

Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer Food Program for Children

Washington State Department of Social and Health Services
Economic Services Administration, Community Services Division

In December 2022, the U.S. Congress [authorized](#) a permanent, nationwide Summer EBT program supporting children who lose access to free and reduced-price meals through the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program during the summer months. Separate from Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Summer EBT – also known as SUN Bucks – will provide up to a total of \$120 in additional food benefits to each eligible child beginning summer 2024 and adjusted annually.

The program complements other summer nutrition programs authorized by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Food and Nutrition Service. Similar to SNAP, SUN Bucks is a flexible benefit that families can use to buy food of their choice, which will help families struggling with rising food costs and bring additional food dollars into local economies. SUN Bucks is an evidence-based policy which research shows that providing families with summer grocery benefits reduces child hunger and supports healthier diets. USDA tested SUN Bucks as a demonstration project in select states and certain Indian Tribal Organizations for several years as the Summer EBT Food Program for Children. [Rigorous evaluations](#) showed that the program decreased the number of kids with very low food security by one-third.

In Washington, SUN Bucks will be co-implemented by the Department of Social and Health Services and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. A projected 550,000 Washington children would meet the [eligibility requirements](#) and receive benefits this summer. DSHS submitted its initial notice of intent to administer SUN Bucks to FNS on Jan. 1, 2024, and must submit a state plan by Feb. 15, 2024. The program is funded through a 50 % state and federal match; DSHS must confirm the availability of state funds prior to receiving FNS approval of the state plan. Upon approval, state agencies can begin to use the allocated administrative funding and issue SUN Bucks benefits at 100 % federal funding.

Implementing SUN Bucks in 2024 requires seamless collaboration and data sharing between DSHS, OSPI and the Washington state EBT vendor, FIS. Administration of the Pandemic EBT program provided a strong programmatic foundation for these partners to build on as they work through the state’s SUN Bucks plans. DSHS is unable to make changes to its internal eligibility systems in time for benefit issuance in 2024, and potentially 2025, due to various competing priorities. Given the tight timelines and importance of timely access to these benefits, DSHS is seeking proper authority and funding to secure a third-party contractor.

Gov. Inslee’s 2024 supplemental budget proposes funding to implement the program in summer 2024. This proposal includes \$9.6 million in state funds as well as spending authority for an additional \$9.6 million of federal funds. DSHS and OSPI continue to work with federal and state partners to refine these estimates.

For more information, please see [Summer EBT | Food and Nutrition Service \(usda.gov\)](#)

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