



# SUN Bucks NC 2025: Information for Community Organizations

*Webinar – April 2025*



NC DEPARTMENT OF  
**HEALTH AND  
HUMAN SERVICES**



North Carolina Department of  
**PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**



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# AGENDA

1. **Food Insecurity in NC**
2. **SUN Bucks Overview**
3. **ALL 3 SUN Summer Nutrition Programs**
4. **Eligibility**
5. **Issuance**
6. **How You Can Help**



# Food Insecurity Is a Critical Challenge In North Carolina



12.8%

of North Carolina residents live below the poverty line<sup>3</sup>



1 in 5

children in North Carolina face food insecurity or chronic hunger<sup>1</sup>



>70%

of children in North Carolina are eligible for free or reduced-price meals at school<sup>2</sup>



<sup>1</sup> *Feeding America Map the Meal Gap*

<sup>2</sup> *North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, not exact due to impact of Hurricane Helene*

<sup>3</sup> *Poverty Rate in NC (Statista), 2023*

# Food Insecurity is a Critical Challenge in North Carolina



## Food Insecurity During Summer

### Causes



### Impacts on Children

- Many students **lose access to school meals** during the summer months
  - Many families **lack access to transportation** to summer meal sites
  - Many families **lack access to affordable supermarkets** and grocery stores
- **Children experience stress** in not knowing where their next meal will come from
  - Kids and teens **miss out on key nutrients** needed for growth and development
  - Students return to school less ready to learn and **perform worse in school**<sup>4</sup>.

# Sun Summer Nutrition Programs For Kids



## Three ways to combat summer hunger in North Carolina

North Carolina



### SUN Meals

Youth enjoy meals and activities onsite together at schools and community sites



### SUN Meals To-Go

Meals for youth are available for pick up or delivery in some rural areas



### SUN Bucks

Grocery-buying benefits are provided on debit-like cards per eligible child

Learn more and find a nearby summer meal site at [SummerMeals4NCKids.org](https://SummerMeals4NCKids.org).

Learn more at [ncdhhs.gov/sunbucks](https://ncdhhs.gov/sunbucks)



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# Introduction To Sun Bucks

## SUN Bucks is back for the summer of 2025!

- US Department of Agriculture (USDA) program
- Grocery-buying benefits to purchase nutritious food during summer while schools are out
- **One-time payment of \$120 per eligible child**
- Benefits come on a SUN Bucks card
- Benefit amounts can vary year to year

## Who will be eligible for SUN Bucks?

Students who participate in certain federal assistance programs will be automatically eligible to receive benefits, while other students may need to apply for SUN Bucks.

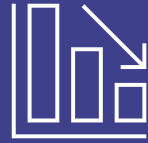
## For more eligibility details:

- Visit [ncdhhs.gov/sunbucks](https://ncdhhs.gov/sunbucks)
- Eligibility Flyer on [ncdhhs.gov/sunbucksResources](https://ncdhhs.gov/sunbucksResources)



# Evidence-based Program, Supported By A Successful 3-year Pilot

Over a three-year period, USDA implemented a **successful** pilot program to provide electronic benefits in specific states and Indian Tribal Organizations (ITOs) to test its effectiveness. An evaluation assessment<sup>1</sup> of the pilot found:



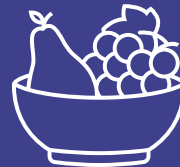
**33%** decrease in “very low” food insecurity in children



**89%** of participants redeemed their issued benefits



Increase in households’ food expenditures



Improved dietary quality for most of the nutrition outcomes surveyed



Increased whole grain, dairy, vegetable and fruit consumption

Decreased sugar-sweetened beverage consumption





# SUN Bucks NC - 2024 Program Impact

**1.1 million\***

NC children received benefits to increase access to nutritious food choices during the summer months.

**\$130 million\***

in grocery-buying benefits issued in NC for the 2024 summer months, providing critical nourishment to children.

**\$200 million\***

boost to NC's economy.

**96.5%**

of SUN Bucks benefits were spent by families in 2024.



# Statewide And County Profiles For All NC Sun Programs

- Profiles provide a statewide and county-by-county snapshot of all SUN Summer Nutrition Programs for Kids
- Profiles are a powerful advocacy tool for promoting awareness and support
- Visit [SummerMeals4NCKids.org/County-Profiles](https://SummerMeals4NCKids.org/County-Profiles) to see NC statewide and county profiles for the summer of 2024



North Carolina

Children receiving free and reduced-price (FRP) school meals are at greater risk of hunger during the summer.

