



North Carolina's New SUN Bucks Program

The [United States Department of Agriculture](#) (USDA) has launched its newest permanent food assistance program called SUN Bucks, also known as Summer EBT. The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) in partnership with Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) is excited to be one of 36 states opting into the program for Summer 2024.

Food insecurity remains a critical challenge across the state, with 1 in 4 children facing food insecurity or chronic hunger.¹ Over 60% of North Carolina students rely on free or reduced-price meals at school, meaning their access to nutritious foods during the summer period may decrease.¹ This lack of access to healthy, consistent meals can have adverse childhood development outcomes, including heightened stress and worse academic performance.²

SUN Bucks will provide school-age children with grocery-buying benefits for the summer period and works in tandem with NCDPI's [summer meal programs](#) as well as the [Food and Nutrition Services](#) and [Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children \(WIC\)](#). Children who qualify will receive a one-time payment of \$120 per eligible child on debit-like EBT cards that can be used to purchase healthy food at retailers that accept EBT. NCDHHS and NCDPI estimate that nearly 1 million North Carolinian children will receive benefits this summer.

SUN Bucks is an evidence-based program supported by a successful three-year pilot implemented by USDA. Over a three-year period, an evaluation assessment³ of the pilot found:

- 33% decrease in “very low” food insecurity in children
- 89% of participants redeemed their benefits
- Improved dietary quality for most of the nutrition outcomes surveyed, including:
 - Increase in whole grain, dairy, vegetable, and fruit consumption
 - Decrease in sugar-sweetened beverages consumption

SUN Bucks benefits will start to go out to families in mid-June, with rolling issuances until the end of September 2024 as new children become eligible. Many children will automatically qualify for SUN Bucks, but some will need to apply.

Please encourage families to visit the [SUN Bucks website](#) and SUN Bucks [Frequently Asked Questions](#) for more information. Families can also contact a SUN Bucks customer service representative by dialing 1-866-719-0141 and pressing option 2.

¹ North Carolina Department of Public Instruction

² [Food Insecurity and Child Development: A State-of-the-Art Review \(NIH\)](#)

³ [Summer EBT — A Tested and Effective Strategy for Ending Summer Hunger | Food and Nutrition Service \(usda.gov\)](#)