

PANDEMIC-EBT IN CALIFORNIA: LESSONS AND OPPORTUNITIES TO END CHILDHOOD HUNGER



CALIFORNIA
ASSOCIATION OF
FOOD BANKS

Rocio Perez
Bill Emerson National Hunger Fellow
Congressional Hunger Center
March 2021

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

2

Executive Summary

4

Background Information

7

Project Goals

9

Survey Findings

11

Conclusion & Recommendations

25

Appendix A: Methodology

29

Appendix B: Interviews

33

Appendix C: Quotes

34

References

35

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our heartfelt gratitude to the hundreds of parents across California who participated in our survey, and the dozens of parents who spoke with us and shared their experience about Pandemic EBT. This report would not have been possible without them.

We would also like to thank:

- Jessica Bartholow, Former Policy Advocate of the Western Center on Law & Poverty, for her expertise and project advising during weekly early-morning project team meetings.
- Food Research and Action Center and Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, for their tremendous resources and research, which this report would also not have been possible without.
- Second Harvest Food Bank of Silicon Valley and San Francisco-Marin Food Bank for their expertise.
- The Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA) for their insights and recommendations in the design of our survey.

INTRODUCTION

In March 2020, The World Health Organization declared the COVID-19 public health crisis a global pandemic.¹ What was initially thought to be a short-term situation quickly turned out to be an unparalleled public health and economic crisis. One essential question that leaders have been forced to ask since the pandemic's onset was: How do we feed children and assist their learning when states are forced to close schools in order to keep children safe?

and adequately adjust to fill the gap left by the missing school meals.

The U.S. House Committee on Education and Labor quickly convened and received input from various stakeholders, including the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Food Research Action Center (FRAC), among other organizations, to discuss how the federal government should respond to rapidly growing

“There had been a Pandemic SNAP program idea during the H1N1 virus. We encouraged legislators to change the name to Pandemic EBT to ensure that families who received free or reduced priced meals felt comfortable with participating in the program. The language was written in a broad way to include as many kids as possible and easily communicate P-EBT to families.”

– Crystal FitzSimons, Director of School and Out-of-School Time Programs, Food Action & Research Center

In the United States, public health officials responded to the significant and sudden rise in COVID-19 cases² by calling for public spaces to be limited, including school campuses leaving children without access to Free or Reduced Priced Meals (FRPM) that millions depend on to prevent hunger.³ What's more, high layoff rates left families financially struggling to make ends meet, growing the number of families who needed help to meet their basic food needs.⁴ Meanwhile, food banks were besieged with the sudden overwhelming demand for food and a reduction in their volunteer base, due to California's stay-at-home order during March 2020.⁵ Simply put, the existing social safety net was overwhelmed by the rapid public health and economic crisis unfolding and, because of discriminatory and exclusionary policies such as immigration status requirements, existing government public benefits programs could not quickly

food insecurity. Two strategies were quickly noted: 1) devise a plan for schools to operate socially-distanced grab-and-go food programs; and, 2) authorize the Pandemic-EBT (P-EBT) program. While a pandemic food benefit program was authorized once during the H1N1 influenza virus outbreak in 2009,⁶ it was never implemented.

In addition, the Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer for Children (Summer EBT) program has been highly successful in addressing childhood hunger that is proven to spike during the summer months,⁷ but has been limited to demonstration projects in just a handful of states and tribal communities.⁸ Summer EBT provides families with children eligible for FRPM a debit card with \$30 or \$60 in monthly food benefits to be used at stores that accept EBT. For the 10 states and Indian

Tribal Organizations that received grants from USDA to implement a Summer EBT program in 2016, it was reported that more than 75 percent of households in the program redeemed some or all of their benefits.⁹ This resource has proven to reduce childhood hunger in the summer months when schools are closed, because it replaces the school meals that children would have received in school.

Informed by these prior policies, P-EBT is a temporary emergency school meal replacement nutrition benefit loaded onto an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card for children who lost access to school meals due to school closures. It was enacted under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act on March 19, 2020.^{10A}

“P-EBT is an example of the government rising to the occasion in a major crisis to innovate and provide millions of dollars of food assistance to families.”

*- Dottie Rosenbaum, Senior Fellow,
Center on Budget and Policy Priorities*

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, all 50 states implemented P-EBT following guidance issued by the USDA Food and Nutrition Service. States were instructed to issue P-EBT benefits to all children eligible for FRPM under the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), if they were enrolled at a school that experienced a campus closure of five or more consecutive days.¹¹ This was an intentional decision to specifically replace school meals lost due to COVID-19 related campus closures rather than to provide a general income maintenance or food benefit to families with children. Because the NSLP and other school or community-based child nutrition programs serve children regardless of the immigration status of themselves or a family member, P-EBT also offered lawmakers an invaluable opportunity to serve immigrants who are often excluded from public benefit programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), known as CalFresh in California, or from worker insurance programs like Paid Family Leave (PFL) or Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits.

While the federal food benefits provided some relief to states working to respond to the pandemic with programs that were responsive to the spike in poverty and hunger, states had limited time and federal administrative funds to design and implement P-EBT,¹² leaving states to deal with financial and resource limitations that arose at a time when they were struggling to meet other pressing needs of low-income families and newly unemployed workers.

“Every state implemented P-EBT on a different timeline. We focused on ensuring all states implemented P-EBT, tracked how each state operationalized P-EBT, and advocated for strategies to ensure all eligible students were able to access benefits.”

*- Etienne Melcher Philbin, Deputy Director of School and
Out-of-School Time Programs,
Food Research & Action Center*

This report looks at the tremendous opportunity that the P-EBT program provided in California, specifically by analyzing survey and interview data from P-EBT recipients in the first round of P-EBT distribution in the summer of 2020.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic in California, 30% of households with children were food insecure, with Hispanic households with children (37%), and Black households with children (34%) experiencing a disproportionate impact. Thanks to Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, Rep. Zoe Lofgren and other California leaders, Congress created Pandemic-EBT (P-EBT), an emergency school meal replacement nutrition benefit, in the Families First Act. The benefit was loaded onto an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card for children who lost access to school meals due to school campus closures. California issued nearly \$1.4 billion in P-EBT benefits to nearly 4 million kids — a 95% reach rate across 58 counties.

Through a survey and interviews with P-EBT recipients and stakeholders, the impact of P-EBT was examined from recipients' perspectives. The survey received nearly 1,400 responses in English, Spanish, and Chinese from across California, and in-depth interviews were conducted with 19 P-EBT recipients and 12 key stakeholders.

How did Pandemic EBT impact your family?

**respondents were permitted multiple responses*

55%

P-EBT reduced our worries in paying other household expenses like rent, electricity, or the phone bill

55%

P-EBT let us stretch our food budget for our whole family

43%

P-EBT gave us enough food benefits to pay for meals for my child/ren when they would have been in school

"I was able to nourish my kids with P-EBT. I have trouble getting to food giveaways or school lunch pickups because I'm disabled and can't drive."

- P-EBT recipient

Policy Recommendations

P-EBT was a temporary policy to address the inequities exacerbated by the pandemic and will continue to exist if we do not create permanent changes. Let's take the lessons learned from the design of P-EBT and the developments of the pandemic to update policies that meet families where they are.

Improve the P-EBT Experience for Families:

1. Create clear messaging about P-EBT eligibility and Public Charge for immigrant communities.
2. Expand P-EBT customer service opportunities.
3. Translate all P-EBT related materials and information in all threshold languages, and invite community participation in verifying accuracy of translations.

Maximize the Opportunity of P-EBT:

4. Implement the 15% P-EBT benefit boost to re-calculate and increase P-EBT benefits.
5. Ensure robust engagement by all education stakeholders.

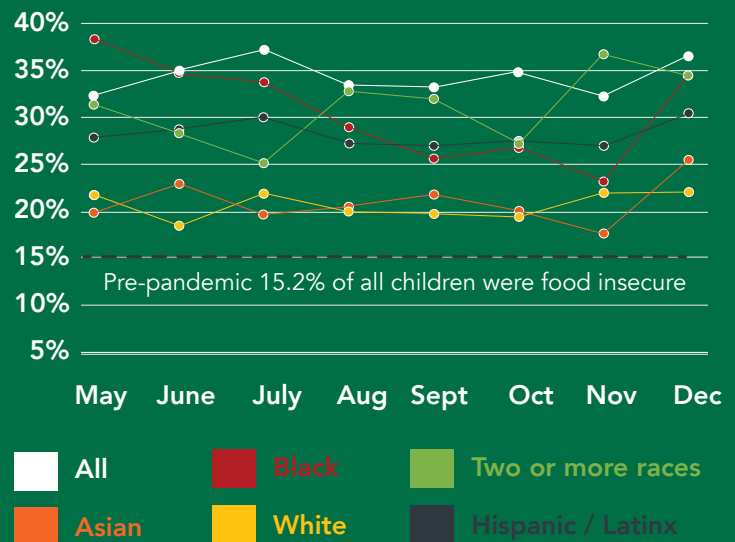
Leverage Other Anti-Hunger Programs:

6. Create strong avenues to connect P-EBT recipients to existing food programs such as CalFresh.
7. Simplify and expand CalFresh eligibility.
8. Provide universal school meals to all children.
9. Implement out-of-school-time EBT.

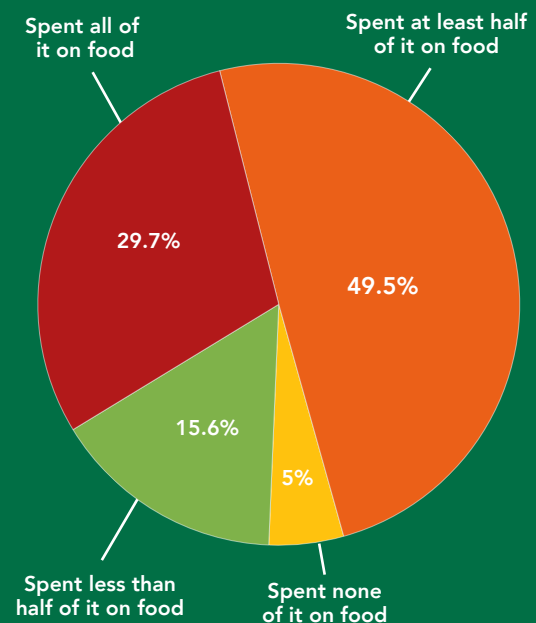
Key Findings

- 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.
- Our survey revealed the vital combination of P-EBT and school meals for families with children. Across our survey data and interviews with P-EBT recipients, school meals remained a main food resource for families.
- Across all languages, over half of P-EBT recipients who responded to our survey were not already on CalFresh at the time they received P-EBT benefits, and when asked why they weren't on CalFresh, nearly half responded that they were "worried about using government programs."
- Across all languages, respondents had similar issues, questions, and concerns about P-EBT. When asked about concerns, the top two answers were "hard to set up PIN" and "tried calling the P-EBT phone number but couldn't get through."
- During the first few months of the pandemic, about 80% of respondents reported that their income went down "a lot" or "lost all" of their income. The majority of survey respondents — 65% stated using all or at least half of their stimulus checks (\$1200 federal Economic Impact Payment or \$500 state Disaster Relief Assistance for Immigrants) to buy food during the early months of the pandemic.
- P-EBT not only helped families to keep their children nourished and healthy — it also eased other financial burdens for families and enabled everyone in the household to have enough food. Over half of respondents said that P-EBT "reduced our worries in paying other household expenses like rent, electricity or the phone bill," and that P-EBT "let us stretch our food budget for our whole family."
- P-EBT represented a temporary sense of security. Over 66% of survey respondents stated that P-EBT was not enough to feed their families, and that they had to use additional food resources to stretch their food budgets.

In December 2020, more than 30% of households with children in California were food insecure:



P-EBT Recipients who received a stimulus payment (federal or DRAI) spent at least half on food:



"We have long known that children are hungriest when school meals aren't available. Pandemic EBT showed that we can change this, and get vital food assistance to children in need. We can't go back — we must ensure that EBT is a permanent solution for out of school times to permanently fight child hunger."