## 2024 Summer Nutrition Programs ROBESON COUNTY

NEED	
<b>24,620</b>	or <b>99%</b>
of students in the county's K-12 public schools were eligible for FRP school meals	



### FUELING CHILDREN & THE ECONOMY

\$3.4M in funding to the county from all SUN Summer Nutrition Programs

	<b>20,031</b> Children received benefits		<b>62.4K</b> Meals served
	<b>\$2.4M</b> Funding distributed in county <small>(\$120 per eligible child for the 2024 summer)</small>		<b>\$240.8K</b> NC Summer Meals Funding
			<b>210.4K</b> Meals served
		<b>\$794.3K</b> NC Summer Meals Funding	

# School Search Tool

*A child's eligibility for SUN Bucks is partially impacted by the type of school they attend: National School Lunch Program (NSLP), Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), or neither.*

## What are NSLP and CEP?


**NSLP** is a federal program in most public schools and some charter and private nonprofit schools. As part of this program, kids who meet certain criteria can get free meals or meals at a lower price through their school.

**CEP** is part of NSLP and lets schools and education groups in certain places give meals to all students at no cost.

## How can I determine if a school is NSLP, CEP, or neither?

Visit [ncdhhs.gov/sunbucks-schoolsearch](https://ncdhhs.gov/sunbucks-schoolsearch) to use the SUN Bucks 2025 School Search. You can use the search bar to determine if a school is NSLP, CEP, or neither by searching the school name, county, or zip code.

An official website of the State of North Carolina [How you know](#) Select Language

 **NCDHHS** Search Menu

[Home](#) > [Divisions](#) > [Child and Family Well-Being](#) > [Food and Nutrition Services \(Food Stamps\)](#) > [SUN Bucks Homepage](#) > [SUN Bucks 2025 School Search](#)

### SUN Bucks 2025 School Search

The searchable list below includes the schools in North Carolina. It shows if each school participates in the National School Lunch Program ("NSLP"), is a Community Eligibility Provision ("CEP") school, or is neither (school listed as "not eligible"). **You can use the search bar to find your child's school by searching the school name, county, or zip code.**

If your school shows as NSLP or CEP, you can [apply for SUN Bucks](#).

**Note:** This list will be updated throughout the school year.

100 entries per page Search:

County Description	School Name	Zip Code	Status
Alamance	A.B. Middle College	27253	NSLP

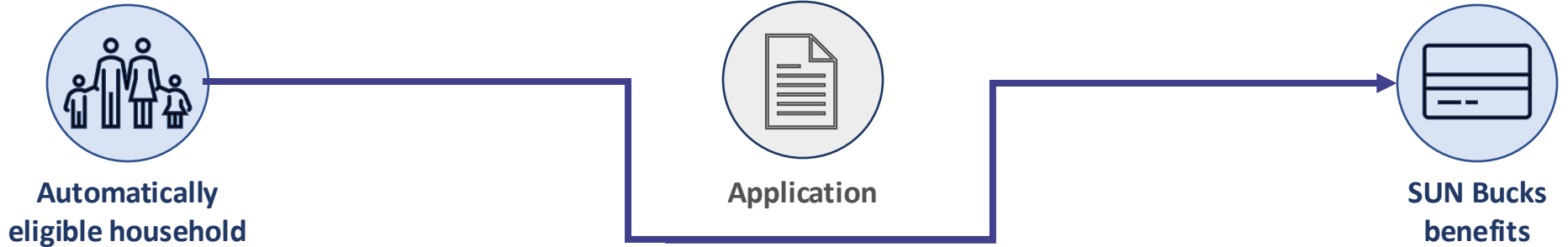
# SUN Bucks Automatic Eligibility

**Over 1m**

North Carolina students are **automatically eligible** in 2025

Students may be **automatically eligible** for SUN Bucks if they participate in at least one of the following programs and do **NOT** need to apply:

1. National School Lunch Program (NSLP) free or reduced-price (FRP) school meals
2. Food and Nutrition Services (FNS, food stamps)
3. Work First (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), cash assistance)
4. Medicaid with household income below 185% of the federal poverty level
5. Foster care
6. McKinney Vento (unhoused/migrant/runaway)



## How will families know if one or more of their children is automatically eligible?

Households with one or more children who are automatically eligible should receive an official Eligibility Notice via robocall, text, and email. More details are available on the [SUN Bucks webpage](https://ncdhhs.gov/sunbucks) (ncdhhs.gov/sunbucks).

