

# **SUN Bucks NC 2025: Information for EBCI**

Webinar – April 2025









The training resources and information that will be presented to you today have been developed as mandated by the State and in compliance with prior federal mandates. Executive Order 14151 "Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing" issued on January 20, 2025, and Executive Order 14173 "Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity" issued on January 21, 2025, alter those mandates. On April 22, 2025, NCDHHS received instruction from the Children's Bureau on these Executive Orders. Although no changes have been made to today's training, NCDHHS is currently working with its partners to update this training to comply with the requirements of the Federal Government, including the Executive Orders.









# SUN Bucks NC 2025 Information

Webinar - April 2025







## **FACILITATORS**

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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>



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



>70%

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









<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Feeding America Map the Meal Gap

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

<sup>&</sup>lt;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
- Children experience stress in not knowing where their next meal will come from
- Many families lack access to transportation to summer meal sites
- Kids and teens miss out on key nutrients needed for growth and development
- Many families lack access to affordable supermarkets and grocery stores
- 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**



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



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

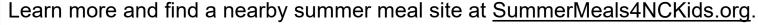
rural areas



#### **SUN Bucks**

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

Learn more at ncdhhs.gov/sunbucks









#### 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



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
- Eligibility Flyer on <u>ncdhhs.gov/sunbucksResources</u>









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#### 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



1

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** to see NC statewide and county profiles for the summer of 2024



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**

24,620 or 99%

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



20.031

Children received benefits

**Funding** distributed in county

(\$120 per eligible child for the 2024 summer)

SUN	
MEALS	

62.4K Meals served

**NC Summer Meals** \$240.8K **Funding** 



210.4K

Meals served

\$794.3K

**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.

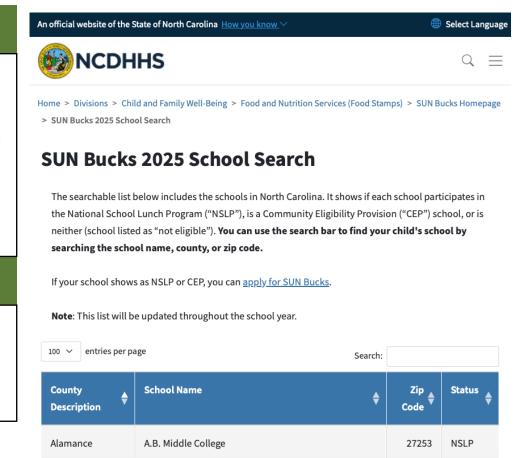
#### What are NSLP and CEP?

**NSLP** (The National School Lunch Program) is a federally assisted meal program operating in public and nonprofit private schools and residential childcare institutions. It provides nutritionally balanced lunches to children each school day. Families can apply to see if their children qualify for free or reduced-price meals.

**CEP** allows schools in low-income areas to serve meals at no cost to all enrolled students without collecting household applications.

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

Visit <u>ncdhhs.gov/sunbucks-schoolsearch</u> 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's name, county, or zip.









#### **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 <u>at least one</u> of the following programs and do **NOT** need to apply:

- 1. National School Lunch Program (NSLP) free or reduced-price (FRP) school meals
- 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 <u>SUN Bucks webpage</u> (ncdhhs.gov/sunbucks).







#### Who Should Complete A SUN Bucks Application?

Find the chart below at <a href="mailto:ncdhhs.gov/SUNBucksResources">ncdhhs.gov/SUNBucksResources</a> (see Flyer: SUN Bucks Eligibility)

<b>First</b> , which type of school does the student attend?	Then, which scenario applies to the student?	Automatically qualify?	Apply?
National School Lunch Program (NSLP)	<ol> <li>SCENARIO A: Participates in at least one of the following programs:</li> <li>NSLP free or reduced-price (FRP) school meals</li> <li>Food and Nutrition Services (FNS, food stamps)</li> <li>Work First (TANF, cash assistance)</li> <li>Medicaid with household income below 185% of federal poverty level</li> <li>Foster care</li> <li>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
	Scenario D: Does not participate in any of the programs listed in Scenario A.	NO	NO
Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)	Scenario E: 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 onetime \$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.