- Etienne Melcher Philbin, Deputy Director of School and Out-of-School Time Programs, Food Research & Action Center



BACKGROUND

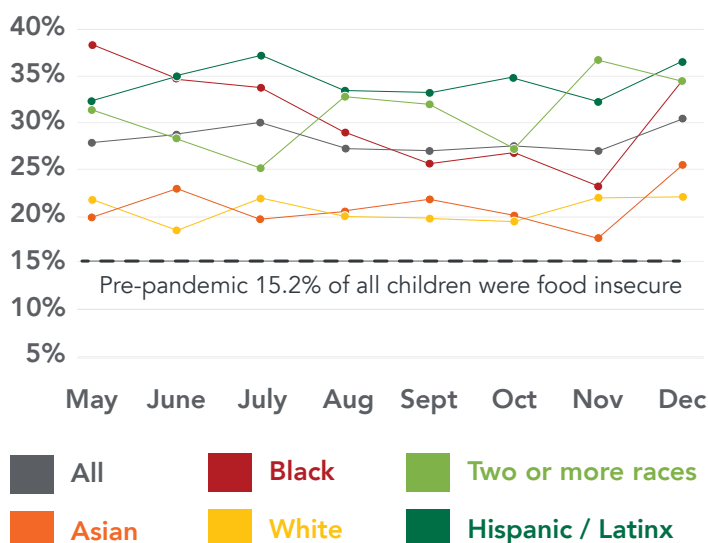
Childhood Hunger in California Spiked During COVID-19

While California raced to figure out how to implement P-EBT, childhood hunger spikes were rampant across the U.S. due to loss of access to school meals and economic hardships many families faced. While more children became eligible for FRPM due to economic hardship, schools all over the country and in California closed their doors to slow the spread of the COVID-19 virus, resulting in children losing access to subsidized school meals that they would have relied on during the school day.

The long-lasting negative effects of experiencing food insecurity and living in poverty are detrimental to a child's development, including their physical and mental health, and continue the intergenerational cycle of poverty.¹³ Prior to the pandemic, 15.2 percent of households with children in California were experiencing food insecurity, while one in five children in California (20 percent) lived in poverty.¹⁴ This rate increased to 29 percent of food insecurity among families with children in California during the early months of the pandemic. When analyzing food insecurity by race, Latinx, Black, and other communities of color faced consistent, deep disparities compared to white households.

Many food banks across California reported that they saw a spike in the number of new families and clients they were serving at community food distribution sites.¹⁵

Percent of food insecurity for households with children in California in 2020 from the Northwestern University Analysis of Census Pulse Survey Data:



Immigrant & Mixed-Status Families are Disproportionately Impacted by COVID-19

Immigrant and mixed-status families have disproportionately suffered the heavy burden of the pandemic. Even prior to COVID-19, a shocking 60 percent of undocumented migrant and seasonal workers were food insecure in 2016.¹⁶ More broadly, before the pandemic, among families with children, more than one in five infants with non-citizen parents were food insecure.¹⁷ Due to discriminatory and exclusionary policies, undocumented immigrants are barred from many federal safety net programs including SNAP, known as CalFresh in California.

Additionally, the fear of deportation and concern over repercussions that receiving benefits could have on later achieving citizenship prevented many immigrant and mixed-status families likely eligible for benefits from accessing aid to which they were entitled — jeopardizing their health and wellbeing.¹⁸ This has been detrimental during the pandemic since immigrants are over-represented in low-wage and often dangerous jobs, thus leading to disproportionately high numbers of COVID-19 related sickness and deaths.¹⁹ For example, in California, Latinx undocumented immigrants living in rural areas account for the majority of positive COVID-19 cases in the state.²⁰

Yet despite this acute need, existing public benefit exclusions, and the chilling effect from Public Charge,²¹ few new federal or state benefits have been provided to support immigrant households during the pandemic. In May 2020, California enacted the Disaster Relief Assistance to Immigrants (DRAI), providing one-time \$500 debit cards for immigrant families who were excluded from the CARES Act.²² However, this was limited to approximately 150,000 participants.²³ A similar initiative was proposed under AB 826 (Santiago), which would have provided \$300-\$600 in food benefits for low-income and immigrant families, but was vetoed by Governor Newsom in September 2020.²⁴

In this context, P-EBT was a key program able to serve immigrant and mixed-status families because it was based on school-aged children's eligibility for FRPM and did not have an immigration status requirement. As described below, P-EBT was a critical food resource for immigrant families still navigating the burden of the pandemic with fewer public benefit resources to support them.

“Government programs are usually best at serving people who are already connected, not the people who are the most disconnected from services, or have the most barriers.”

- Jessica Bartholow, Former Policy Advocate, Western Center on Law & Poverty

P-EBT Implementation in California

California was one of the first states to implement P-EBT, with the California Department of Social Services' (CDSS) P-EBT plan approved by the USDA Food and Nutrition Service on April 23, 2020,²⁵ and children began receiving benefits in May 2020. In California, children eligible for FRPM and who were enrolled in other public benefits including CalFresh, CalWORKs, income-qualifying Medi-Cal, or were homeless or in foster care, were automatically mailed P-EBT cards to addresses they had on file at their school. Children not already enrolled in these other programs were required to submit an online application (available in English, Spanish, and Chinese). P-EBT cards could be used at any retailer accepting EBT, and did not prevent children from also receiving “grab and go” meals from schools that continued to serve meals during the pandemic.²⁶

P-EBT benefits were based on the value of school meals (breakfast and lunch) at the free rate over the course of five school days, which was \$5.70 per school day, depending on the number of eligible days for each student.²⁷ Therefore, children in California who were eligible for free and/or reduced price meals before March 15, 2020, received a maximum \$365 in P-EBT benefits to cover the value of meals lost on average between March 16 - June 12 (62 days of school). This was the case for many students, given school campus closures were nearly statewide.

To activate P-EBT cards, recipients had to call a hotline to set up and input a PIN number. By September 2020,²⁸ CDSS issued nearly \$1.4 billion in benefits to 3.7 million school-aged children: almost a 95 percent reach rate.

Summary of statewide P-EBT data:

Total Eligible Children Issued P-EBT Benefits	3,738,346
Total P-EBT Benefits Issued	\$1,362,140,097
Total Automatically Eligible Children	
Issued P-EBT Benefits	2,256,807
Total Cards Issued to Automatically Eligible Children	1,481,939
Total Cards Issued to Applicant Children	1,253,956
Total Applications Received (unduplicated)	1,374,413
Total Children Issued Full Benefits	3,719,015
Total Children Issued Prorated Benefits	19,723

PROJECT GOALS

This project adds a critical dimension to the growing body of research studying this newly implemented program during an unprecedented public health crisis. We provide a first-in-the-nation analysis of the impact of P-EBT by aiming to answer questions like:

- How did P-EBT impact families' food insecurity and economic security overall?
- How could the process for applying for and using P-EBT benefits be improved?
- What role did Public Charge have among immigrant and mixed-status P-EBT families?
- What experiences did P-EBT families have with navigating customer service?
- What challenges overall did P-EBT recipients have?

This research project uses a multi-method approach to develop the policy history, analysis, and recommendations in this report, and combines original and secondary data:

- Policy landscape analysis of existing publications related to P-EBT, followed by significant original research to understand the value of P-EBT as well as new policy opportunities.
- Online survey of P-EBT recipients in California.
- Key-informant interviews of both P-EBT recipients and program stakeholders.

Almost 1,400 P-EBT recipients participated in the survey and 19 recipients participated in qualitative interviews over a three month period. These surveys and interviews were conducted in three languages (English, Spanish and Chinese). In addition, we also interviewed 12 P-EBT stakeholders, such as advocates, staff at community-based organizations, and government agency staff. A full description of the methodology of the survey and interviews is provided in Appendix A.





SURVEY FINDINGS

The following findings are a summary of key highlights from the survey, augmented by quotes from P-EBT recipients and key stakeholders who were interviewed. Throughout this section, P-EBT recipients who responded to our survey are either referred as “P-EBT recipient survey respondents,” “survey respondents”, or “P-EBT recipients who responded to the survey.” When referring to a group of responses from people who took the survey in a particular language, it will be phrased as “Spanish-speaking P-EBT survey respondents” or “English-speaking P-EBT survey respondents” or “Chinese-speaking P-EBT survey respondents.”

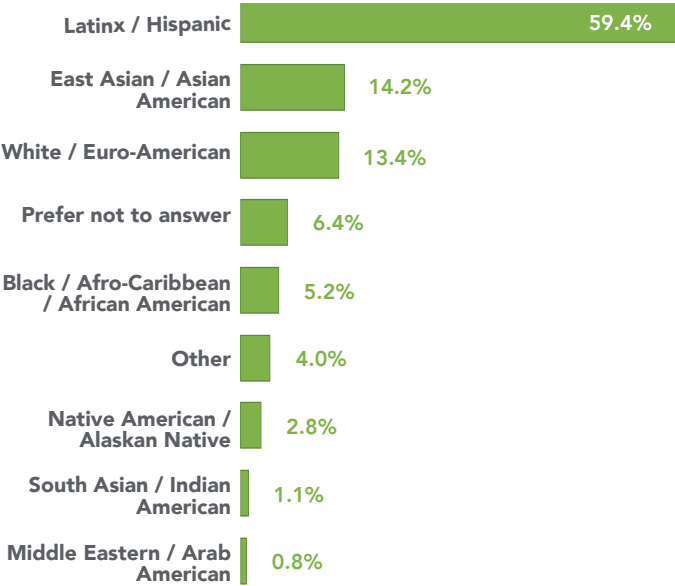
Demographics of Survey Respondents

Three key demographic components that frame the findings on P-EBT recipient experiences:

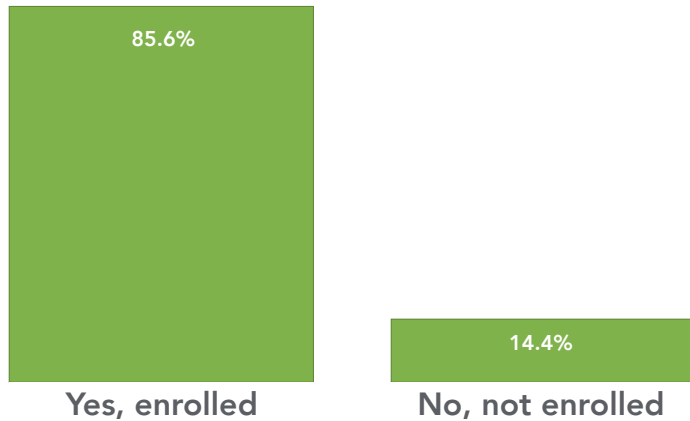
A total of 1,394 P-EBT recipient survey respondents completed the survey over seven weeks. Below is a breakdown of survey respondents by language:

Language	Respondents	Percentage
English	847	61%
Spanish	357	26%
Chinese	188	13%
Total	1,394	100%

We received an overwhelming response from Latinx / Hispanic P-EBT recipients. Survey respondents had the option to choose multiple answers that best represented them:



An overwhelming majority of P-EBT recipients had children already enrolled in Medi-Cal:



1,394 Survey Respondents

The Impact of P-EBT

When discussing the impact of P-EBT, it is important to consider the socio-economic factors and circumstances of families receiving P-EBT to fully understand why P-EBT was important for these families. P-EBT served families vulnerable to hunger and with vastly disparate access to other aid during a period of intense hunger and hardship. As noted throughout our findings, P-EBT represented a temporary sense of relief and was limited in its impact due to existing conditions and structures that create food insecurity. Without long-term solutions, even a one-time benefit like P-EBT is insufficient to relieve families with high levels of food insecurity hurting communities throughout the state.

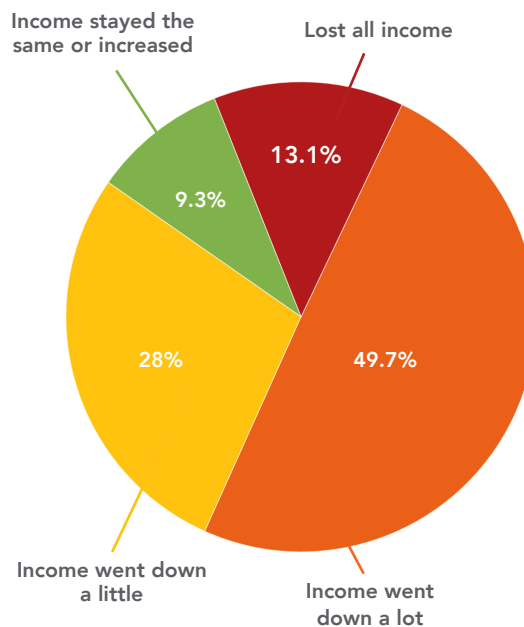
What happened to your family's income during the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic?

During the first few months of the pandemic, 63 percent of P-EBT recipient respondents reported that their income “went down by a lot” or “lost all” of their income. Due to widespread unemployment from the pandemic,²⁹ many households had either one parent working odd hours or no parents working. The financial strain³⁰ brought by the loss of income and additional responsibilities such as supporting online schooling forced families to ration food,³¹ be behind on bill payments (including rent), and feel desperate.

