



SUN Bucks Program

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) operates the SUN Bucks program, also known as Summer EBT, a food assistance program that helps families purchase groceries during the summer months. The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS), in partnership with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI), participates in the program to support children and families across the state.

Food insecurity remains a critical challenge across North Carolina, with 1 in 4 children facing food insecurity or chronic hunger. 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. This lack of access to healthy, consistent meals can affect childhood development, including increased stress and challenges with academic performance.

SUN Bucks provides school-age children with grocery-buying benefits during the summer months and works along 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 per eligible child on a debit-like EBT card that can be used to purchase healthy food at farmers' markets and retailers that accept EBT. NCDHHS and NCDPI estimate that over 1 million North Carolina children will receive benefits this summer.

SUN Bucks is an evidence-based program supported by a successful three-year pilot implemented by the USDA. Over a three-year period, an evaluation assessment¹ 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 are issued to eligible families during the summer months.

Many children will automatically qualify for SUN Bucks, but some will need to apply. Families are encouraged to visit the [SUN Bucks website](#) for more information. Families can also contact the North Carolina EBT call center at: 1-866-719-0141 and press option 2 for SUN Bucks.

¹North 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 \(usda.gov\)](#)