



SUN Bucks 2025: Information for School Nutrition and Summer Meals Sponsors

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 line³



1 in 5

children in North Carolina face food insecurity or chronic hunger¹



>70%

of children in North Carolina are eligible for free or reduced-price meals at school²



¹ *Feeding America Map the Meal Gap*

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

³ *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 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 school⁴.

SUN Summer Nutrition Programs for Kids

Three ways to combat summer hunger in 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.

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 debit-like 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
- Review Eligibility Flyer on 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 assessment¹ 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

¹ *Summer EBT — A Tested and Effective Strategy for Ending Summer Hunger | Food and Nutrition Service (usda.gov)*⁸

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 given to NC's economy.

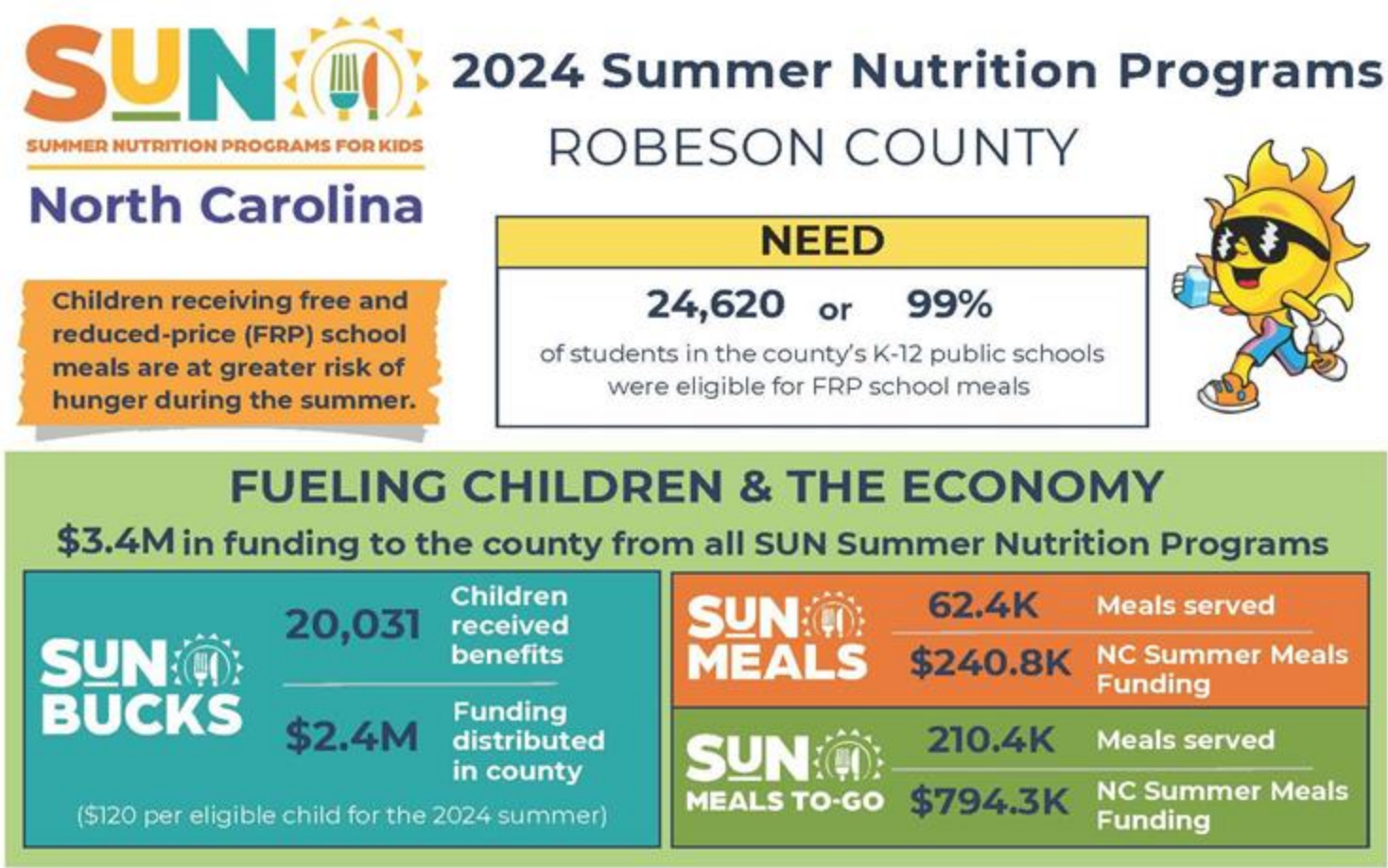
96.5%

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



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?

The National School Lunch Program (**NSLP**) is a federally assisted meal program operating in public and nonprofit private schools and residential child care 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 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.

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

Select Language

 **NCDHHS**

[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

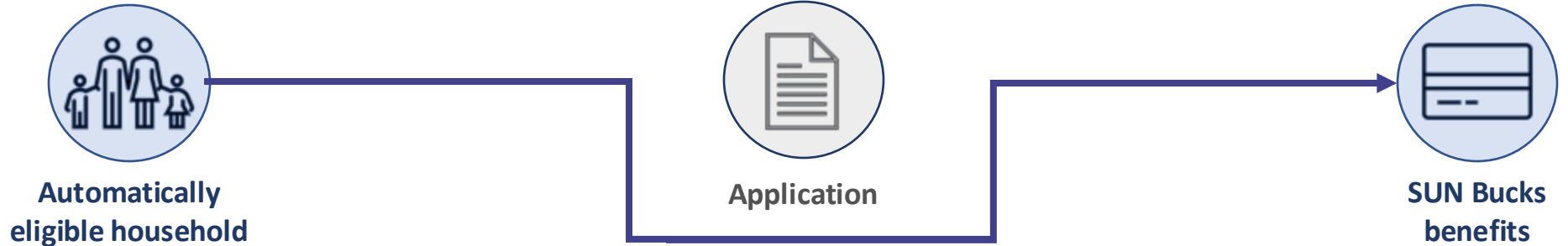
SUN Bucks Automatic Eligibility

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 (see Flyer: SUN Bucks Eligibility)