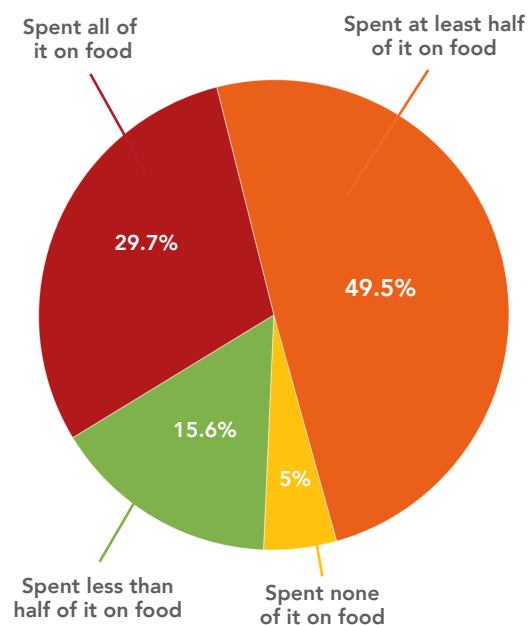
What other financial resources has your family used during the COVID-19 Pandemic?

Depending on structural barriers including class, immigration status, income, race, and ethnicity, the financial resources available to families during the pandemic varied substantially. The majority of survey respondents - 79 percent - stated using all or at least half of their stimulus checks (\$1,200 federal Economic Impact Payment or \$500 state Disaster Relief Assistance for Immigrants) to buy food during the early months of the pandemic.

About 63% of respondents said that they lost all of their income or that their income went down a lot:



P-EBT Recipients who received a stimulus payment (federal or DRAI) spent at least half on food:



“It changed my life because we made less income and although we lived paycheck to paycheck, the pressure was different. I don’t know where I am going to get money.... I can’t pay bills this month...”

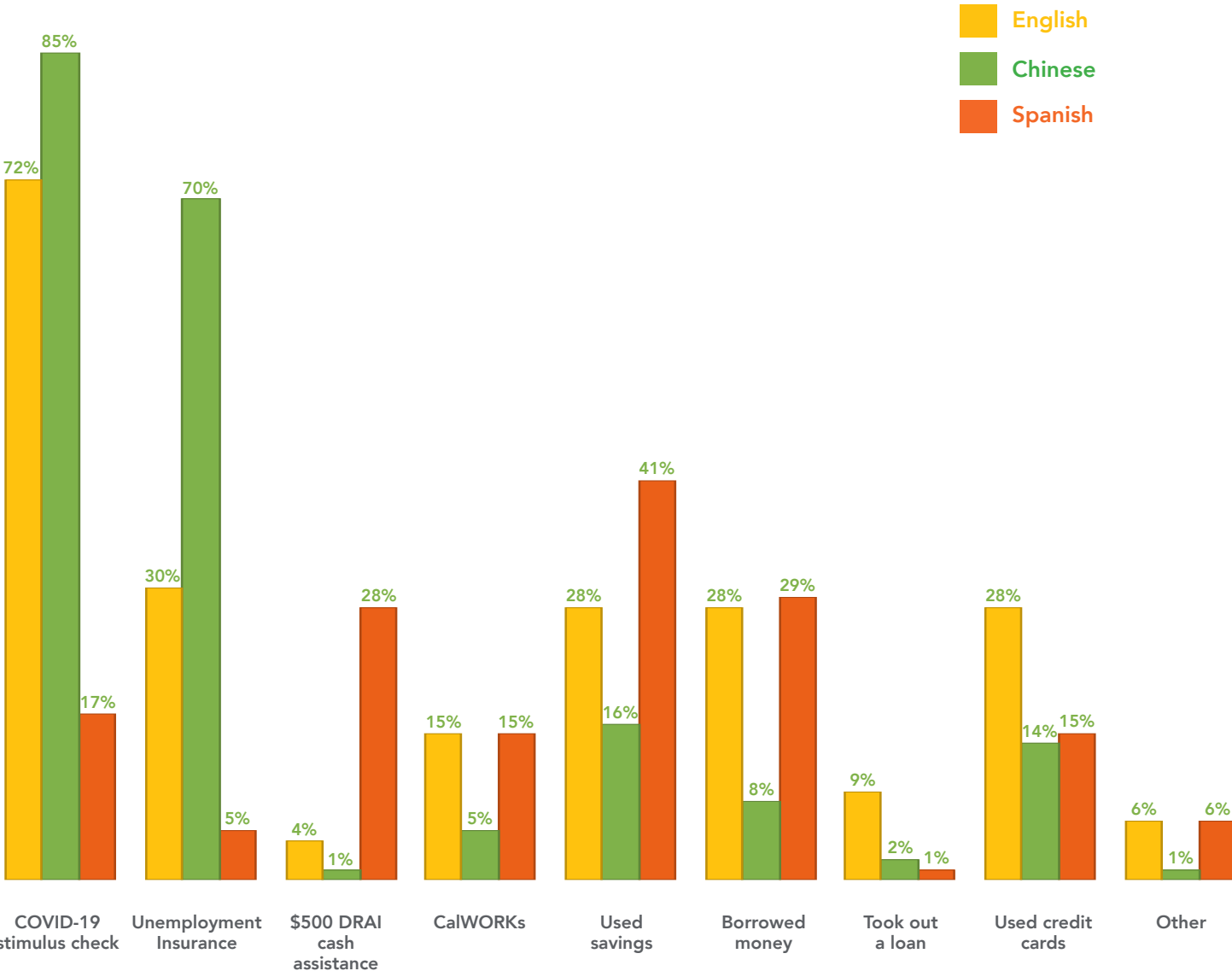
- P-EBT recipient

Overall, P-EBT recipients reported relying on the COVID-19 stimulus check, savings, and Unemployment Insurance to make ends meet. However, when analyzing the data by language, Spanish-speaking P-EBT survey respondents stated relying heavily on their quickly depleting savings, borrowed money, and the \$500 DRAI cash assistance. Meanwhile English and Chinese-speaking P-EBT survey respondents stated relying on the COVID-19 \$1,200 stimulus check, Unemployment Insurance, savings, and credit cards.

This stark contrast in available financial resources is largely due to Spanish-speaking P-EBT survey respondents working low-wage jobs and/or living in a mixed-status household (i.e. a family whose members include people with different citizenship or immigration statuses) who were

excluded from federal government relief.³² As a result, \$500 DRAI cash assistance represented one of the top three financial resources available to undocumented immigrant families because it was one of the only pandemic relief options available. According to a survey conducted by the California Immigrant Relief Assistance Coalition in December 2020, 87 percent of survey respondents reported using their \$500 DRAI cash assistance to pay for housing, 54 percent reported using it to pay for food, and 53 percent used it to pay for utilities.³³ As a result, their cash assistance was quickly depleted, and mixed-status families continue to bear the burden of the pandemic.

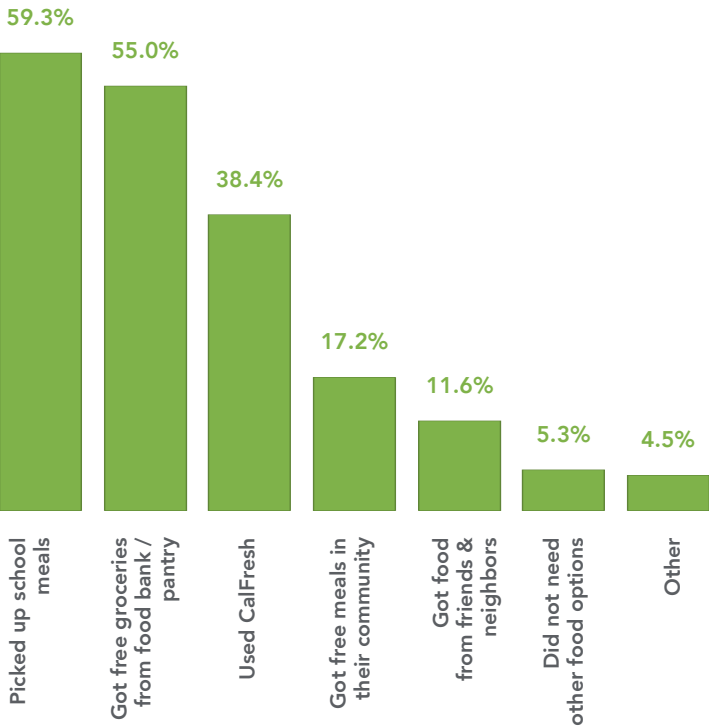
Compared to English- and Chinese-speaking P-EBT recipients, Spanish-speaking recipients relied heavily on their savings, money borrowed from friends, and DRAI:



Before applying for or getting P-EBT benefits, what did you do to get food for your family?

The inadequate resources available forced families to search for and access government and charitable food resources. Prior to receiving or applying for P-EBT, more than half of P-EBT recipients stated that they picked up school meals from their child’s school or groceries from a food pantry, and used CalFresh benefits as additional resources to supplement their food budget.

More than half of respondents stated that they relied on school meals and free groceries from a food bank or pantry before applying for or receiving P-EBT:



“My husband is the main income earner and we have been using our savings but they are fastly depleting. We have been going to food banks, my friends bring me food (milk and vegetables), and I get boxes of food from my son’s school”

- P-EBT recipient

Even after receiving P-EBT benefits, survey respondents shared that they needed to use other food resources in addition to P-EBT. The combination of P-EBT and other food assistance programs proved vital for families needing flexibility in accessing groceries and alleviating financial strains such as single-parent households, working parents who could not align their schedules with school meal distributions, and households with children

with disabilities or dietary restrictions buying the food and snacks that met their children’s specialized needs.

P-EBT survey respondents expressed feeling less anxious, stressed, and/or worried about buying groceries and paying for bills after they received P-EBT.

The chaos and uncertainty that the pandemic quickly brought left families panicked, scared, and stressed about how to adapt. How can I safely buy groceries? How will my kids continue their education? Where am I going to get money for bills and rent? How long will this pandemic last? Across all languages, P-EBT recipient survey respondents shared a sense of security and great relief when they received their cards in the mail. For example, P-EBT recipient survey respondents were able to buy enough food to feed their kids, ensure sufficient meals each day, and focus on other expenses.

Moreover, the impact of P-EBT on families was also noticed by grocery workers who interacted with P-EBT recipients at grocery stores that accepted P-EBT benefits. P-EBT supports communities by allowing grocery stores to meet families’ food needs and giving families flexibility to feed their children.

Once you got P-EBT, was it enough to buy food for your family, or did you still need other ways to get food?

P-EBT recipient survey respondents shared the sobering reality that, once they received their benefits, P-EBT was not enough to buy groceries and feed their families, or only provided temporary relief. In fact, P-EBT recipient survey respondents admitted that if they rationed out their P-EBT benefits along with other food resources, they could stretch their benefits for about a month. For families where P-EBT represented one of their main resources, such as mixed-status families relying on their minimal savings or one person’s income and school meals, or single-parent households with multiple children, the positive impact of P-EBT diminished quickly as families used up their benefits within the first couple of weeks.³⁴

P-EBT represented a temporary sense of security amidst great uncertainty that allowed families to stretch their food budget, reduce their worries in paying household expenses, and afford meals throughout the day.

66%

Stated that P-EBT was not enough to buy groceries and feed their families — other food programs were also used

(Respondents were permitted multiple responses.)

P-EBT reduced our worries in paying other household expenses like rent, electricity, or the phone bill

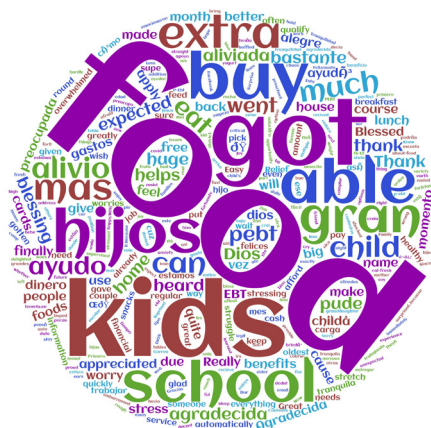
P-EBT let us stretch our food budget for our whole family

P-EBT gave us enough food benefits to pay for meals for my child/ren when they would have been in school

"It helped immensely with the household budget with five kids being out of school. It would have been very hard to provide food they would have normally gotten at school and pay the bills with a smaller income of my single parent home."

