

Summer EBT Informational Session for Community Partners



Hello! Thank you for joining today's informational session on Summer EBT. This session is specifically designed for our community partners and advocates. We want to make sure to provide this audience with all of the program information so you can better assist the families you work with.

Presenters



Allie Caito-Sipe



Gretchen Huntzer



I am Allie Caito-Sipe, Assistant Director of School Nutrition Programs at the Indiana Department of Education. Joining me today is Gretchen Huntzer, School Nutrition Specialist at the IDOE.

Agenda

- Summer EBT background
- Action items for the state and community partners
- Indiana Communications Toolkits
- Frequently asked questions (FAQs)



Our agenda today is to discuss the new USDA program called Summer EBT, lay out action items for the state and community partners, introduce our communications toolkits, and then go over some frequently asked questions. At the end we hope to have enough time to answer any additional questions you might have.

What is Summer EBT?

- Summer EBT, branded as **Indiana SUN Bucks**, is a new and permanent program to provide money to households with school-aged children to purchase food during the summer.
- Households will receive a \$120 lump sum benefit for each qualifying child.
- Children must be eligible for free or reduced price meals and eligibility must be established annually.



So what is Summer EBT?

Summer EBT, which we have branded as Indiana SUN Bucks, is a new and permanent program to provide money to households with school-aged children to purchase food during the summer. Households will receive \$120 for each qualifying child to be spent during the summer months. Children must be eligible for free or reduced price meals and eligibility must be established annually.

In Indiana this program is co-agency operated by Indiana Department of Education and the Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA), specifically Division of Family Resources (DFR). DFR will be responsible for the various contracts for putting this program together and IDOE will be responsible for application processing, program communication and outreach, and the customer service component. We also will be providing the enrollment and eligibility information to the card processors.

How is this different from the Pandemic EBT?

- Pandemic EBT (P-EBT) was mainly implemented by DFR (with enrollment information supplied by IDOE).
- P-EBT was an emergency benefit for eligible households based on COVID-related absences.
- P-EBT was issued throughout the school year and during one summer period.
- Children attending schools that operated the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) were automatically eligible for P-EBT.



So you might be wondering, how is Sun Bucks different from the Pandemic EBT (P-EBT) program?

(click) Well first, P-EBT was primarily operated by DFR. IDOE assisted with enrollment information, but that was about it. Sun Bucks will have the commitment and varied expertise of both agencies.

(click) P-EBT was an emergency benefit for eligible households based on COVID-related absences. You probably recall the specific absence tracking that schools had to record to ensure families were receiving the right amount of benefits. Luckily with Sun Bucks, the only eligibility criteria is that the student was approved for free or reduced benefits during the prior school year or at some point during the 2024 summer.

(click) P-EBT benefits were issued throughout the school year and during one summer period. Sun Bucks will only be issued for the summer months. This program does not extend into the school year.

(click) Children attending schools that operated the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) were automatically eligible for P-EBT. That is not the case with Sun Bucks. Let's talk about that now.

SUN Bucks and CEP Schools

What is CEP?

Approved CEP schools have a high percentage of direct certified students (students receiving SNAP, TANF, income-based Medicaid (meeting the USDA income guidelines), or are foster, migrant, or homeless). CEP schools provide free meals to all students and do not collect applications for free and reduced meal benefits.

Who qualifies for SUN Bucks?

- Direct certified students
- Students who might have submitted a free and reduced application with the school
- Students approved through the SUN Bucks application



For those who might not be aware, CEP is an option for schools that have a high percentage of direct certified students, meaning households already qualify for another assistance program like SNAP, TANF, or certain levels of income-based Medicaid, or the students in the household are foster, migrant, or homeless. Schools that elect to implement CEP do not process any applications for meal benefits. Instead, they use their direct certification percentage and multiply that by 1.6 to determine their free and paid claiming percentage. All students automatically receive a free meal, regardless of individual eligibility.

As I mentioned under P-EBT all students in CEP schools were automatically eligible for P-EBT benefits. This has changed for SUN Bucks. Going forward, only students who were direct certified for free or reduced benefits at a CEP school will automatically be eligible for SUN Bucks. If the school collected and processed free and reduced applications for other benefits and pushed that into IDOE's enrollment system called the Data Exchange, we can use that eligibility for this program as well. Households with students who could not be direct certified and did not fill out an application with the school will be able to fill out an application for SUN Bucks benefits. This application will be made available at the state level and processed by the state.