# Who Should Complete A SUN Bucks Application?

Find the chart below at [ncdhhs.gov/SUNBucksResources](https://ncdhhs.gov/SUNBucksResources) (see Flyer: SUN Bucks Eligibility)

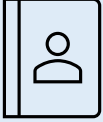
First, which type of school does the student attend?	Then, which scenario applies to the student?	Automatically qualify?	Apply?
National School Lunch Program (NSLP)	<b>SCENARIO A:</b> Participates in at least one of the following programs: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. NSLP free or reduced-price (FRP) school meals</li> <li>2. Food and Nutrition Services (FNS, food stamps)</li> <li>3. Work First (TANF, cash assistance)</li> <li>4. Medicaid with household income below 185% of federal poverty level</li> <li>5. Foster care</li> <li>6. McKinney Vento (unhoused/migrant/runaway)</li> </ol>	YES	NO
	<b>SCENARIO B:</b> Does not participate in any of the programs listed in Scenario A. Household must meet the income guidelines for SUN Bucks.	NO	YES
<u>Non</u> -NSLP	<b>Scenario C:</b> Student is between ages 7 and 16 AND participates in at least one of the programs listed in Scenario A or CTFDP (Cherokee Tribal Food Distribution Program).	YES	NO
	<b>Scenario D:</b> Does not participate in any of the programs listed in Scenario A.	NO	NO
Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)	<b>Scenario E:</b> Participates in at least one of the programs listed in Scenario A.	YES	NO
	<b>Scenario F:</b> Does not participate in any of the programs listed in Scenario A. Household must meet the income guidelines for SUN Bucks.	NO	YES

# Issuance for 2025 SUN Bucks Cards

- Only a **one-time payment of \$120 per eligible child** will be issued for the 2025 summer.
- **One SUN Bucks card** will be issued **per family**.
- SUN Bucks cards will be **mailed** on a rolling basis from **early May to mid-June 2025**. As additional children are found eligible, a one-time \$120 payment of benefits will be issued to families until the end of September.
- Starting in **late May, benefits will be made available** on a new SUN Bucks card.
  - ▶ Some households may receive their SUN Bucks card before benefits are available to spend.
  - ▶ Please encourage families to be patient if they do not see their benefits right away.
- SUN Bucks card will be mailed with information on **how to activate and spend these benefits**.



# SUN Bucks NC - 2025 Key Dates



**April 21**

*2025 SUN Bucks eligibility notices begin being sent*



**MAY 22**

*2025 SUN Bucks benefits begin being issued*



**AUGUST 31**

*Last day to apply for 2025 SUN Bucks benefits*

## How can families access the SUN Bucks application?

- Families who can apply will **receive an invitation to apply by E-mail or text** with instructions. Families can also visit the [SUN Bucks webpage](https://ncdhhs.gov/sunbucks) (ncdhhs.gov/sunbucks) to learn more and apply.
- The online application is the easiest and fastest way to apply; paper applications can also be requested.

## When will children who are eligible receive their SUN Bucks benefits?

- SUN Bucks benefits will start to go out mid to late May and will continue through the summer as more children are determined eligible.
- More details are available on the [SUN Bucks webpage](https://ncdhhs.gov/sunbucks) at ncdhhs.gov/sunbucks.
- Monitor NCDHHS social media accounts for SUN Bucks announcements. These accounts are on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [X](#) (previously Twitter).

# Role of Community Stakeholders

*We need YOU to help spread the word about the new SUN Bucks program in North Carolina. Community stakeholders can help support this information sharing in several ways:*

**Learn** more about the new SUN Bucks program by visiting [ncdhhs.gov/sunbucks](https://ncdhhs.gov/sunbucks) and @NCDHHS social media channels.

**Direct** students and families interested in learning more to available resources, including the website: [ncdhhs.gov/sunbucks](https://ncdhhs.gov/sunbucks)

**Encourage** students and families who may be eligible, but don't automatically qualify, to apply for SUN Bucks before August 31, 2025.

**Distribute** official SUN Bucks information through your established channels (such as ListServ, social media, websites, newsletters, bulletin boards, etc).





# How You Can Help

## ACT NOW! Share Information about SUN Bucks

### Post Flyers

#### Inform families about SUN Bucks:

1. **SUN Bucks Overview flyer**
  - This gives general information about SUN Bucks
2. **SUN Bucks Eligibility flyer**
  - This informs families about eligibility requirements

Find these flyers and more at [ncdhhs.gov/sunbucksResources](https://ncdhhs.gov/sunbucksResources)

## More summer smiles with North Carolina SUN Bucks

SUN Bucks is a US Department of Agriculture (USDA) program that provides grocery-buying benefits to qualifying families with school-aged children during the summer months when schools are out. Families receive a **one-time payment of \$120 in food assistance benefits per eligible child**. Benefits will be issued on debit-like EBT cards that can be used to buy nutritious food at grocery stores, farmers markets, and some online retailers. Benefit amounts may vary year to year.