"We use all resources [school meals and groceries from food banks] to eat and stretch our food budget. P-EBT runs out in 1-3 weeks for my family."

- *P-EBT* recipients



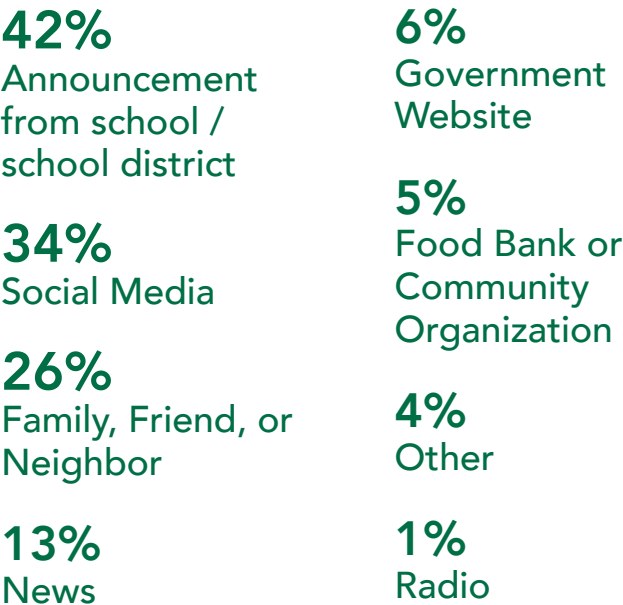
"It's the most heartbreaking thing to see parents come into our store worried they won't be able to get the basics, or to have to take items out of their cart at the cash register when they don't have enough money to pay the total. Thanks to the Pandemic EBT program, families who are struggling don't have to go hungry or go without paying the electric bill or buying gas in order to buy basics like milk and vegetables. The program benefits our whole community too, because the money they save on groceries will be spent on other basic needs, boosting our economy and providing good jobs for others."

- Lori Wilkersom, cashier,
Costa Mesa, Calif.

Communication About P-EBT

One of the biggest tasks State agencies and outreach organizations faced was communicating an entirely new program to families quickly and efficiently. According to P-EBT recipients who responded to our survey, most first heard about P-EBT through an announcement from their child’s school or school district and through social media, underscoring the importance of schools as trusted, effective messengers.

How did you first hear about P-EBT?



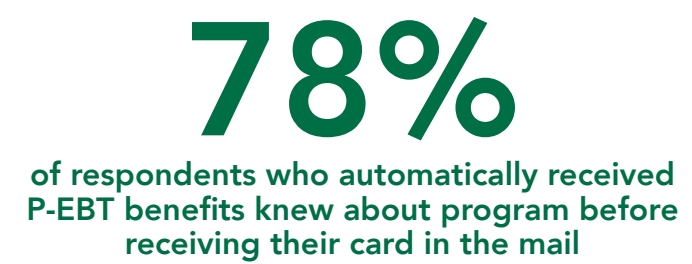
In fact, a majority of P-EBT survey respondents who automatically received P-EBT stated knowing about P-EBT prior to receiving it in the mail because of announcements from schools and social media.

School districts and outreach organizations have been essential to spreading P-EBT information and gaining trust from community members. A common strategy used by school districts was using social media platforms to directly communicate P-EBT information to families.

It is important to note that when disseminating and communicating P-EBT information with families that it be certified by state agencies and trusted organizations to avoid confusion and unnecessary stress for families. For example, when initially communicating to the public that school aged children on Medi-Cal were eligible for P-EBT benefits, the P-EBT communications materials did not clarify that only certain categories of Medi-Cal would make them eligible for P-EBT. In reality, only school-aged children on Medi-Cal who were under the 185 percent of the Federal Poverty Level were eligible

to receive P-EBT benefits, as P-EBT eligibility was based on income thresholds for Free and Reduced Price School Meals. Therefore, not all school aged children who were on Medi-Cal were eligible for P-EBT benefits. The lack of communication about this important nuance resulted in many families wondering why their school aged children on Medi-Cal did not receive P-EBT benefits.

The reception of P-EBT information by the general public is critical to evaluating and developing user-friendly P-EBT materials to avoid confusion and the spread of misinformation. During a time of great uncertainty, families are desperate for resources to alleviate financial stress and food insecurity. Therefore it is our collective responsibility to ensure that P-EBT information in communities will help families.



“My kids get free meals from their school, everyone told us we should qualify (including our school)then we found out that it was only schools that participate in the National School Lunch program specifically.”

“Me sentí muy feliz porque P-EBT es una ayuda muy grande para la alimentación de mis niños.”

“I received phone calls, text messages, and emails from the school district with a link to the P-EBT application and school website for more information. I trusted that they vetted the information including links they were sending me about the program.”

- P-EBT recipients

“We really need to make sure that outreach materials and external factsheets are verified by CDSS before being shared with the community to ensure correct information makes it out to Californians in need.”

*- Jazmin Hicks, Senior Self-Sufficiency Policy Analyst,
The County Welfare Directors Association of California*

“We posted P-EBT information on our Instagram and we received lots of DM’s (Direct Messages) from families.”

*- Kristin L. Hilleman, Director of Food and Nutrition Services ,
Capistrano Unified School District*

“We used CAFB P-EBT materials to share across our social media. We talked about P-EBT at monthly child nutrition coalition meetings, at regional meetings, and presented about P-EBT to food service directors.”

- Tracy Weatherby & Zia MacWilliams, Second Harvest of Silicon Valley

“SFUSD created weekly digest emails to staff with P-EBT information cited from the California Department of Education or California Food Policy Advocates. Schools used that information to post on their Instagram, Facebook and Twitter social media pages in Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, Tagalog, and English languages for families.”

*- Jennifer LeBarre, Executive Director of Student Nutrition
Services, San Francisco Unified School District*

How Families Received P-EBT (or Not)

The design and implementation of P-EBT greatly influenced the manner by which eligible families received and experienced P-EBT, especially among recipients who had to apply for it.

Most families who responded to our survey either received P-EBT automatically for all their children, or had to apply for P-EBT for all of their children.

Across all languages, 11 percent of survey respondents reported that they had one or more children who received it automatically, but had to apply for their additional eligible child or children online.

When compared to Spanish-speaking survey respondents and English-speaking survey respondents, Chinese-speaking survey respondents had a lower rate of receiving P-EBT benefits automatically and were less likely to receive P-EBT benefits after submitting their application.

Families who applied for P-EBT, and families who both applied for P-EBT and received P-EBT automatically:

P-EBT survey respondents who applied for P-EBT stated that they applied online since their children receive free and reduced priced meals at school. These families included those who received P-EBT automatically for one of their children but not the rest and/or none of their children received P-EBT automatically. They experienced long wait times for their cards and contacted the hotline to inquire about eligibility, appeals, setting up PIN, or application updates.

Families who applied for P-EBT but never received it:

While our survey was not specifically designed to gather detailed feedback from families who were denied P-EBT or never received it, an option for this possibility was included in our survey to provide these families an opportunity to share their experience. In total, only 120 people (8.6 percent) responded to the survey stating that none of their children received P-EBT.

For P-EBT applicants who applied for P-EBT for their children but never received it:

- **stated being denied after appealing due to their children being enrolled in private or charter schools; or**
- **their children's school not being enrolled in the National School Lunch Program; or**
- **their school having incorrect address information**

While some P-EBT applicants who responded to the survey shared why their children may have not qualified for P-EBT, the majority did not know why their children did not receive P-EBT benefits after applying.

60%

of respondents reported not knowing why their children did not receive P-EBT cards after applying for benefits

The wide reach of P-EBT for eligible families:

One component of the design and implementation of P-EBT that may explain the variation in how families received P-EBT is data matching by the California Department of Social Services and the California Department of Education.³⁵ In California, all children eligible for FRPM and in a CalFresh household, on Medi-Cal, CalWORKs, in foster care, or homeless, received P-EBT benefits automatically. However, children not identified in these programs had to submit an online application. The California Department of Social Services and the California Department of Education created a data-matching system using existing case data, but there were limitations to data-matching due to occasionally imperfect or incomplete data in the various databases. Therefore, our survey and interview data demonstrate that in some instances children may have been required to fill out an online application even when they were in another qualifying program, or they may have been denied P-EBT without understanding why, or families may have had different experiences with P-EBT for their multiple children.

However, even with these challenges in data-matching, limited administrative funding to implement an entirely new program outside the traditional social safety net, and need to update State infrastructure, the overwhelming majority of P-EBT recipient survey respondents reported receiving P-EBT benefits for all their school-aged children, mostly families with one or two children

75%

of respondents received P-EBT for one or two children

The circumstances brought by the pandemic challenged State infrastructure to respond to food insecurity at an all time high. With limited additional administrative funding, California was able to implement an entirely new program that reached nearly 4 million school-aged children. Taking these lessons learned and experiences of people who received benefits in the first round of P-EBT, future rounds of P-EBT³⁶ and existing food programs can work together to reduce hunger.

“We have precedent, so it’s a different sense of understanding about infrastructure that is needed, both for clients, advocates, state entities, schools. We want a better P-EBT experience for families for the rest of the year.”

- Alexis Fernandez, Chief of CalFresh & Nutrition Branch, California Department of Social Services

“CDSS was a great partner. There is great value in having two state agencies working together on a program. Each entity had different strengths and knowledge. Overall, P-EBT was incredibly successful. As we get ready for round two, we’ll build on what we’ve learned.”

- Kim Frinzell, Director of Nutrition Services Division, California Department of Education



Common Issues Experienced by P-EBT Recipients

Across all languages, P-EBT recipient survey respondents had similar issues with P-EBT and similar questions and concerns about P-EBT. The top two answers were “hard to set up PIN” and “tried calling the P-EBT phone number but couldn’t get through.”

Moreover, most P-EBT recipient survey respondents reported that they experienced long wait times to receive their P-EBT cards in the mail and wanted to check the status of their application alongside other questions about eligibility and the online P-EBT application. These answers were further supported during interviews.

How did you know how to activate your card?

While a common issue was difficulty in setting up a PIN number, the majority of P-EBT survey respondents successfully set up a PIN number using instructions provided with the card.

However, for both Spanish-speaking P-EBT survey respondents and Chinese-speaking P-EBT survey respondents, it was difficult to set up their PIN number, especially for Chinese-speaking P-EBT recipients, because PIN instructions were only sent in English. To navigate this language barrier, both groups relied on their friends and relatives for help setting up PIN numbers.

“I’m part of a parent’s WeChat group so I got more information from other parents. When one of the parents got their card, they helped answer each other’s questions, like setting up the PIN.”

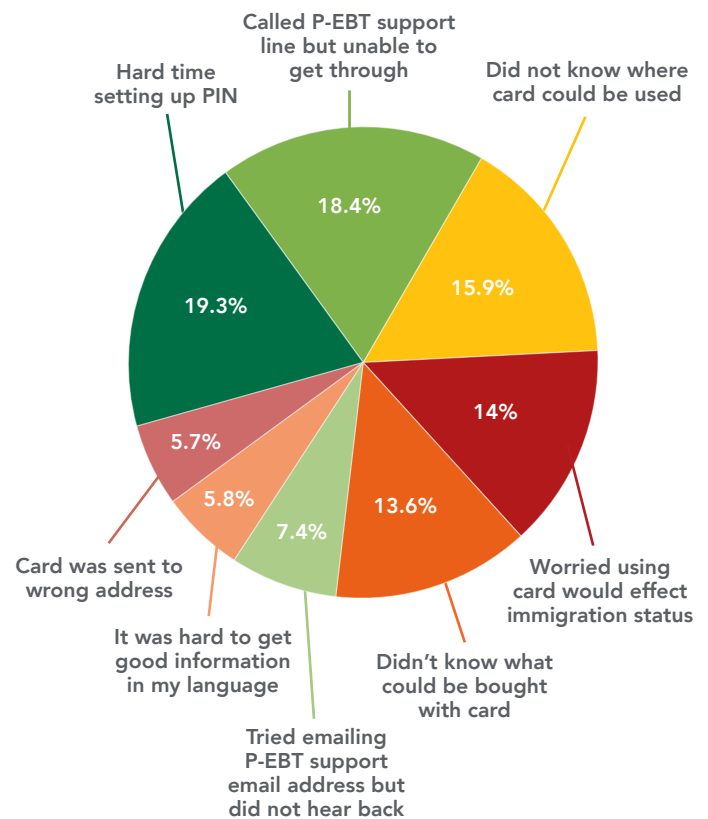
- P-EBT recipient

The need for inclusive and user-friendly communication materials, including P-EBT applications and translating P-EBT materials in multiple languages, could help answer and resolve some issues P-EBT recipients experienced. Reputable community organizations who have experience with public health benefits and dealing with clients from low-income backgrounds could help assist in these efforts.