First, which type of school does the student attend?	Then, which scenario applies to the student?	Automaticall y qualify?	Apply?
National School Lunch Program (NSLP)	SCENARIO A: Participates in at least one of the following programs: 1. NSLP free or reduced-price (FRP) school meals 2. Food and Nutrition Services (FNS, food stamps) 3. Work First (TANF, cash assistance) 4. Medicaid with household income below 185% of federal poverty level 5. Foster care 6. McKinney Vento (unhoused/migrant/runaway)	YES	NO
	SCENARIO 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	Scenario C: 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
	Scenario F: Does not participate in any of the programs listed in Scenario A.		

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 cards 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 email, text, or robocall** 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](https://www.facebook.com/ncdhhs), [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/ncdhhs), and [X](https://twitter.com/ncdhhs) (previously Twitter).

Learn and Share and SUN Programs

Learn and share information about SUN Bucks, SUN Meals, and SUN Meals To-Go:

- Learn more about SUN Bucks at ncdhhs.gov/SUNBucks.
- Follow @NCDHHS, @NCSchoolMeals, @Ray4NCKids and @CarolinaHungerInitiative for info/updates.
- Ensure your team knows about all 3 SUN Programs.
- Reach out to families and the community about all 3 SUN Programs. Make sure they know how to find summer meals and get information on SUN Bucks.
- Use resources to promote the programs that include flyers, social media, slides, graphics, videos, etc.
- USDA resources are available at fns.usda.gov/summer/toolkit. NC resources are available from NCDHHS, NCDPI and CHI at ncdhhs.gov/SUNBucksResources and SummerMeals4NCKids.org.