SUN Bucks and Non-CEP Schools

What is a non-CEP school?

Schools that process direct certification and applications to determine free or reduced eligibility and then claim those meals at the proper rates - free, reduced, and paid.

Who qualifies for SUN Bucks?

- Students approved for free or reduced meals at any point during the school year.
 - Unless the household opted out of benefits or benefits were removed due to verification.
- Students approved through the SUN Bucks application during the summer.



Let's talk about the non-CEP schools. These are schools that process direct certification and applications to determine free and reduced eligibility and then claim those meals at the proper rates - free, reduced, and paid.

How does this program work for non-CEP schools?

Households that qualify for free or reduced meals at any point during the previous school year are eligible for SUN Bucks, unless the household opted out of benefits or they were removed due to verification.

Households that were not direct certified and missed applying for benefits during the school year, will have the opportunity to fill out our SUN Bucks application with the state during the summer months.

Including
virtual and
homeschool
students!

SUN Bucks and Non-NSLP Schools

What is a non-NSLP school?

Schools that do not operate the National School Lunch Program.

Who qualifies for SUN Bucks?

- Only school age children who are already receiving SNAP, TANF, certain levels of Medicaid benefits or are foster children.



Non-NSLP schools are also included in SUN Bucks guidance. So what is a non-NSLP school? This is any school that does not operate the National School Lunch Program.

Only school-age children who are already approved for SNAP, TANF, certain levels of income based Medicaid, or are foster will be eligible for S-EBT. Households with children who are not automatically eligible for one of those programs or via foster status are not allowed to submit an application.

Notice that students attending virtual schools and homeschool students fall into this criteria as well.

Information Sharing

School enrollment information submitted to IDOE Data Exchange (DEX)

Direct Certification information

Homeless/migrant/foster lists

Approved state SUN Bucks applications

SUN Bucks card processor (Conduent)

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graph LR; A[School enrollment information submitted to IDOE Data Exchange (DEX)] --> D[SUN Bucks card processor (Conduent)]; B[Direct Certification information] --> D; C[Homeless/migrant/foster lists] --> D; E[Approved state SUN Bucks applications] --> D;
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So how will we know who gets benefits? Primarily we will be getting this information from the IDOE's Data Exchange (also known as DEX). Schools currently submit information about their enrolled students into the state system on a regular basis - not just for school nutrition information, but also for other state reporting requirements. We will be pulling that information (including student name, student address, birthdate, and free and reduced eligibility). Additionally we will pull students who haven't been matched directly by schools in the state's Direct Certification database. We will also be working with homeless, migrant, and foster liaisons and points of contact to ensure we are quickly identifying those students. Finally all other students who might be eligible but haven't been direct certified or weren't approved through an application during the school year, will be able to fill out a state sun bucks application.

Program Nuts and Bolts

- New cards will be issued for this program.
- Households will receive one card for each eligible student in the household.
- The card will be loaded with the full \$120 benefit.
- The money can be spent on the same items that SNAP dollars can be spent on.
 - Criteria will be posted on our website and on the paperwork that comes with the card.
- There will be a process for households to submit address changes, opt out of card benefits, ask questions about eligibility, inquire about a missing card, and notify of fraud or stolen benefits.



Some very specific program nuts and bolts:

1. New cards will be issued for this program. So households should not keep their old P-EBT cards and can throw them away.
2. Households will receive one card for each eligible student in the household.
3. The card will be loaded with the full \$120 benefit. Even if a household applies in July or August.
4. The money can be spent on the same items that SNAP dollars can be spent on - criteria will be posted on our website and on the paperwork that comes with the card.
5. There will be a process for households to submit address changes, opt out of card benefits, ask questions about eligibility, inquire about a missing card, and notify us of fraud or stolen benefits.

State Level Action Items



So now that you have a general overview of SUN Bucks and an inkling of who is eligible and who is not. I want to go over what we are currently working on right now and what is coming up.