“State agencies need to translate materials in more languages, and one way to accomplish this is by working closely with community organizations already assisting communities in their languages.”

- Claudia Menjivar, Attorney, Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles

Respondents experienced a variety of problems using P-EBT cards:



To activate P-EBT cards:

84% of all respondents followed information received with the card

16% of respondents asked friends or relatives

56% of Chinese-speaking respondents followed information received with the card

54% of Chinese-speaking respondents asked friends or relatives

P-EBT & School Meals

The story of P-EBT cannot fully be told without highlighting the role that school meals had on P-EBT recipient families. The survey revealed that a vital combination of P-EBT and school meals together helped families with children meet their food needs, as widespread school closures impacted communities all across California.

Across our survey data and interviews with P-EBT recipients, school meals remained a main food resource.

Before receiving P-EBT: Prior to receiving P-EBT, survey respondents stated that they picked up school meals to feed their children.

While receiving P-EBT: When recipients received their P-EBT benefits, recipients reported that they had to combine their P-EBT benefits with other food resources including school meals to feed their children and stretch their food budget.

After using P-EBT benefits: After using their P-EBT benefits, recipients resorted back to the food resources available to them before P-EBT such as school meals.

In other words, P-EBT alone was not enough for families. Rather, it was the combination of P-EBT and school meals, alongside other programs, that helped families to keep their children nourished while schools were closed. To fully understand this combination, it's important to understand how schools adapted to the extraordinary circumstances of school closures and implemented related school meal waivers that allowed them to modify their school meal programs.

A Challenge: Restructuring school meal programs to efficiently and safely distribute meals to children during the summer.

One of the most significant challenges for schools and school districts was learning how to restructure their school meal programs to efficiently and safely distribute meals to children through the summer, when P-EBT was

not available. Schools switched to their Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)³⁷ or Seamless Summer Option (SSO)³⁸ to serve meals to children while schools were closed in the spring and throughout the summer. While finishing the highly challenging 2019-2020 school year and supporting summer programs, schools and staff had to quickly adapt to a growing reliance on school meals as more families began experiencing food insecurity.

For instance, due to the lack of access to transportation, general fears surrounding exposure to COVID-19 among other reasons that restricted the ability of families to pick up school meals, the Capistrano Unified School District partnered with their transportation department to create bus routes to deliver meals for families who could not pick up school meals themselves.

"We recreated the operation of school meals several times from serving on campus to delivering at home. We went from service every day (serving lunch and breakfast) to a two day a week service (serving multiple days of breakfast and lunch meals with one service time)."

- Kristin L. Hillman, Director of Food & Nutrition Services, Capistrano Unified School

This strategy of distribution was possible because of the flexibilities provided under USDA waivers. Under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, USDA issued waivers to school districts to allow for flexibility in distributing school meals such as outside typical settings (e.g. creating bus routes for delivering school meals, drive through, and grab and go) and to students not enrolled in their district.³⁹ It also allowed parents and guardians to pick up meals on behalf of their children, instead of requiring their children to be present. USDA waivers also provided much-needed flexibilities in allowing all children to be eligible for free meals — not just children at schools who are served meals under a Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) or children who had been qualified through the FRPM application form.

The usage of P-EBT benefits demonstrates how it compliments school meals by filling the gaps when families need flexibility in accessing food, and P-EBT was able to alleviate financial stress on families.

"In the first few weeks of the pandemic we picked up school meals. The school would give me four boxes of milk but it is not enough. With P-EBT, I can buy more milk and food for my children."

- P-EBT recipient

The combination of P-EBT and school meals helped many recipients with obtaining food, and brought a sense of security back to their families. Aside from being a trusted source of P-EBT information, schools had an immense pressure of meeting families' food needs — and P-EBT temporarily helped alleviate some pressure.

“[P-EBT] was an amazing addition to the options for families. It helped families that could not make school distribution times due to transportation issues or health issues especially when our bus service stopped because bus drivers don't work in the summer.”

- Kristin L. Hilleman, Director of Food & Nutrition Services,
Capistrano Unified School District

“P-EBT fills the gap for weekends when school meals are not given out, breaks such as winter and Thanksgiving, when our dining staff need to rest and to alleviate USDA limitations on school meals being sent out at a time. For example, we can only send out seven meals at a time so that's where P-EBT comes in.

“In order to feed dinner to a student not enrolled in our schools, we have them write down their first and last name to avoid being audited. Why can't we just feed kids? We need continued and more flexibility in feeding students not enrolled at a particular school. We shouldn't be turning kids away from getting school meals.”

- Jennifer LeBarre, Executive Director of Student Nutrition
Services, San Francisco Unified School District

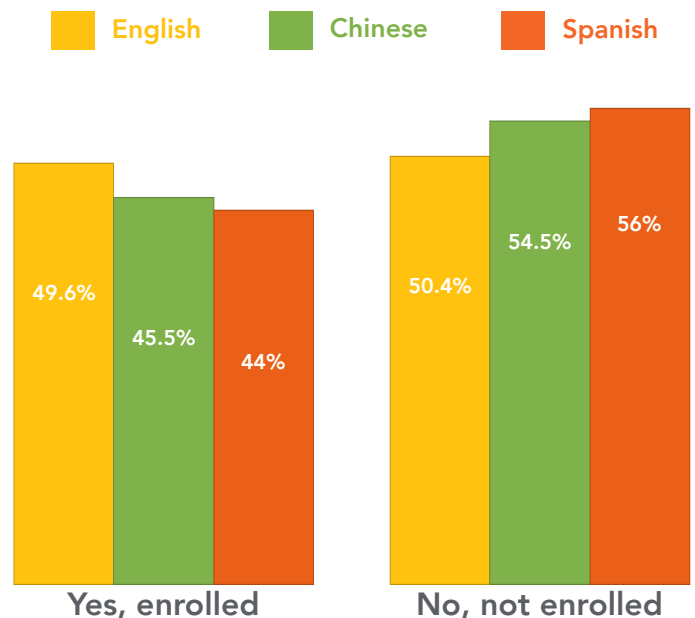
P-EBT & CalFresh

One of the effects brought by the pandemic was a dramatic increase in CalFresh applications. During the first few weeks of shelter-in-place, CalFresh received more than four times the standard application volume⁴⁰ due to rapid and high unemployment.⁴¹ The urgency in mitigating food insecurity during an unprecedented public health crisis left families looking for any resource that could help feed their children. For immigrant and mixed-status families, however, the chilling effects caused by Public Charge were pervasive enough to prevent many from applying to any public health benefits.⁴²

Was your family already on CalFresh when you applied for or got P-EBT?

Across all languages, more than half of P-EBT recipients who responded to our survey were not already on CalFresh at the time they received P-EBT benefits. In other words, P-EBT was able to reach families not enrolled in CalFresh and extend this crucial benefit.

Over of half P-EBT recipients were not already enrolled in CalFresh when they received benefits:



Survey respondents not on CalFresh by the time they received P-EBT benefits provided two predominant reasons:

1) Public Charge

P-EBT recipient survey respondents who received Disaster Relief Assistance for Immigrants (DRAI), expressed feeling concerned and fearful over being considered a Public Charge.⁴³ Therefore, they either decided to leave the program or avoid applying all together.

“Sí lo recibía, pero como dijeron que sería carga pública, y que afectaría en un futuro proceso migratorio mi esposo dijo que la discontinuara” I was receiving CalFresh but since I was told that it could be a public charge and that it would affect future immigration proceedings, my husband told me to discontinue receiving CalFresh.

- P-EBT recipient

A few P-EBT survey respondents viewed applying for and using CalFresh as a necessary risk for the wellbeing of their family, despite the fears from Public Charge.

Even during a public health crisis, the chilling effects of Public Charge were pervasive enough to scare immigrant and mixed-status families from accessing critical nutrition benefits and to think twice about using P-EBT benefits. The Public Charge rule has created long-lasting damage, and mixed-status immigrant families have been excluded from most COVID-19 federal government assistance. Immigrant and mixed-status families were already relying on their savings and borrowed money from friends/relatives, and many used at least half of the state's one-time cash assistance to buy food.

“I worry about being considered a Public Charge.....maybe I'll regret it later but for now I need any help I can get.”

- P-EBT recipient

2) CalFresh 'Cliff' Exacerbated by Pandemic Unemployment Compensation & Emergency Allotments

Besides Public Charge, some P-EBT survey respondents not on CalFresh at the time of receiving P-EBT had been enrolled in CalFresh but became ineligible after receiving Unemployment Insurance or working overtime to obtain more income. Consequently, their income surpassed the CalFresh income guidelines — sometimes by less than \$200. As a result, those that had CalFresh before the pandemic but got Unemployment Insurance, plus those that worked more hours and oftentimes were the only source of income for their family, were cut off from the program. This is commonly referred to as the "Benefits

Cliff" — the dynamic that households are cut off from benefits once they hit a certain income threshold. Under federal SNAP law (known as CalFresh in California) and state options, during normal periods CalFresh is designed to mitigate this through features such as Categorical Eligibility, which allows families with modest earnings but high deductible expenses to still receive the minimum monthly allotment before losing eligibility.⁴⁴ The survey findings, however, show that the combination of Pandemic Unemployment Compensation benefits,⁴⁵ and SNAP Emergency Allotments⁴⁶ made the benefits cliff devastating for low-income families with children during the pandemic.⁴⁷ ^B

P-EBT recipient survey respondents expressed feeling punished for receiving federal assistance and worried over how to replace CalFresh in their food budget.

“We got denied because of Unemployment Insurance even when that extra money was going towards bills. CalFresh counted it as income and denied our CalFresh which in turn left us struggling again to eat during the pandemic.”

- P-EBT recipient

Another P-EBT recipient survey respondent, a single parent with two kids, describes a breakdown of her expenses and how CalFresh could alleviate financial stress.

“I'm not on CalFresh because sadly they told my income goes over \$200. I only get two checks of \$1,060 with all the tax deductions. My rent is \$950, my car insurance is \$70, I pay \$400 in credit cards I use to buy food and gas, [Me and] my two childrens cell phone service [is a] total of \$120, and I now I pay internet [which is] \$60, for my children to do online school. It made me sad that as a single parent with only one income, [My family] did not qualify for CalFresh...”

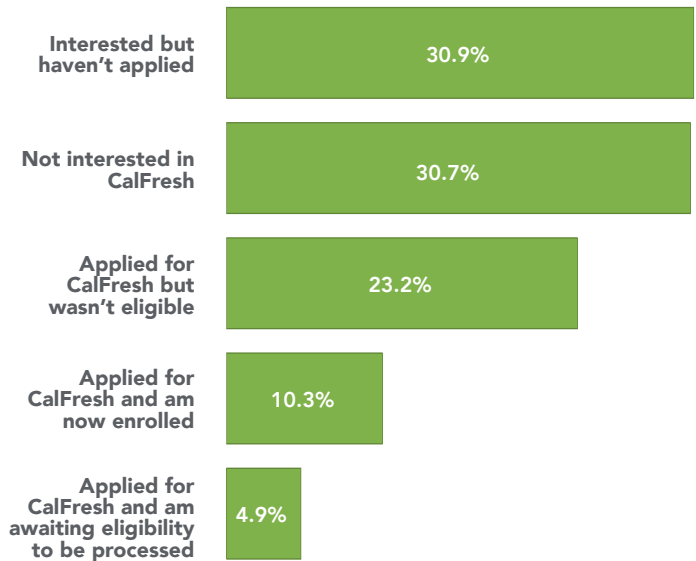
- P-EBT recipient

B. SNAP Emergency Allotments were authorized in the Families First Coronavirus Response Act. These Emergency Allotments are temporary additional SNAP benefits provided to all households not already receiving the maximum SNAP allotment for their household size, in effect bringing everyone up to the SNAP maximum benefit level.

