of unactivated P-EBT cards so that partners and city officials could target those areas for additional outreach.
- Texas Health and Human Services Commission regularly provided application data at the county and zip-code level to education and advocacy partners, which used the information to target paid radio, television, and social media ads.

- ▶ **To ensure vulnerable populations, such as those who are immigrants, in foster care, and are experiencing homelessness, receive critical food and nutrition benefits,** implement these strategies to ensure their access to P-EBT.

## 2. Components of an Informative P-EBT Website

- ▶ Informative text with detailed processes
- ▶ Robust Q&A
- ▶ Public charge guidance
- ▶ Availability in multiple languages
- ▶ Clear process for troubleshooting
- ▶ Instructions on how to activate a P-EBT card
- ▶ Links to other food assistance programs
- ▶ How to find meal sites in the community



## II. School District: Communications and Outreach Resources

### 1. Opportunities for School Districts to Spread the Word About P-EBT

- ▶ **Use all of your communications media** — website, letters to parents/guardians, social media, virtual learning platforms, “grab and go” meal bags, and robocalls and texts — to share information with families about how P-EBT will work this school year.
  - » Brockton Public Schools PSA video
  - » Beardsley School District P-EBT webpage
  - » Worcester Public Schools social media infographic
  - » LISA Academy Public Charter Schools infographic
- ▶ **Share information about P-EBT with school district liaisons** for homeless children and families, migrant education coordinators, foster care caseworkers, social workers, and educators.
- ▶ **Collect and process school meal applications continuously**, even if you are offering meals through the summer nutrition programs. See FRAC’s Strategies

*to Increase School Meal Application Returns* for more information, including sample resources that make the connection between the school meal application and P-EBT.

- » San Francisco Unified School District Multi-Purpose Family Income Form webpage with P-EBT messaging

- ▶ **Encourage families to update any changes in their address** in the school district system to ensure that the P-EBT card will be received and to avoid delays in families receiving benefits.

- » Fort Smith Public Schools distributed a flyer encouraging families to confirm their address on file (provided in English and Spanish).

- » In the spring of 2020, Philadelphia School District used its robocall system to contact families, inform them about P-EBT, confirm the address on file at the school district, and to provide information on how to update their address if needed.

### 2. Template: School District Communications Materials



### III. City and Community Partners: Communications and Outreach Tips

#### 1. City and Community Partners' Roles in P-EBT Communications

##### City Partners

- ▶ [Share information about P-EBT](#) with partner organizations, service providers, and families (via website, flyers, social media, webinars, and community meetings).
  - » [Durham County provided informational flyers in both English and Spanish.](#)
- ▶ [Work with community groups to translate P-EBT materials](#) into languages that are particularly helpful to your population, and communicate clearly with immigrant families that this program does not affect public charge status.
- ▶ [Ask the state to share P-EBT data with you.](#) Identify areas with a high incidence of unactivated P-EBT cards for additional outreach. This can help increase access to much-needed benefits and ensure that the positive economic impact from the P-EBT funding will be realized in your community.
  - » **Example:** The Shah Family Foundation and its community partners received data on cities and areas within those cities with high rates of unactivated P-EBT cards from the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance, and they partnered with the appropriate city government to target those areas for extra outreach.
- ▶ [For more examples of what cities can do, watch Pandemic EBT: An Important Opportunity for Cities,](#) a webinar co-hosted by FRAC and the National League of Cities.

##### Community Partners

- ▶ [Share information about P-EBT](#) with partner organizations, service providers, retailers, and families (via website, flyers, social media, webinars, and community meetings).
  - » [HealthWatch Wisconsin produced a 2 minute video summarizing eligibility, and receiving benefits.](#)
  - » [Arizona Food Bank Network created a flyer.](#)
  - » Massachusetts P-EBT partners [created various videos](#) in multiple languages to share information about the program, how it works, and to confirm that participation does not impact public charge.
  - » [Rhode Island Community Food Bank CEO wrote an op-ed](#) reflecting on the years of P-EBT and giving the program “grades”.
  - » [San Diego Hunger Coalition created a website](#) equipped with explanations, visuals, and contact information.
  - » [Just Harvest in Pennsylvania provided monthly status updates.](#)
- ▶ [As a trusted partner within your community, reinforce in your communications](#) that P-EBT does not impact the public charge test.
  - » [Alabama Arise created a flyer providing public charge guidance.](#)
- ▶ [Provide application assistance to families encountering barriers,](#) e.g., language, literacy, and access to an online application.
  - » Within your community, partner with other organizations that work with immigrant communities to spread the word about P-EBT to those populations.



### IV. Additional P-EBT Resources

- ▶ [Customizable P-EBT outreach materials](#)
- ▶ [FRAC's P-EBT Communications Resources Shared Drive \(includes sample outreach materials\)](#)
- ▶ [FRAC's P-EBT webpage](#)
- ▶ [FRAC's Pandemic EBT Recommendations for a Permanent Nationwide Summer EBT Program](#)



If you have any questions about P-EBT, please reach out to Kelsey Boone, [kboone@frac.org](mailto:kboone@frac.org).



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