

**There are important new COVID-19-related food assistance benefits to be aware of:**

**First, many FoodShare recipients have automatically received an extra allotment covering March and April.** This temporary extra allotment is only for recipients who normally receive less than the maximum FoodShare benefit for their household size. The 'extra' is the amount needed to bring their benefit up to the maximum level. The March 'extra' benefit was issued to QUEST cards on April 12, and the April 'extra' benefit was issued on April 26. Thus far, there are no provisions for these 'extra' benefits to continue.

**Additionally, Wisconsin DHS announced late Friday afternoon that Wisconsin has been approved by the USDA to provide Pandemic-EBT benefits. This provides substantial new temporary benefits for children.**

Pandemic EBT (or P-EBT) is a special program that provides benefits for children who normally receive free or reduced price meals at school. This is a benefit that operates like FoodShare -- it provides funds on an EBT card, and these funds can only be used for food. These benefits will cover the period March-June.

Pandemic EBT benefits will be issued in two installments -- one for March-April, and one for May-June. **The total combined March-April benefit is \$176.70 per child; the combined May-June benefit is \$148.20 per child.** The 'per child' refers to children who were receiving free or reduced price meals prior to the COVID-19 school closure. This also includes all children in schools that had been providing free meals to all through the Community Eligibility Provision.

These new benefits will be phased in as follows, according to DHS:

- For people already on Foodshare, the benefits will show up on their QUEST card. The combined March-April benefit (\$176.70 per child) will be available on the card on April 27, and the May-June benefit (\$148.20 per child) will be available in end of May. Here is a link to the letter Foodshare recipients will get explaining these new benefits:

<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/fs-pebt-letter.pdf>

- For people not enrolled in Foodshare but enrolled in other public benefits, benefits will either get added to an existing QUEST card or will be issued on a new P-EBT card. The March-April benefits will be available on May 10, and the May-June benefits will be available end of May.
- People with children receiving free or reduced price meals, whose information is not available in the public benefits system, will be able to apply for Pandemic EBT in early May. Benefits will be issued on a new P-EBT card.

Pandemic EBT benefits need to be used within one year of issuance.

Districts may continue to operate meal programs for children, and children may continue to receive meals through those programs even if they are also getting Pandemic EBT benefits.

I'm expecting further updates and new developments -- I'll continue to share information as I learn more.

Judi Bartfeld

Food Security Research and Policy Specialist, Division of Extension  
Professor, School of Human Ecology

UW-Madison

[bartfeld@wisc.edu](mailto:bartfeld@wisc.edu)