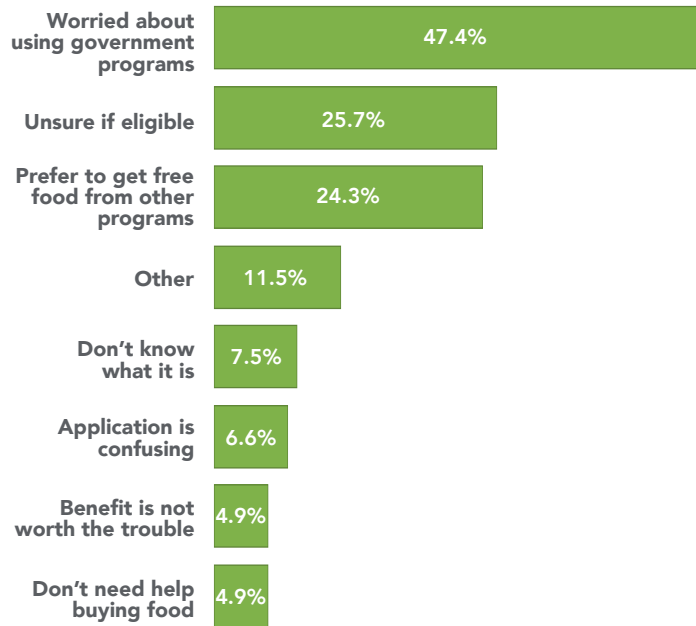
Did your perception of CalFresh change after you got P-EBT?

When asked if their experience with using P-EBT made them “more interested in CalFresh”, 31 percent of P-EBT recipient survey respondents answered “I’m more interested but have not yet applied.” A follow-up question revealed that the most common reason P-EBT survey respondents gave for not being interested in CalFresh was “Worried about using government programs.”

Did P-EBT make you more interested in applying for CalFresh?



Why aren't you interested in CalFresh?



CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

Pandemic EBT recipients overwhelmingly spoke to the need for permanent, year-round solutions for child hunger that are available to all California communities regardless of immigration status. They consistently spoke to the importance of school meals as a bedrock of food access for their children, in tandem with programs like P-EBT, CalFresh, and other assistance to feed their families during the COVID-19 crisis and beyond.

P-EBT recipients spoke to how school meals are a lifeline for children, and for their families who can stretch their food budgets knowing that their children are fed at school. These and other families will be looking to policy makers to ensure that the universal meal access provided under waiver authority is not temporary, but that school meals are always available for all students. Moreover, a growing body of evidence⁴⁸ shows that universal school meals access would solve a host of problems: “lunch shaming,” stigma and school meal debt,^C supporting hard-hit nutrition service departments and their workforce, allowing children to spend less time in line and have more time to eat, and boosting school attendance and achievement.⁴⁹ It is crucial that we support Nutrition Service Departments and their workforce who have worked tirelessly to feed children through the pandemic while facing steep declines in reimbursements for school meals distributed during COVID-19. School nutrition directors report that the pandemic has caused or increased budget deficits up to 71 percent and deficits are projected to be significantly worse by the end of the 2020–21 school year.⁵⁰

In addition, as informed by P-EBT recipient survey respondents, low-income families require food resources like P-EBT for any time when school meals are unavailable. Research has shown that when children lose access to school meals, food insecurity grows,⁵¹ as reflected by what has occurred during the pandemic.

As highlighted above, Summer EBT is proven to assist families in obtaining food when schools are closed during the summer, and to support school-based feeding programs, yet limited funding has prevented additional states from participating and extending this resource to all children eligible for FRPM.⁵² According to the USDA's

evaluation, Summer EBT reduced the number of families considered “very low food insecure” by one-third and those considered food insecure by one-fifth,⁵³ making it a rare policy intervention that has the greatest impact among the population with the highest need. In addition to research on P-EBT, the Summer EBT program provides additional context and proof for the effectiveness of permanently providing benefits on an EBT card to children when school meals are otherwise unavailable.

“P-EBT puts us in a much better position for Summer EBT. What happened in the Spring [2020] was basically what happens every summer. In the Spring there was little planning for programs to be implemented during the middle of a pandemic and so we needed to rethink how to operate programs. The reality is, every summer food insecurity increases among families with children. It impacts low-income children at a greater rate.”

- Crystal FitzSimons, Director of School & Out-of-School Time Programs, Food Action & Research Center

Our research provides insights into both the circumstances P-EBT recipients' families were living in and the role of P-EBT in their lives to better understand its impact. P-EBT was a temporary relief from the inequities exacerbated by the pandemic, and unless we create permanent changes, inequities that harm families will remain. The unprecedented circumstances the pandemic created for families was a product of structural barriers and outdated infrastructure that was incapable of responding to the incredible demand for food. Policy advocates have long warned about the consequences that lack of equitable

C. When students who are not certified for free school meals arrive in the cafeteria without cash in hand or in their school meal account, they can start to accrue school meal debt. Learn more: <https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/best-practices-preventing-reducing-school-meal-debt.pdf>

food policies and funding could cause, as well as the inspiring success P-EBT represents during the midst of the COVID-19 crisis.

The survey and interview responses inform the following federal and state policy recommendations to both improve the P-EBT program and also enact a range of policy improvements to create a hunger-free future for California's children.

"P-EBT was an absolute success. It was a band-aid program, though, to address an emergency. As a country, we now don't have an excuse for letting kids go hungry in the summer. If we can make it happen during a pandemic, then we can make it happen other times too."

*-Jessica Bartholow, Former Policy Advocate,
Western Center on Law & Poverty*

Improve the P-EBT Experience for Families

1) Create clear messaging about P-EBT eligibility and Public Charge for immigrant communities: The complexities of Public Charge have created fear and confusion among immigrant and mixed-status families even extending into a pandemic. Immigrant families who are eligible for public health benefits are either preemptively disenrolling from CalFresh or are hesitant to use any government food assistance. It is critical that we continue to clarify any confusion regarding who is considered a Public Charge and what programs are considered under a Public Charge determination.⁵⁴ To ensure the health and nourishment of all Californians, it is paramount we eliminate the Public Charge rule altogether.

2) Expand P-EBT customer service opportunities: The timely development of P-EBT did not allow for proper and thorough implementation of customer service options. As confirmed by our findings, P-EBT recipients experienced long wait times on the State hotline and some were unable to speak with a customer service agent. Increasing the number of customer service agents and methods of managing calls can help answer more P-EBT recipients' concerns and improve the experience with the program. Additionally, creating a mechanism by which applicants can check the status of their application and track their P-EBT cards such as an online portal or interactive

automated phone system to get a callback in various languages, can help ease P-EBT recipients' concerns.

3) Translate all P-EBT related materials and information in all the important threshold languages, and invite community participation in verifying accuracy of translations: One of the biggest barriers to accessing P-EBT benefits was lack of translated materials. For example, PIN set-up instructions were sent to recipients only in English. Chinese-speaking P-EBT recipients stated having great difficulty in activating their P-EBT cards. If states had adequate time to prepare materials in multiple languages, this issue likely would have been avoided. With more time and resources, California should allocate funding to translate P-EBT communication materials, including their website, and invite community-based organizations to verify that translations are accurate. By inviting trusted community organizations to validate translated materials, confusion among P-EBT recipients will be mitigated, the number of inquiries to customer service will be reduced, and trust about P-EBT and similar food-related programs among diverse communities will be built.

Maximize the Opportunity of P-EBT

4) Implement the 15 percent P-EBT benefit boost and explore further P-EBT benefit increases: On January 22, 2021, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced that it would be increasing P-EBT benefits by 15 percent.⁵⁵ Our findings revealed that capping P-EBT benefit amounts at \$5.70 per child per school day is insufficient for low-income families with children. Even with the Cost-Of-Living Adjustment in the fall of 2020, this only raised daily reimbursement rates to \$5.86 per child.⁵⁶ Many survey respondents reported using their P-EBT benefits within a few weeks and using other food resources such as picking up groceries from food pantries in order to stretch their food budget. Increasing P-EBT benefits by 15 percent would be a major step for states to help families during the pandemic and reevaluate how food benefits are calculated for other existing food programs.

5) Robust engagement by all education stakeholders: All education stakeholders spoke to the incredible value of P-EBT, but they also shared the reality of early confusion among families — did it replace school meals? How do P-EBT and school meals fit together? As our data shows, families spoke unequivocally to the critical role of schools as trusted messengers, and also as key sites to submit applications, establish eligibility, update addresses, and other actions to ensure program access. With 100 percent federal funding for administrative costs for 2021-2022, there is every opportunity for full engagement by state and local education stakeholders to maximize P-EBT 2.0 for families.

Leverage Other Anti-Hunger Programs

6) Create strong avenues to connect P-EBT recipients to existing food programs such as CalFresh: The need for connecting eligible low-income families to food programs has never been more critical. Seamless and easy avenues should be created to connect P-EBT recipients to CalFresh and other existing food programs. It's important to create a safe and welcoming atmosphere for families to understand, enroll in, and use food programs. As our survey findings demonstrated, only about half of survey respondents said that they were on CalFresh at the time that they received P-EBT. Similarly, clearing up confusion about eligibility requirements, Public Charge concerns, and improving customer service for recipients can help to encourage families to enroll in programs like CalFresh.

7) Simplify and expand CalFresh eligibility: The need to expand CalFresh income guidelines was evident across survey responses and interviews with P-EBT recipients. During a time of massive unemployment and food insecurity, first-time CalFresh applicants were expecting food assistance and instead were denied due to strict income requirements. CalFresh applicants who were cut off for exceeding the income limit due to the Unemployment Insurance supplement lost access to a vital food program for their family. In both cases, families were left to figure out how to secure food. Especially during times of national economic crises, income guidelines should be expanded in order to serve more families.

8) Provide universal school meals to all children: School meal programs are proven to provide critical food access to children during the school day — and during the early days of the COVID-19 crisis when schools were closed and P-EBT had not been distributed yet, childhood hunger spiked to upwards of 40 percent. Even before COVID-19, child hunger levels were at 15 percent. Unsurprisingly, P-EBT recipient survey respondents spoke to the incredible value of school meals, even when they were being accessed outside of the traditional school infrastructure and schedule. A universal school meal program, where all children in California are provided free school meals, would help to ease administrative burden on schools, would ease stigma among children, increase school meal participation, and most importantly, would ensure that all children in California have the nourishing meals they need to learn and thrive during the school day.

9) Implement out-of-school-time EBT: P-EBT has demonstrated the necessity of having an additional food resource during periods when school campuses are closed, like the summer months when childhood hunger increases. It compliments the social safety net system that was unable to respond to high levels of food insecurity. There should be permanent, nation-wide meal-replacement EBT options provided when school meals are not available, including regularly scheduled breaks as well as unforeseen natural or human-made disasters so food aid is available when children need it most.





APPENDIX A: METHODOLOGY

Policy Landscape

To analyze the design of P-EBT and its early implications, we reviewed the literature related to P-EBT to construct a policy landscape. This included documents related to the policy history of P-EBT and related programs such as Summer EBT⁵⁷ and Pandemic SNAP⁵⁸ to account for modifications to existing food programs that have not previously been implemented across states or are long-standing food benefit programs. It also included an overview of P-EBT implementation in California,⁵⁹ as well as in other states, to acknowledge how states' implementation and communications strategies may have impacted P-EBT recipients' experience with the program.⁶⁰ Finally, already published data and reports on the impact of P-EBT in reducing hunger⁶¹ were utilized to identify opportunities to strengthen and expand P-EBT and other anti-hunger programs into the future. A full list of secondary materials is available in the References section at the end of the report.

Survey Design & Execution

The goal of the survey was to explore and understand the impact of P-EBT and related public benefits on recipient families, as well as to identify opportunities to improve existing or establish new policy priorities, through the lens of P-EBT recipients. As described below, the survey design process followed the iterative process of grounded theory using the existing literature and preliminary interviews to construct and refine the final instrument.⁶²

Survey Design

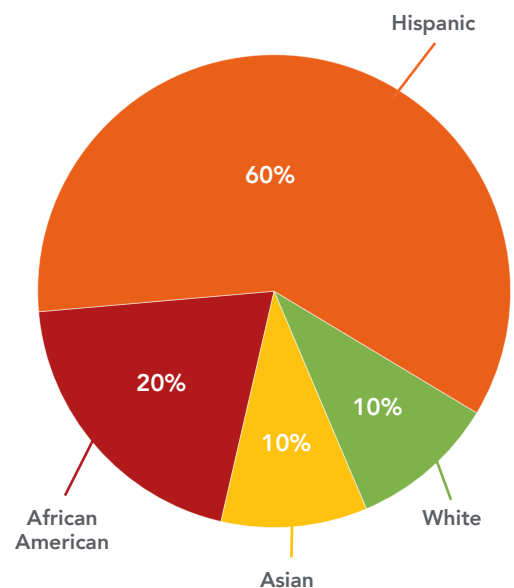
Based on the policy landscape analysis and conversations with project advisors, a survey draft was created. To test whether the initial draft 1) captured P-EBT recipient's concerns and experiences 2) questions were worded and phrased appropriately, preliminary interviews with P-EBT recipients using the survey draft were conducted. CAFB extended an invitation on Facebook and Twitter with a linked Google form for interested P-EBT recipients to sign up for a 30-minute interview. After an overwhelming response, a total of 10 P-EBT recipients were randomly selected for preliminary interviews. Preliminary interviews were conducted in English and Spanish via telephone. All 10 participants were mailed a \$50 gift card as compensation.