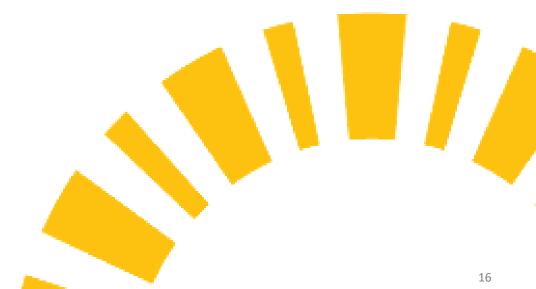






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#### **SUN Bucks NC - 2025 Key Dates**



#### 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 <u>SUN Bucks webpage</u> (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 <u>SUN Bucks webpage</u> at ncdhhs.gov/sunbucks.
- Monitor NCDHHS social media accounts for SUN Bucks announcements. These accounts are on <u>Facebook</u>, <u>Instagram</u>, and X (previously Twitter).







#### Help Families Receive Their SUN Bucks Card

#### EBCI Data and Updating Contact Information

#### **SUN Bucks 2025 Data Pulls**

- Data requests are part of the operations process for SUN Bucks per USDA Guidance
- Data is used to:
  - determine eligibility for SUN Bucks
  - send notifications by robocall, email, and text notifications to contact information on file
  - send SUN Bucks cards to the address on file
- It is important for families to keep their contact information up to date.

#### **How Families Update their Address**

Families may update their contact information by calling the North Carolina EBT Call Center at 1-866-719-0141, selecting their language, then selecting 2 to speak with a SUN Bucks representative.

- Parents/caregivers with children that automatically qualify for SUN Bucks should update their address by Monday, May 5 to ensure their SUN Bucks card is mailed to the correct location.
- After May 5, 2025, families may request an update change and request a new card be mailed to their current address.







#### SUN Bucks and FNS (Food Stamps) - Important Differences

#### **SUN Bucks and FNS are Different Programs**

You can receive both SUN Bucks AND CTFDP benefits.

#### **SUN Bucks**

- •What: SUN Bucks is grocery-buying benefits in a <u>one-time payment</u> of \$120 per eligible child on a SUN Bucks debit-like card.
- •EBCI's Tribal Food Distribution Program (CTFDP): You <u>CAN</u> receive SUN Bucks and CTFDP at the same time.
- •Get Both SUN Bucks and CTFDP? YES! You can participate in both CTFDP and SUN Bucks.
- •Bonus: Participating in the Tribal Food Distribution Program automatically qualifies children for SUN Bucks!

#### **FNS (Food Stamps)**

- What: Monthly FNS (Food and Nutrition Services or Food Stamps) grocery-buying benefits on an FNS debit-like card.
- EBCI's Tribal Food Distribution Program (CTFDP): You CANNOT receive FNS and CTFDP in the same month.
- **Get Both FNS and CTFDP? NO.** Households must choose one program per month.







#### **Cherokee Tribal Food Distribution Program (CTFDP)**

#### **Learn More & Get CTFDP Application**

- •Visit the EBCI Tribal Foods Website: food.ebci-nsn.gov
- •On the website, you can find:
  - Detailed program information
  - •Eligibility requirements
  - •The downloadable application form

#### **Contact for Questions & Application Support**

•Reach out directly to:

Amelia Owle-Arkansas

•Email: amelowle@ebci-nsn.gov

• Phone: **828-359-9757** 

•Contact Amelia if you have questions about the CTFDP or need assistance with the application process.

Quick Reminder: Participating in CTFDP works alongside receiving SUN Bucks!







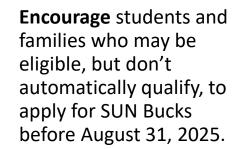
#### Role of Community Stakeholders

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 <a href="ncdhhs.gov/sunbucks">ncdhhs.gov/sunbucks</a> and @NCDHHS social media channels.



Direct students and families interested in learning more to available resources, including the website: ncdhhs.gov/sunbucks



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







#### How You Can Help Inform Families about SUN Bucks and SUN Meals

#### **SUN Bucks Overview Flyer**

#### SUN Bucks Eligibility Flyer (2-pages)

### 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



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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 to learn about eligibility and to apply.
- Stay updated on SUN Bucks! Visit 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 (M) 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.



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.





m ⊆ North Carolina Department of SMC PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

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## SUN Bucks is back for another year in 2025!



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SUN Bucks provides \$120 of grocery-buying benefits to qualifying school-aged children. Benefits can be used to buy nutritious food during the summer at places like grocery stores, farmers markets, and some online retailers. 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. More information can be found at SummerMeals4NCKids.org.

- 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 students will need to apply. Use the chart below or visit the SUN Bucks website at <a href="https://nchibucks">nchibucks</a> and use the SUNNY Chatbot's "Eligibility Quiz" to see if your child qualifies and whether you need to apply. Here you will also find more information on eligibility, application, and answers to frequently asked questions.
- ► Does My Student Qualify for SUN Bucks?