State Level Action Items

February	March	April	May	June	July	August
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Finalize POM → Begin state SUN Bucks application development → Start internal conversations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Convene school advisory groups → Work with stakeholders → Host info sessions → Release toolkits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Onboard new hires → Press release → App opens → Troubleshoot issues and questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Last data push → First issuance → Applications processed → Verification for cause conducted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Applications processed → Customer service provided → Cards continue to issue until end of summer in August 		



(click) By January 1 we had to opt into the program and then submit our plan of operations and management (or POM) to USDA by February 15. In other words, this planning has been quick and complex. We immediately starting working with DFR's vendor to create a state-wide online application to release in April. We also started working with our internal groups, like Communications, IT, infrastructure, etc. to ensure that everyone is communication and working together.

(click) At the tail end of February we started convening advisory groups - we have met with CEP-only sponsors; non-CEP sponsors, and those with a mix of CEP and non-CEP schools. We also have been reaching out to stakeholders in the community to share the details of this program. We are hosting these information sessions for both community partners and school personnel. By the end of March we hope to be able to release our toolkits and website, which we will talk about in a little bit.

(click) We recently hired 3 contractors to help process applications, conduct verification, and help with customer service issues and will begin onboarding them soon. IDOE will be sending out a press release once the application opens (although we will be communicating with schools well before that in our weekly newsletter) and begin helping schools and households troubleshoot issues and answer questions.

(click) In May we expect to have our last data push from data exchange and then the first card issuance will go out - as long as the card vendor is able to meet the demands of all the states that are operating S-EBT. We will continue to process applications and we are required to verify any questionable applications for cause.

(click) Throughout the summer months we will continue to process applications, provide customer service, and issue cards until the end of summer in August.

Not on this timeline but something to make note of - all cards have an expungement period. Any benefits that have not been spent within 122 days after issuance will be removed from the card. SNAP households are used to this, but there will be plenty of households that have never had SNAP benefits before. We will be including this information on their mailer that is sent with the card and through updates.

Community Level Action Items



Now I want to outline some specific community level action items.

Program Promotion

- Review the SUN Bucks Communications Toolkit
- Promote the program widely
 - Newsletters
 - Social Media
 - Websites
 - Webinars
 - Directly with households
- Help explain who qualifies and where to go with questions.



First and foremost, we need your help with program promotion.

One piece of feedback we got during our advisory sessions was that the program wasn't communicated very well with schools or families. Households randomly started receiving benefit cards in the mail and didn't understand why they were getting them and what they were for.

To help combat this, we will be releasing two different SUN Bucks Communications toolkits, one for schools and one for community partners. Gretchen will go over these toolkits in a little bit. We hope you will promote the program in your newsletters, on social media, on your website, in webinars, and when working directly with households. We would appreciate any help we can get communicating to households about how students qualify for SUN Bucks and directing families where to go with questions.

Program Plan for CEP Schools

Schools should be notifying households with Direct Certified children:

- That they do not need to apply for SUN Bucks.
- How to opt out, change address, and make other application updates.

Households not individually approved for free or reduced benefits

- Should fill out the state's SUN Bucks application beginning mid-April, if they feel they qualify.



Keep in mind, the program operates differently depending on the school that the student goes to.

For CEP schools, the plan is for schools to notify households with direct certified children that they do not need to apply for SUN Bucks. They will automatically receive a SUN Bucks card in the mail. Schools should also let them know how to opt out or change address/household information before May 1.

Households that were not individually approved for free or reduced benefits should be directed to the state's SUN Bucks application beginning mid-April if they feel they qualify.

Program Plan for Non-CEP Schools

Schools should be communicating to households already approved for free or reduced benefits:

- That they do not need to apply.
- How to opt out, change address, and make other application updates.

Households not approved for free or reduced benefits:

- Before May 1: Should fill out an application with the school (if they feel they are eligible).
- On and after May 1: Should complete the state's SUN Bucks application.



For those attending a non-cep school:

Schools should be communicating to households approved for free and reduced benefits that they will not need to apply for SUN Bucks benefits. Instead they will automatically receive their cards in May. However they can be told how to opt out of the program, update their address, or make any other application updates.

Households not approved for free or reduced benefits, should be encouraged to fill out an application with the school prior to May 1. On and after May 1, they should be directed to the state's online SUN Bucks application.

Including
virtual and
homeschool
students!