To test for language sensitivity for immigrant households, experts at CAFB, Food Research Action Center (FRAC), Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA), Western Center on Law & Poverty (WCLP), Second Harvest Food Bank of Silicon Valley and San Francisco-Marin Food Bank (SFMFB), offered revisions to the survey. The final survey was co-branded by CAFB and CHIRLA.

The survey was designed using Qualtrics software, Version CoreXM Standard of Qualtrics. The survey was available online through the link: <https://bit.ly/pebt-survey>. The survey had five open ended questions, two questions asking for name and email address, and 23 multiple choice questions. Depending on their method of receiving P-EBT (received automatically, received after applying, received P-EBT automatically for some children but not all etc.), survey respondents received different sets of questions. On average, survey respondents completed the survey within 10 minutes.

The survey was available in English, Spanish, and Chinese accordingly with languages the P-EBT application was available in. English and Spanish translations were handled by CAFB, and the Chinese translation was completed by a translator well versed in public benefits and P-EBT.

Demographics of preliminary interviews:



The survey's 30 questions focused on two primary topics:

- Operational issues related to utilizing the benefit, such as receiving P-EBT automatically, having to apply for P-EBT, problems experienced with activating P-EBT cards, or experiences related to customer service.
- The value of P-EBT to families, the importance of other public benefits such as school meals, CalFresh and income supports, and the impact of Public Charge on immigrant and mixed-status families in accessing any of these benefits.

To incentivize and help compensate potential survey respondents, we promoted that all entries would be entered into a raffle where randomly selected winners would win a \$50 Visa gift card.^D To enter the raffle, survey respondents had to provide their email address as a form of contact. A total of 100 randomly selected winners were sent \$50 gift cards.

Survey Distribution

The survey was initially distributed via CAFB's social media channels, which had maintained a following of P-EBT recipients throughout the program. The survey was further shared with CAFB's 41 member food banks, as well as a broad set of anti-hunger and allied direct service and advocacy groups across the state. A detailed, step-by-step guide⁶³ explaining the design of the survey in Qualtrics along with a social media toolkit⁶⁴ was shared with all partner organizations.

Interviews

To supplement the survey, in-depth interviews were conducted with P-EBT recipients to further understand their experiences with the program, as well as with key external stakeholders who had direct program knowledge.

P-EBT Recipient Interviews

Based on the survey results, P-EBT recipients who opted to participate in a follow-up interview were selected to expand upon their survey responses. All interviews remained confidential and anonymous.

To underscore: interviewees were purposefully selected to further investigate key topics that emerged from the small minority of uncommon experiences P-EBT recipients shared while the survey data overwhelmingly represents the common experiences reported by P-EBT recipients with P-EBT.

Factors in determining selected participants included:

- Being enrolled in CalFresh and Medi-Cal
- Children in single parent households vs. working parent households vs. unemployed parents (we did not directly ask this question in our survey, but some respondents shared this information in their open-ended responses)
- Children receiving FRPM school lunches but not on Medi-Cal
- Receiving the Disaster Relief Assistance for Immigrants (DRAI) and on CalFresh, or not on CalFresh
- Someone whose children both received P-EBT automatically and applied for P-EBT

Interviews were conducted in English, Spanish, and Chinese. For interviews in Chinese, an interpreter was present, and they coordinated interviews with selected Chinese-speaking P-EBT recipients. All interviews were between 30-45 minutes, conducted via Zoom, and recorded. They were also compensated \$50 in the form of a Visa gift card for their time.

External Stakeholder Interviews

To capture the larger context of the design, implementation, and execution of P-EBT in California, 12 interviews were conducted with stakeholders, including program administrators at the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) and California Department of Education (CDE), the California School Nutrition Association, food bank staff who assist with CalFresh outreach and applications, school nutrition service department representatives, and policy advocacy organizations. A full list is available in Appendix B.

Breakdown of in-depth interviews:

Language	Number of Interviewees
English	3
Spanish	3
Chinese	3
Total	9

D. An eGift Visa Card or physical card was mailed depending on the recipient's preference.

Limitations

This report is intended to capture the impact P-EBT had on recipients' lives, including initial barriers, and to identify recommendations for future P-EBT iterations and further legislation to fight childhood hunger. Given the time constraints of this project (six months) this research is not a formal, scientific study of California P-EBT recipients. Our project budget of \$10,000 presented limitations including the number of questions we could include in our survey (e.g. adding more questions in Qualtrics would have generated additional licensing costs), the number of interviews we could conduct in Chinese (as we had to contract with a Chinese language interpreter for these interviews), and the number of Visa gift cards we could distribute to survey respondents.

Another limitation was our sensitivity to protect respondents while seeking to specifically understand the experience of people from immigrant and mixed-status households. We did not directly ask about immigration status because we did not want it to be a barrier or concern in responding to the survey. Instead, we used two proxies as a way to disaggregate the data:

Language in which the survey was completed: We understand the language that survey respondents selected to complete the survey is not a determining factor of immigration status. In fact, survey respondents could be fluent in other languages aside from the language they chose to complete the survey in. However given the limitations of not directly asking about immigration status, we considered language as a factor for potentially identifying P-EBT recipient respondents who are part of an immigrant or mixed-status household.

Disaster Relief Assistance for Immigrants (DRAI) related responses: We used the question and responses related to DRAI,⁶⁵ a one time state-funded cash assistance disaster relief stimulus payment for people who are undocumented, to identify respondents who are undocumented or part of a mixed-status household.

It is understood that the impact of P-EBT on families may change as the state implements new strategies to improve P-EBT and expand their capacities given the important enhancements in the Consolidated Appropriations Act 2021 as well as how the pandemic progresses and continues to affect low-income families.⁶⁶





APPENDIX B: INTERVIEWS

List of Key Stakeholder Interviewees

Alexis Fernandez

Chief of CalFresh and Nutrition Branch
California Department of Social Services

Kim Frinzell

Director of Nutrition Services Division
California Department of Education

Gurjeet Barayah

Manager of School Nutrition Programs Administration
Section, Nutrition Services Division
California Department of Education

Betzabel Estudillo

Senior Advocate
Nourish California

Jessica Bartholow

Former Policy Advocate
Western Center on Law & Poverty

Kristin Hilleman

Director of Food and Nutrition Services
Capistrano Unified School District

Tracy Weatherby

Vice President of Strategy and Advocacy
Second Harvest of Silicon Valley

Zia McWilliams

Manager of Federal Children's Nutrition Programs
Second Harvest of Silicon Valley

Cathy Senderling-McDonald

Executive Director
County Welfare Directors Association of California

Jazmin Hicks

Senior Self-Sufficiency Policy Analyst
County Welfare Directors Association of California

Claudia Menjivar

Attorney
Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles

Crystal FitzSimons

Director of School and Out-of-School Time Programs
Food Research & Action Center

Etienne Melcher Philbin

Deputy Director of School and Out-of-School Time
Programs Food Research & Action Center

Jennifer LeBarre

Executive Director of Student Nutrition Services
San Francisco Unified School District

Alison Hard

Professional Staff
House Education and Labor Committee

Dottie Rosenbaum

Senior Fellow
Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

APPENDIX 3: QUOTES

Additional Quotes from Survey Respondents

"At the time that I received my P-EBT card in the mail, I was literally out of options on how I would provide my children with their next healthy meal. I literally dropped to my knees crying with joy and happiness and immediately went Grocery shopping for my four children."

"It helped not worry about food...I was able to have one less thing to worry about."

"I didn't have to cry because I couldn't feed my kids, I didn't have to ask to borrow money from friends and family, I didn't have to hear my kids telling me they were hungry. P-EBT went a long way for my family because I was able to feed my kids."

"It was a wonderful blessing during times of fear and uncertainty. P-EBT allowed us to buy extra food and snacks to provide for the kids during the lockdown and during distance learning months. As a family we are very thankful for the extra money to buy food during this pandemic."

"P-EBT helped us get more food on our table for our children, both my husband and I had both lost our jobs due to the pandemic and had to use the bit of savings we had to pay for our bills and rent. I don't know what we would have done without the help that was given to us. It helped us stay afloat."

"Me ayudo a comprar comida y pude pagar otras facturas con el dinero que hubiera usado en comida. Somos una familia de 7 miembros y de bajos recursos entonces esta ayuda de P-EBT nos ayudo un poco en esta situacion tan dificil."

"P-EBT helped me buy food, and I could pay other bills with the money I would have used on food. We are a low-income family of seven, so P-EBT helped us a little in this very difficult situation."

"With P-EBT I was able to nourish my kids appropriately during that short time period. I have trouble getting to food giveaways or school lunch pickups because I'm disabled and can't drive."

"It helped me and my family out a lot! We were able to buy food and stretch out the money for meals to last us a few more weeks. It was a blessing itself."

"PEBT significo mucho para mi familia ya que mi esposo lo descansaron el mes de marzo. Y somos personas que no pudimos agarrar ninguna ayuda del gobierno por ser inmigrantes...todos los dias esa tarjeta fue de bendición para mi familia porque pude ponerles comida a la mesa a mis niños y a mi familia."

"P-EBT was very important for my family since my husband was laid off from work in March. We are immigrants so we didn't receive any help from the government. Every day, the P-EBT card was a blessing for my family because I was able to put food on the table for my kids and family."

"A mí familia nos sirvió mucho pues estábamos en una situación donde teníamos que decidir entre pagar la renta y los biles o la comida y la llegada de las tarjetas p-ebt fueron de mucha ayuda nos desestresamos un poco de la compra de comida"

"For my family, P-EBT helped us a lot because we were in a position where we had to decide whether to pay for rent and bills or food. When the P-EBT cards arrived, they were very helpful in reducing our stress about buying food."

"Nos ayudo mucho ya que con eso se compró lo más necesario para comer. Y así poder pagar el teléfono, el gas, e internet, que es muy necesario por la escuela de los niños."

"P-EBT helped us a lot with buying the necessary food. I was able to pay telephone, gas, and internet bills—which is necessary for online schooling for my kids."

"I could focus on paying other bills without having to worry about also having to pay for food. CA P-EBT was that helping hand we needed to help us stretch out our food budget. We really benefited from being able to buy extra healthy food with the EBT card."

"It took so much stress off my shoulders and [I] didn't have to worry so much about what my kids will eat next."