- ▶ **Who is eligible for SUN Bucks?** Many children will be automatically enrolled for SUN Bucks based on their participation in other qualifying benefit programs. Other children **will need to apply**. Visit the NCDHHS SUN Bucks website, [ncdhhs.gov/sunbucks](https://ncdhhs.gov/sunbucks) to learn about eligibility and to apply.
- ▶ **Stay updated on SUN Bucks!** Visit [ncdhhs.gov/sunbucks](https://ncdhhs.gov/sunbucks) for more information and answers to frequently asked questions. Search "NCDHHS" on [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), and [X](#) and follow the account to stay in the loop for important program updates and announcements.



**Other ways to fuel youth during the summer:** In addition to receiving SUN Bucks, families also are encouraged to have their children, ages 18 and younger, participate in other federal Summer Nutrition Programs available at no cost to them.

**SUN MEALS North Carolina** Through SUN Meals, kids and teens can eat meals and snacks and engage in fun, fitness and educational activities during the summer at schools, parks, and other neighborhood locations.

**SUN MEALS TO-GO North Carolina** In rural areas where it may be difficult to access and participate in SUN Meals, SUN Meals To-Go may be available for pick up or delivery.

Families can find more information at [SummerMeals4NCKids.org](https://SummerMeals4NCKids.org).

# How You Can Help

**ACT NOW! Share Information on ALL 3 SUN programs**

## Post Flyers

### SUN Summer Nutrition Programs for Kids flyer

- Informs families how to access food during the summer from ALL 3 SUN federal programs

Available at [ncdhhs.gov/sunbucksResources](https://ncdhhs.gov/sunbucksResources)

## SUN Programs Feed Their Summer Smiles!

Make this a summer to remember with SUN Programs: USDA's Summer Nutrition Programs for Youth. These programs offer meals, snacks, and grocery-buying benefits at no cost for families to keep kids fueled up for summer.

Learn more at [SummerMeals4NCKids.org/SUNPrograms](https://SummerMeals4NCKids.org/SUNPrograms)



Youth 18 and under can **enjoy meals onsite together** at eligible meal sites. These sites often provide summer learning, fun activities, or nutrition education.

SUN Meals help kids get the nutrition they need all summer long and enjoy time with other kids.



In some rural areas, SUN Meals To-Go can be **picked up or delivered** right to your home!

Also called non-congregate meals, meal sponsors may provide multiple days of meals at a time to youth ages 18 and under in many rural locations during the summer break.



With SUN Bucks, families get **\$120 in grocery benefits per eligible school-aged child**. Use the debit-like card to buy food while school is out in the summer.

SUN Bucks are a convenient way to support healthy meals at home. [ncdhhs.gov/sunbucks](https://ncdhhs.gov/sunbucks)



# How You Can Help

## ACT NOW! Share Information About SUN Bucks



### Post Online

#### Share and learn information about SUN Bucks:

1. Use the SUN Bucks **social media toolkit** to post about SUN Bucks on your profiles
2. Follow **@NCDHHS** on social media for updates about SUN Bucks; and follow **@NCSchoolMeals** for summer meals updates from NC DPI and **@CarolinaHungerInitiative** for updates on all NC SUN programs.
3. **Remember to post all flyers** mentioned on previous slides on your organization's website

Find the social media toolkit and more at [ncdhhs.gov/sunbucksResources](https://ncdhhs.gov/sunbucksResources). Check back on our website [ncdhhs.gov/sunbucks](https://ncdhhs.gov/sunbucks) for the most up-to-date information

# Thank you for joining!

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***Thank you for your continued support of North Carolina children and teens!***

## Where can I go for more information about SUN Bucks?

- **SUN Bucks NCDHHS website:** [ncdhhs.gov/sunbucks](https://ncdhhs.gov/sunbucks)
- **NCDHHS Social Media (Instagram, Facebook, and X):** @NCDHHS, #NCSUNBucks
- **SUN Bucks Information for Education Community**
  - [carolinahungerinitiative.org/sunbucks](https://carolinahungerinitiative.org/sunbucks)
  - Carolina Hunger Initiative is a communications partner with NCDHHS on SUN Bucks
- **Information on SUN Meals and SUN Meals To-Go:** [SummerMeals4NCKids.org](https://SummerMeals4NCKids.org)

*Please reach out to [DCFW.SUNBucks@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:DCFW.SUNBucks@dhhs.nc.gov) with any questions!*

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1.mail:

Food and Nutrition Service, USDA  
1320 Braddock Place, Room 334  
Alexandria, VA 22314; or

2.fax:

(833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or

3.email:

[FNSCIVILRIGHTSCOMPLAINTS@usda.gov](mailto:FNSCIVILRIGHTSCOMPLAINTS@usda.gov)

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