First, which type of school does the student attend?	Then, which scenario applies to the student?	Student is automatically qualified and does not need to apply.	Can the student apply?
1 Student attends a NSLP* school	SCENARIO A: Student participates in at least one of the following programs:  1. NSLP free or reduced-price (FRP) school meals  2. Food and Nutrition Services (FNLS, SNAP, food stamps)  3. Work First (TANF, cash assistance)  4. Medicaid with household income <185% of Federal Poverty Level (FPL)  5. Foster care	<b>✓</b>	x
	SCENARIO B: Student does not participate in any of the programs listed in Scenario A. Household must meet the income guidelines for SUN Bucks.	x	✓
2 Student does <u>not</u> attend a NSLP* school	SCENARIO C: Student is between the ages of 7 and 16 and participates in FNS, Work First, Medicaid with household income <185% of FPL, McKinney-Vento (unhoused, runaway), CTFDP (Cherokee Tribal Food Distribution Program), or foster care.	<b>✓</b>	x
	SCENARIO D: Student does not participate in any of the programs listed in FNS, Work First, or foster care.	x	x
3 Student attends a CEP** school	SCENARIO E: Student also participates in at least one of the programs listed in FNS, Work First, Medicaid with household income <185% of FPL, McKinney-Vento (unhoused, runaway), or foster care.	<b>✓</b>	x
	SCENARIO F: Student does not participate in any of the programs listed in Scenario A. Household must meet the income guidelines for SUN Bucks.	x	✓

\*National School Lunch Program (MSLD) is a program in most public schools and some charter and private schools. Students who meet certain criteria for both free and reduced-price meals are eligible to receive free meals through their school due to legislation from the NC General Assembly covering the cost for reduced-price meals.

\*\*Community Eligibility Provision School (CEP) is a type of NSLP school where all students get free me

Use the School Search Tool on the SUN Bucks website to see if your school is NSLP, CEP, or neither (does not qualify).

- How much will families receive? The one-time payment for the summer of 2025 is \$120 per eligible child. Benefit amounts may vary year to year and can be found on the SUN Bucks website.
- When and how will benefits be issued? Qualifying families will get a one-time payment per eligible student for the summer. Families will get a SUN Bucks card with benefits in the mail. Cards will be distributed starting in May and continue as additional children are determined eligible throughout the summer.
- Does SUN Bucks replace other food assistance benefits? No, SUN Bucks does not take the place of other food benefits. It's extra help on top of any other benefits you or your children might be getting.
- Are there other food assistance benefits for youth in the summer?
  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. 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. 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.





- How do I apply for SUN Bucks? Go to ncdhhs.gov/ sunbucksapplication to complete one single application for all the children in your household. Eligibility will be decided for each child separately.
- Stay updated on SUN Bucks! Search "NCDHHS" on Instagram, Facebook, and X to follow the account and stay in the loop for important program updates and announcements.







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#### 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

Find this flyer and SUN Bucks flyers at ncdhhs.gov/sunbucksResources



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



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













SummerMeals4NCKids.org

Scan to learn about nearby summer meals and grocery benefits





#### How You Can Help

#### ACT NOW! Share Information About SUN Bucks





#### **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 (@NCDHHS); follow @NCSchoolMeals
- **3. Post all flyers** mentioned on previous slides on your organization's website

Find the social media toolkit at <u>ncdhhs.gov/SUNBucksResources</u>. Check back on our website *ncdhhs.gov/sunbucks* for the most upto-date information







#### **NC DHHS Nondiscrimination Statement**

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), religious creed, disability, age, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language), should contact the agency (state or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: <a href="https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ad-3027.pdf">https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ad-3027.pdf</a>, from any USDA office, by calling (833) 620-1071, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to:

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

These institutions are equal opportunity providers.









#### Thank you for joining!

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

#### Where can I go for more information?

- SUN Bucks NCDHHS website: ncdhhs.gov/sunbucks
- SUN Bucks Flyers, webinar slides, and more: ncdhhs.gov/SUNBucksResources
- NCDHHS Social Media (Instagram, Facebook, and X): @NCDHHS, #NCSUNBucks
- Contact for Cherokee Tribal Foods Distribution Program: amelowle@ebci-nsn.gov
- SUN Meals and SUN Meals To-Go info: <u>SummerMeals4NCKids.org</u>, @NCSchoolMeals
- Contact for SUN Bucks questions not answered on the website: DCFW.SUNBucks@dhhs.nc.gov