REFERENCES

1. "Listings of WHO's response to COVID-19," World Health Organization, accessed January 20, 2021. <https://www.who.int/news/item/29-06-2020-covidtimeline>
2. Laurel Wamsley. "California Hits New High in COVID-19 Hospitalizations," National Public Radio, June 22, 2020. <https://www.npr.org/sections/coronavirus-live-updates/2020/06/22/881703745/california-hits-new-high-in-covid-19-hospitalizations>
3. Jill Cowan and Sona Patel. "Schools Close Over Coronavirus Concerns," The New York Times, March 14, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/14/us/california-coronavirus-cases.html>
4. Kim Parker, Rachel Minkin, Jesse Bennett. "Economic Fallout From COVID-19 Continues to Hit Lower-Income Americans the Hardest," Pew Research Center, September 24, 2020. <https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2020/09/24/economic-fallout-from-covid-19-continues-to-hit-lower-income-americans-the-hardest>
5. Maanvi Singh. "California's Food Banks Grapple with 'Tsunami of Need' as Pandemic Grows," The Guardian, April 3, 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/03/california-coronavirus-food-banks>
6. Congressional Research Service. "USDA Domestic Food Programs' response to COVID-19." March 20, 2020. https://case.house.gov/uploadedfiles/crs_usda_assistance_covid19.pdf
7. "Hunger Doesn't Take a Vacation: Summer Nutrition Status Report." Food Research and Action Center, June 2017. <https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/FRAC-Summer-Nutrition-Report-2020.pdf>
8. "Summer Meals for Children: An Overview of Federal Aid" Congressional Research Service, August 2020. <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF11633>
9. "Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer for Children (SEBTC) Demonstration: Summary Report." 2016
10. "Text - H.R.6201 - 116th Congress (2019-2020): Families First Coronavirus Response Act." 2020. Congress.gov. March 18, 2020. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/6201/text>
11. "Memorandum: State Plan for Pandemic EBT (P-EBT)" From the United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service to SNAP State Agencies and Child Nutrition State Agencies, sent March 20, 2020. <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/resource-files/SNAP-CN-COVID-PEBTGuidance.pdf>
12. Anya Kamenetz. "Why Billions In Food Aid Hasn't Gotten To Needy Families." NPR, January 2021. <https://www.npr.org/2021/01/15/953963243/why-billions-in-food-aid-hasnt-gotten-to-needy-families>
13. Jessica Bartholow and Mike Herald. "Background on Child Poverty & Hunger," Western Center on Law and Poverty, March 2020. https://wclp.org/wpcontent/uploads/2020/03/WCLP_Background_ChildPovertyAndHunger_March2020.pdf
14. "Child Food Insecurity in California." Feeding America, accessed January 20, 2021. <http://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2018/child/california>
15. Ailsa Chang & Jonaki Mehta. "For Hungry Americans Across The Country, Food Insecurity Crisis Deepens." NPR, December 14, 2020. <https://www.npr.org/sections/coronavirus-live-updates/2020/12/14/946420784/u-s-faces-food-insecurity-crisis-as-several-federal-aid-programs-set-to-run-out>
16. "Hunger and Poverty Among Immigrants." Bread for the World, August 2016. <https://www.bread.org/sites/default/files/downloads/immigrants-fact-sheet-2016.pdf>
17. Lauren Bauer. "The COVID-19 crisis has already left too many children hungry in America," Brookings Institute, May 6, 2020. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2020/05/06/the-covid-19-crisis-has-already-left-too-many-children-hungry-in-america>
18. Grace Kim, Renee Lahey, Marcus Silva, Sean Tan. "Public Charge and the Threat to Immigrant Families in California: Reducing the Chilling Effect on Medi-Cal Participation." UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs, October 2019. https://luskin.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/4PublicCharge.FINAL_MP.pdf
19. "Hunger and Poverty Among Immigrants." Bread for the World, August 2016. <https://www.bread.org/sites/default/files/downloads/immigrants-fact-sheet-2016.pdf>
20. Rosalio Ahumada, Tony Bizjak and Kim Bojorquez. "Special Report: As cases surge, California struggles to slow COVID-19 in Latino communities," The Sacramento Bee, July 5, 2020. <https://www.sacbee.com/news/coronavirus/article243965407.html>
21. "Public Charge." ILRC. January 29, 2021. Accessed February 05, 2021. <https://www.ilrc.org/public-charge>
22. "CDSS Programs." Disaster Relief Assistance for Immigrants. Accessed January 4, 2021. <https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/immigration/covid-19-drai>

23. Lorraine Tamburrino. "Forgotten During COVID: An Assessment of Immigrant Needs in the Pandemic." CHIRLA, Summer 2020. <https://www.chirla.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Forgotten-During-Covid-Report-FINAL.pdf>
24. AB826." Bill Status. Accessed January 25, 2021. https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billStatusClient.xhtml?bill_id=201920200AB826
25. "Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer Program (P-EBT) Approval of California State Plan" From the USDA FNS to Jesus Mendoza, Regional Administrator of the Western Region Office, sent April 23, 2020. <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/resource-files/CA-SNAP-COV-PEBT-Approval%20Letter.pdf>
26. "Pandemic- EBT Communications Toolkit." Food Research & Action Center, January 2021. <https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/PEBT-Comm-Toolkit.pdf>
27. "All County Welfare Directors Letter: Implementation of Pandemic EBT (P-EBT)." From the Family Engagement and Empowerment Division, CDSS to All County Welfare Directors, sent May 7, 2020. <https://www.cdss.ca.gov/Portals/9/Additional-Resources/Letters-and-Notices/ACWDL/2020/ACWDL-Pandemic-EBT.pdf>
28. "Pandemic EBT 1.0 Outcomes Report." California Department of Social Services, September 2020. <https://www.cdss.ca.gov/Portals/9/EBT/Pandemic/P-EBT-Outcomes-Report.pdf>
29. Kim Parker, Rachel Minkin and Jesse Bennett. "Economic Fallout from COVID-19 Continues To Hit Lower-Income Americans the Hardest." Pew Research Center, September 2020. <https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2020/09/24/economic-fallout-from-covid-19-continues-to-hit-lower-income-americans-the-hardest>
30. "Tracking the COVID-19 Recession's Effects on Food, Housing, and Employment Hardships." Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, January 2021. <https://www.cbpp.org/research/poverty-and-inequality/tracking-the-covid-19-recessions-effects-on-food-housing-and>
31. "Hunger in America Is Growing." Feeding America. Accessed January 23, 2021. <https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america>
32. "Fact Sheet: Mixed Status Families and COVID-19 Economic Relief." National Immigration Forum. August 12, 2020. Accessed February 10, 2021. <https://immigrationforum.org/article/mixed-status-families-and-covid-19-economic-relief>
33. Izzy Greenblatt. "Survey Finds That Relief for Undocumented Immigrants Helped, but Not Enough." ABC News. December 08, 2020. Accessed January 23, 2021. <https://www.abc10.com/article/news/local/california/covid-relief-program-survey-for-undocumented-immigrants/103-22f04bd2-54d7-48a5-87f3-2139d89ed77a>
34. Lauren Bauer, Abigail Pitts, Krista Ruffini, and Diane Whitmore Schanzenbach. "The Effect of Pandemic EBT on Measures of Food Hardship." The Hamilton Project, July 2020. https://www.hamiltonproject.org/assets/files/P-EBT_LO_7.30.pdf
35. "Pandemic EBT Implementation Documentation Project." 2020
36. California Department of Social Services. "Pandemic EBT Cards." Accessed January 23, 2021. <https://www.cdss.ca.gov/home/pandemic-ebt>
37. "Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) Fact Sheets." USDA. Accessed January 25, 2021. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/sfsp-fact-sheets>
38. "Seamless Summer and Other Options for Schools." USDA. Accessed January 25, 2021. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/seamless-summer-and-other-options-schools>
39. "School Meals." U.S Department of Agriculture, Accessed January 23, 2021. <https://www.usda.gov/coronavirus/school-meals>
40. Eleanor Davis. "COVID-19's Impact on the Social Safety Net." Code for America, April 2020. <https://www.codeforamerica.org/news/covid-19s-impact-on-the-social-safety-net>
41. "Pandemic EBT 1.0 Outcomes Report." 2020
42. Leighton Ku. "New Evidence Demonstrates That The Public Charge Rule Will Harm Immigrant Families and Others." Health Affairs, October 2019. <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hblog20191008.70483/full>
43. Protecting Immigrant Families. "Trump's Public Charge Regulation Is Hurting Immigrant Families Now." Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP), April 2020. <https://protectingimmigrantfamilies.org/wpcontent/uploads/2020/04/DocumentingHarm-update-2020-04-27.pdf>
44. Dottie Rosenbaum. "SNAP's 'Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility' Supports Working Families and Those Saving for the Future." Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, July 2019. <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/snaps-broad-based-categorical-eligibility-supports-working-families-and>
45. "Unemployment Insurance Relief During COVID-19 Outbreak." U.S. Department of Labor Seal. 2020. Accessed February 10, 2021. <https://www.dol.gov/coronavirus/unemployment-insurance#:~:text=The%20new%20law%20creates%20the>
46. "All County Welfare Directors Letter: CalFresh Emergency Allotments for January 2021." From CDSS Family Engagement and Empowerment Division to All County Welfare Directors, sent January 4, 2021. [https://www.cdss.ca.gov/Portals/9/Additional-Resources/Letters-and-Notices/ACWDL/2021/ACWDL%20CalFresh%20Emergency%20Allotments-January%202021%20\(003\).pdf](https://www.cdss.ca.gov/Portals/9/Additional-Resources/Letters-and-Notices/ACWDL/2021/ACWDL%20CalFresh%20Emergency%20Allotments-January%202021%20(003).pdf)

47. "States Are Using Much-Needed Temporary Flexibility in SNAP to Respond to COVID-19 Challenges." 2021. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. February 5, 2021. <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/states-are-using-much-needed-temporary-flexibility-in-snap-to-respond-to#:~:text=Emergency%20allotment%3A%20States%20can%20give,states%20have%20used%20this%20option.&text=In%20jurisdic-tions%20with%20the%20emergency,households%20get%20the%20maximum%20benefit>
48. "School Meals are Essential for Student Health and Learning." Food Research & Action Center (FRAC), August 2019. https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/School-Meals-are-Essential-Health-and-Learning_FNL.pdf
49. Krista Ruffini. (2018). "Universal Access to Free School Meals and Student Achievement: Evidence from the Community Eligibility Provision". IRLE Working Paper No. 102-18. <http://irle.berkeley.edu/files/2018/10/Universal-Access-to-Free-School-Meals-and-Student-Achievement.pdf>
50. "Survey Report: COVID Budget Deficits in School Food." Center for Ecoliteracy, December 2020. <https://www.californiafoodforcaliforniakids.org/survey-report-school-food-budget-deficits-during-covid-19-december-update>
51. Elaine Waxman. "Food insecurity in the summer: Thinking outside the lunch box." Urban Institute Blog, June 2016. <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/food-insecurity-summer-thinking-outside-lunch-box>
52. "The Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer Program (Summer EBT)." Food Research & Action Center. December 02, 2019. Accessed January 25, 2021. <https://frac.org/research/resource-library/the-summer-electronic-benefit-transfer-program-summer-ebt>
53. "Hunger Doesn't Take a Vacation: Summer Nutrition Status Report." Food Research and Action Center, June 2017. <https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/2017-summer-nutrition-report-1.pdf>
54. "Food over Fear: Overcoming Barriers to Connect Latinx Immigrant Families to Federal Nutrition and Food Programs." Food Research and Action Center, and National Immigration Law Center, December 2020. https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/NILC_Latinx-Immigrant-Families.pdf
55. United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). "Biden Administration Expands P-EBT to Benefit Millions of Low-Income and Food Insecure Children During a Pandemic." News release, January 22, 2021. <https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2021/01/22/biden-administration-expands-p-ebt-benefit-millions-low-income-and>
56. "All County Welfare Directors Letter: Pandemic EBT Extension." From CDSS Family Engagement and Empowerment Division to All County Welfare Directors., sent November 2, 2020. https://www.cdss.ca.gov/Portals/9/Additional-Resources/Letters-and-Notices/ACWDL/2020/ACWDL_11-2-2020-p_ebt.pdf?fver=2020-11-02-153450-650
57. "Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer for Children (SEBTC) Demonstration: Summary Report." U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service, May 2016. <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/ops/sebtcfinalreport.pdf>
58. "Randy Alison Aussenberg and Kara Clifford Billings. "USDA Domestic Food Assistance Programs' Response to COVID-19: P.L. 116-127 and Related Efforts." March 2020. https://case.house.gov/uploadedfiles/crs_usda_assistance_covid19.pdf
59. "Pandemic EBT 1.0 Outcomes Report." 2020
60. "Pandemic EBT Implementation and Documentation Project." Center on Budget and Policy Priorities and Food Research & Action Center, September 2020. <https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/P-EBT-Documentation-Report.pdf>
61. Lauren Bauer, Abigail Pitts, Krista Ruffini, and Diane Whitmore Schanzenbach. "The Effect of Pandemic EBT on Measures of Food Hardship." Brookings Institute, July 2020. https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/P-EBT_LO_7.30.pdf
62. Ylona Chun Tie, Melanie Birks, and Karen Francis. "Grounded Theory Research: A Design Framework for Novice Researchers." SAGE Open Medicine. January 02, 2019. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6318722>
63. "P-EBT Survey Guide: Final." California Association of Food Banks, Congressional Hunger Center, and Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights, October 27, 2020. <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1HKtcsncWjha-Zj2zF3n-nl-waCyXJt-lXt5oyvHnOorl/edit?usp=sharing>
64. "P-EBT Survey Toolkit." California Association of Food Banks, and Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights, October 27, 2020. <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1aK-8zOnc392LgvOziKcsjhC-c8hbEAqa-aqKsKTCgq0/edit?usp=sharing>
65. "Coronavirus (COVID-19) Disaster Relief Assistance for Immigrants." The California Department of Social Services. Accessed January 25, 2021. <https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/immigration/covid-19-drai>
66. "Omnibus and Coronavirus Response Package Summary of P-EBT and other Key Child Nutrition Provisions." Food Research & Action Center, 2020. <https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/coronavirus-response-and-omnibus-act-1.pdf>



**CALIFORNIA
ASSOCIATION OF
FOOD BANKS**

1624 Franklin Street #722, Oakland, CA 94612 | 510-272-4435 | cafoodbanks.org