Program Plan for Non-NSLP Schools

Direct all households to the SUN Bucks application where they will be asked to submit their valid SNAP or TANF case number or foster, homeless, or migrant designation for eligibility check.

As a reminder, students enrolled in non-NSLP schools will not be able to be approved with an income application.



For those non-NSLP schools, virtual schools, and homeschooled students - schools and partners should direct all households to the SUN Bucks application where they will be asked to submit their valid SNAP or TANF case number for an eligibility check. They could also check that they are foster, homeless, or migrant and that would be validated as well. As a reminder, they will not be able to be approved for SUN Bucks with an income application.

Program Plan for All Schools

Identify a school contact that we could reach out to in the summer months.

Reasons we might reach out:

- Enrollment questions
- Household questions - split custody, extended eligibility
- Homeless, Migrant, Foster confirmation
- Data issues



For all schools, including CEP, non-CEP, and non-NSLP schools, we are asking them to identify a school contact that we could reach out to in the summer months if necessary.

We might need to validate that a student was really enrolled at their school. We might have some household situations we need to clarify - like split custody situations or extended DC eligibility. We might need to reach out to their liaisons about homeless, migrant, or foster status. And we might need to clean up a data submission problem that is preventing a group of students from their school from receiving the benefits.

We will start reaching out to schools to get this information in the next few weeks.

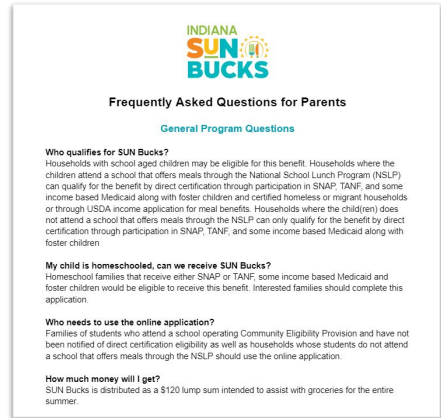
Indiana Communications Toolkits



I am going to turn this next part over to Gretchen to talk about the Indiana Communications Toolkit.

Toolkit for Community Partners

- One page flyer with application QR code
- Suggested social media/newsletter talking points with graphics
- FAQ for Parents
- USDA Fact Sheets for advocates and philanthropic organizations



Toolkit for Schools

- Timeline with suggested outreach
- Guidance by school claiming/operation type
- Letter templates
 - Automatic SUN Bucks approval
 - Need to apply
- Program fact sheets
- Social media post/newsletter wording and graphics suggestions



Frequently Asked Questions



FAQ

Will we be able to help our families better with SUN Bucks than we were with P-EBT?

Yes! Our agencies are working hard to ensure open and clear communication is at the forefront of this program. Schools and partners will be informed of changes and updates in real time. Please make sure the SUN Bucks point person for your corporation is receiving the School Nutrition Programs weekly email.

What resources will we be available to help us with this program?

IDOE is working on a communications toolkit as well as other resources to assist in the flow of information.

- FAQ - Parents
- FAQ - Schools
- Guidance by operation type (CEP, Non-CEP, non-NSLP)
- Communications Toolkit
- Fact Sheets
- Help form and call-in phone number



FAQ

When will households receive their card?

Households who are automatically eligible and those who complete the online application by May 1 should receive their card in early June. Others who complete the application after May 1 will receive their card 4-6 weeks* after approval

*This timeline is subject to change.

Is there a schedule when payments will be made to the cards?

This benefit comes in one lump sum of \$120 per eligible child. There are no additional payments made. One card will be issued for each eligible child.



FAQ

What is the date schools need to have information updated in Data Exchange?

IDOE will pull enrollment roster reports from Data Exchange in early May. Please have all information for eligibility, address updates, and correct enrollment into Data Exchange by May 1.

Can we advertise our summer meals program at the same time we advertise SUN Bucks?

Yes! SUN Bucks and SUN Meals work together to help households feed children in the summer. Please communicate that households can receive both SUN Bucks AND SUN Meals.



FAQ

I have some households that never apply for benefits due to their immigration status. Can these families receive SUN Bucks?

Yes, SUN Bucks is available regardless of citizenship or immigration status and participation will not affect the household's current immigration status.

When is the last day households can use the SUN Bucks application?

Households must apply by Friday, August 16, to receive benefits for 2024.



Questions?