North Carolina SUN Programs Toolkit

Tailored Communications Resources

- SUN Logos Branding Color Palette
- SUN Logos for North Carolina
- SUN Programs Webinars and Slides
- SUN Programs Flyer
- SUN Programs Social Media
- SUN Bucks Overview Flyer
- SUN Bucks Eligibility Flyer
- More resources in development



Find NORTH CAROLINA customized SUN Materials at:
SummerMeals4NCKids.org/toolkit

USDA SUN Program Resources

Multiple Languages, Customizable

- Branding Materials
- Social Media
- Graphics & Videos
- Print Materials
- Factsheets
- Communication Templates



Find USDA resources at fns.usda.gov/summer/toolkit.
Find NORTH CAROLINA customized SUN Materials at SummerMeals4NCKids.org/toolkit



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

SUN Bucks Overview Flyer

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.



5077 0000 0000 0000
JOHN SMITH

- ▶ **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.



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



ncdhhs.gov/sunbucks • NCDHHS and NCDPI are equal opportunity employers and providers. • USDA Non-Discrimination Statement • 5/2025

SUN Bucks Eligibility Flyer (2-pages)

SUN Bucks is back for another year in 2025!



5077 0000 0000 0000
JOHN SMITH

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 ncdhhs.gov/sunbucks 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 (FNS, SNAP, food stamps) 3. Work First (TANF, cash assistance) 4. Medicaid with household income <185% of Federal Poverty Level (FPL) 5. Foster care	✓	✗
	SCENARIO B: Student does not participate in any of the programs listed in Scenario A. Household must meet the income guidelines for SUN Bucks.	✗	✓
2 Student does not 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.	✓	✗
	SCENARIO D: Student does not participate in any of the programs listed in FNS, Work First, or foster care.	✗	✗
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.	✓	✗
	SCENARIO F: Student does not participate in any of the programs listed in Scenario A. Household must meet the income guidelines for SUN Bucks.	✗	✓

*National School Lunch Program (NSLP) 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 meals.

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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Find these flyers and more at ncdhhs.gov/SUNBucksResources

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

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

**SUN
MEALS**
North Carolina

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.

**SUN
MEALS TO-GO**
North Carolina

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.

**SUN
BUCKS**
North Carolina

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



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SummerMeals4NCKids.org

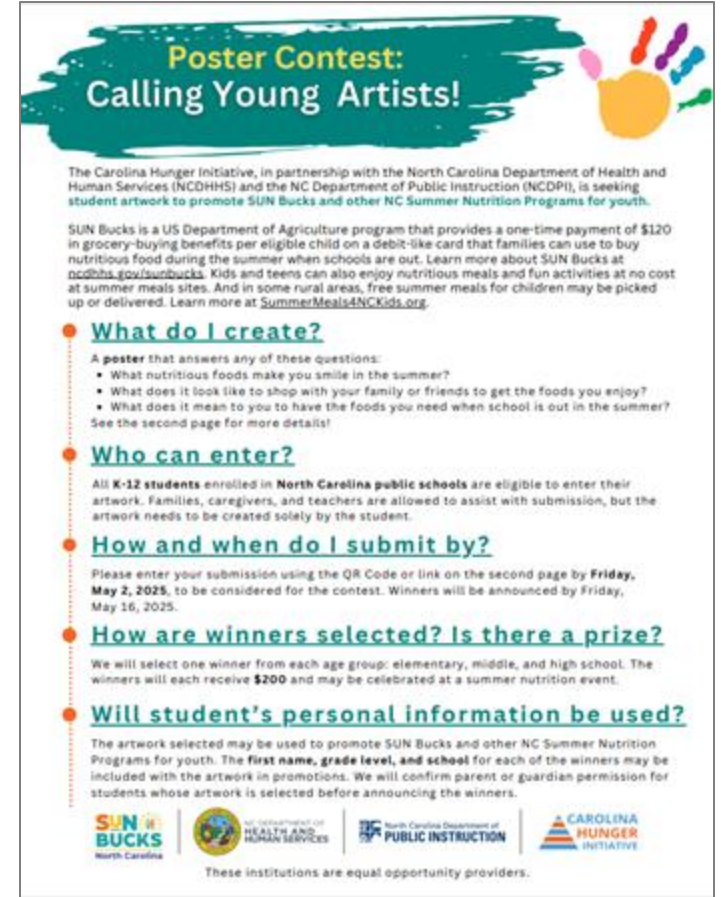
Scan to learn
about nearby
summer meals and
grocery benefits



