

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

Webinar - April 2025









SUN Bucks NC 2025 Information

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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



children in North Carolina face food insecurity or chronic hunger¹



>70%

of children in North Carolina are eligible for free or reducedprice 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
- 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 grocery stores
- Students return to school less ready to learn and perform worse in school⁴.









SUN Summer Nutrition Programs for Kids

SUN SUMMER NUTRITION PROGRAMS FOR KIDS

North Carolina

Three ways to combat summer hunger in 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

Learn more and find a nearby summer meal site at <u>SummerMeals4NCKids.org</u>.



SUN Bucks

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

Learn more at <u>ncdhhs.gov/sunbucks</u>







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 <u>ncdhhs.gov/SUNBucks</u>
- Review 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 ¹ of the pilot found:



33% decrease in "very low" food insecurity in children



89% of participants redeemed their issued benefits



Increase in

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 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 <u>SummerMeals4NCKids.org/</u>
 <u>County-Profiles</u> 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

.4M Funding distributed in county

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

SUN	62.4K	Meals served	
MEALS	\$240.8K	NC Summer Meals Funding	
SUN A	210.4K	Meals served	
The state of the s	ARO / 71/	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.

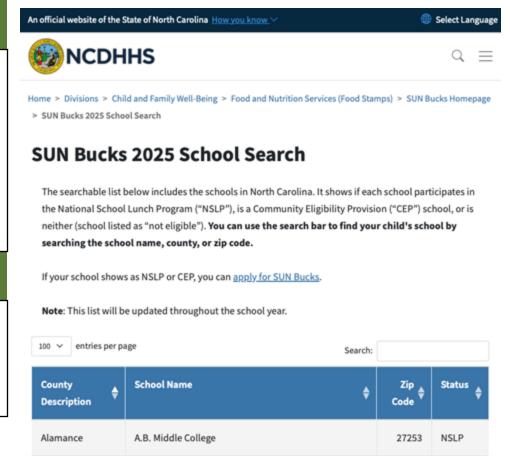
What are NSLP and CEP?

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 <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 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 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 Fligibility Provision	Scenario E: Participates in at least one of the programs listed in Scenario A.	YES	NO
Eligibility Provision	Secretion F: Doos not participate in any of the programs listed in Secretion		

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 cards 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 email, text, or robocall** 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 <u>X</u> (previously Twitter).







How You Can Help

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 <u>ncdhhs.gov/SUNBucks</u>.
- 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 find NORTH CAROLINA customized SUN Materials at Summer/Meals4NCKids.org/toolkit









SUN #

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



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 noghhs gow/sunbucks for more information and answers to frequently asked questions. Search "NCDHHS" on instagram, Egcebook, 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 North Carolina 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.





nodnina.gov/sumbucks + NCDHHS and

SUN Bucks is back for another year in 2025!



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SUN Bucks provides \$120 of gracery-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.

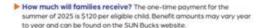
- > Who is eligible for SUN Bucks? Many children will be automatically enrolled for SUN Bucks based on their participation in other qualifying benefit programs. Other students will need to apply. Use the chart below or visit. the SUN Bucks website at nachins gov/sunbucks and use the SUNNY Chatbot's "Eligibility 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 2.F attends 3.V a NSLP* 4.N school 5.F	SCENARIO A: Student participates in at least one of the following programs: 1. NSLP free or reduced-price (FIRP) school meals: 2. Food and Nutrition Services (FINS, SNAP, flood stamps) 5. Work First (TANF, cash assistance) 4. Medicaid with household income <185% of Federal Poverty Level (FPL) 5. Foster cash.	1	×
	SCENARIO 8: Student does not participate in any of the programs listed in Scenario A. Household must meet the income guidelines for SUN Bucks.	×	1
2 Student does not ottend o NSLP* School SCENARIO D: Student o	SCENARIO C: Student is between the ages of 7 and 16 and participates in FinS, Work First, Medicaid with household income <185% of FPL., McKinney-Vento (unhoused, runaway), CTFDP (Cherokee Tribal Food Distribution Program), or foster care.	1	x
	SCENARIO D: Student does not participate in any of the programs listed in FNS, Work First, or foster care.	×	x
3 Student ottends a CEP** school	SCENARIO E: Student also participates in at least one of the programs Ested in FNS, Work First, Medicaid with household income <185% of FPL, McKenney-Vento (unhoused, runaway), or faster care.	1	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.	×	1

tain 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 mean

"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).





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 SummerMedis4NCKds.org





- How do I apply for SUN Bucks? Go to acabas 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.















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



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





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!









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
 - 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

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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

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 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 <u>DCFW.SUNBucks@dhhs.nc.gov</u> with any questions.

Information on SUN Meals and SUN Meals To-Go: <u>SummerMeals4NCKids.org</u>

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