Summer 2025

North Carolina SUN Bucks Student Poster Contest

- **Deadline: Submissions - 5/2, Results - 5/16**
- **Eligibility: All NC K-12 public school students**
- **Submission: 8 ½ x 11" poster, original artwork**
 - What nutritious foods make you smile in the summer?
 - What does it look like to shop with your family or friends to get the foods you enjoy?
 - What does it mean to you to have the foods you need when school is out in the summer?
- **Prizes: One winner from elementary, middle and high, each winner receives \$200 gift card**
- **Find info and enter:**
CarolinaHungerInitiative.org/NCSunBucksPosterContest
- **Please help promote the poster contest!**







**Poster Contest:
Calling Young Artists!**

The Carolina Hunger Initiative, in partnership with the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NC DHHS) and the NC Department of Public Instruction (NC DPI), is seeking student artwork to promote SUN Bucks and other NC Summer Nutrition Programs for youth.

SUN Bucks is a US Department of Agriculture program that provides a one-time payment of \$120 in grocery-buying benefits per eligible child on a debit-like card that families can use to buy nutritious food during the summer when schools are out. Learn more about SUN Bucks at ncdhhs.gov/sunbucks. Kids and teens can also enjoy nutritious meals and fun activities at no cost at summer meals sites. And in some rural areas, free summer meals for children may be picked up or delivered. Learn more at SummerMeals4NCKids.org.

- **What do I create?**
A poster that answers any of these questions:
 - What nutritious foods make you smile in the summer?
 - What does it look like to shop with your family or friends to get the foods you enjoy?
 - What does it mean to you to have the foods you need when school is out in the summer?See the second page for more details!
- **Who can enter?**
All K-12 students enrolled in North Carolina public schools are eligible to enter their artwork. Families, caregivers, and teachers are allowed to assist with submission, but the artwork needs to be created solely by the student.
- **How and when do I submit by?**
Please enter your submission using the QR Code or link on the second page by **Friday, May 2, 2025**, to be considered for the contest. Winners will be announced by Friday, May 16, 2025.
- **How are winners selected? Is there a prize?**
We will select one winner from each age group: elementary, middle, and high school. The winners will each receive **\$200** and may be celebrated at a summer nutrition event.
- **Will student's personal information be used?**
The artwork selected may be used to promote SUN Bucks and other NC Summer Nutrition Programs for youth. The **first name, grade level, and school** for each of the winners may be included with the artwork in promotions. We will confirm parent or guardian permission for students whose artwork is selected before announcing the winners.

These institutions are equal opportunity providers.

How You Can Help

ACT NOW! Share Information About SUN Bucks



Post Online

Learn and share 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** and **@Ray4NCKids** 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. Check back on our website ncdhhs.gov/sunbucks for the most up-to-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: <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ad-3027.pdf>, 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

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Thank You for Joining!

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

Where can I go for more information about SUN Programs?

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

Please reach out to DCFW.SUNBucks@dhhs.nc.gov with any questions.

- **Information on SUN Meals and SUN Meals To-Go:** SummerMeals4NCKids.org

Please reach out to summernutritionprogram@dpi.nc.gov with any questions regarding SUN Meals or SUN Meals To-Go.