



## Frequently Asked Questions for School Employees

Links and resources are listed on the last page of this document.

### Support

#### **What is Indiana SUN Bucks?**

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 \$120 for each qualifying child to be spent during the summer months. Children must be eligible for free or reduced price meals in qualifying schools and eligibility must be established annually.

#### **What support is available at the state level?**

IDOE has full-time dedicated customer support representatives ready to assist schools and households with SUN Bucks questions.

#### **Where do I go if I need help?**

Households, as well as schools, should use the [online help form](#).

#### **Is there a phone number to call?**

Yes, please call the SUN Bucks helpline at 317-234-4528.

#### **When should I help my families versus sending them to the help form?**

Schools can assist households with initial eligibility questions. Please notify those who are directly certified and those who are approved for meal benefits for the 2023-2024 school year that they are automatically qualified for SUN Bucks and answer questions related to local eligibility determinations. Direct all other SUN Bucks questions to the [online help form](#).

#### **Is there a website where households can receive more information?**

Yes, please direct households to the [Indiana SUN Bucks webpage](#) for more information.

#### **Is there a place I can go to see what information was used for the household?**

IDOE will pull eligibility information from Data Exchange (DEX) in May. The information used will include: child's name, address, eligibility determination for free or reduced meals, and whether the child is directly certified. IDOE is building a DEX report schools can use to determine what information was collected.

#### **A household needs to update their address, where can they do that?**

If it is prior to Wednesday, May 1, please update the household's address in your enrollment report within DEX. If after Wednesday, May 1, please have the household submit a ticket to the online [help form](#).

## Data Collection

### **Who at my school uses DEX?**

Each school assigns their own DEX user. Ask in the administration office who submits DEX reports to find out who in your school is the main point of contact.

### **We are a fully Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) school district and collect income applications, can we report that to you?**

Yes, please include the information within data exchange. As long as the application matches similar information collected on the traditional meal benefit application, eligibility determinations can be used for SUN Bucks benefits this year.

### **We are a partial-CEP corporation, if we have CEP students approved on a meal benefit application, will they be collected as automatically eligible?**

Yes, as long as the DEX enrollment report lists a student as eligible for free or reduced price meal benefits, they should pull into the report used for issuing SUN Bucks cards.

## Eligibility

### **If we offer support services to homeschool students, but they are not enrolled in our academic school program, will they be eligible for SUN Bucks?**

Homeschooled students are eligible only if they participate in a directly certifiable program such as SNAP, TANF, and some income based Medicaid along with foster children. Please direct these households to the SUN Bucks online application where they will be asked to submit a valid FSSA case number or check categorical eligibility (foster, homeless, or migrant).

### **Are students enrolled in pre-kindergarten (pre-k) included in the program?**

If pre-k students are enrolled in a National School Lunch Program (NSLP) operating school (whether implementing CEP or not), then they are eligible for SUN Bucks benefits. This eligibility extends to Head Start and On My Way Pre-K programs, as long as the school is operating these programs.

If pre-k students are not enrolled in a NSLP operating school, then they are not eligible for SUN Bucks because they are younger than Indiana's minimum compulsory age of enrollment for school. USDA only allows school-aged students at non-NSLP schools to receive the benefits (if they meet other eligibility requirements, as well).

## General Program Requirements

### Who qualifies for SUN Bucks?

Children attending a school that offers meals through NSLP can qualify for SUN Bucks if they are approved for free or reduced meals at any point during the 2023-2024 school year or in the summer months in 2024. Eligibility will be determined either through direct certification (automatic approval based on participation in SNAP, TANF, and some income based Medicaid, or qualifying as foster, homeless, or migrant) or through a free and reduced income application for meal benefits (either processed by the school or through the state's SUN Bucks application).

School-aged children not attending a school that offers meals through the NSLP can only qualify for the benefit by participating in SNAP, TANF, and some income based Medicaid, or are determined to be foster, homeless, or migrant. These children are not allowed to be approved for SUN Bucks benefits with an income application.

### How is payment issued?

Households will receive one card for each eligible child. Each card will be pre-loaded with the full \$120 benefit.

### When will households receive their card?

Households who are automatically enrolled will receive their card in early June. Those who apply later will receive their card fully loaded with \$120 for the eligible child about as soon as possible after approval. Generally, USDA requires approximately 15 days from the application submission to approve the application and issue the card.

### What is the payment schedule?

SUN Bucks benefits are sent in one lump sum for the entire summer. Households that are automatically enrolled will receive their card in early June. Those who apply later will receive their card fully loaded with \$120 for the eligible child soon after their approval.

### Can children who attend a program where meals are provided through the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) receive SUN Bucks?

Yes. SUN Bucks is a little extra to help families stretch their grocery budget when school's out for summer. Feel free to share the following information to help families find free meal service locations closest to them: call 1-866-3-HUNGRY or 1-877-8-HAMBRE (or text 914-342-7744 with the keyword "summer meals").

### Are there immigration status restrictions to receiving SUN Bucks?

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

### Who needs to use the online application?

Families of students who attend a school operating CEP and have not been notified of automatic eligibility; households with children attending an NSLP school who are not approved for free or reduced benefits by Wednesday, May 1, who wish to apply for SUN Bucks; as well as households whose students do not attend a school that offers meals through the NSLP should use the [online application](#).

**We are not operating the school meals program, how do our families become directly certified?**

If you are not a NSLP school, households can only qualify for SUN Bucks through direct certification. Please have households submit an [application](#) with a valid Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA) case number and the processors will determine the household's direct certification status.

**When is the last day for households to apply?**

Applications for Summer 2024 must be received by Friday, August 16.

**Is the application available in other languages?**

Users can use Google Translate for websites. Please follow [these instructions](#).

## Benefits Questions

**What is the website to apply for SUN Bucks?**

Households who need to apply for SUN Bucks can [apply here](#). CEP schools should direct non-DC households to the SUN Bucks Application. Schools that are not CEP can use their local meal benefit application until Wednesday, May 1, then should direct households to the SUN Bucks Application.

**Can I apply using a paper application?**

Yes, IDOE will release additional information about the paper application soon. Paper applications must be postmarked by Friday, August 17, to be eligible for 2024 benefits.

**Who should households who have issues pertaining to the benefit cards contact?**

Please have households submit a help request to [this form](#) and a SUN Bucks Specialist will respond shortly.

**Where can households use SUN Bucks?**

Households can use SUN Bucks anywhere EBT benefits are accepted. Benefits may only be used to purchase food. Stores cannot give change or cash back from a food benefit transaction. Only the exact amount of food purchases may be deducted from the food benefit account. If returns are made from a SNAP account, the amount of the return will go onto the EBT card as a credit. Cash cannot be given for returns according to federal law. There is no minimum dollar amount per transaction or a maximum limit on the number of transactions.

**When will SUN Bucks expire?**

Benefits expire 122 days after issuance. Please direct households to use the benefit within that time frame. Once expired, the benefit cannot be reloaded.

**How do households opt-out of this program?**

If a household receives notification that they are eligible, but do not wish to receive the benefits, please have them complete the [online help form](#).

**Marketing and Communications Guidance****I'd like to release information about the program to my households. Do you have guidance?**

Please review the SUN Bucks Communications Toolkit for schools on the [Indiana SUN Bucks webpage](#). This toolkit offers step by step guidance for communicating with households about this new program.

**Resources and Links**

SUN Bucks Webpage: <https://in.gov/doe/nutrition/indiana-sun-bucks-summer-ebt>

SUN Bucks Application Link: <https://indianasunbucks.com/>

SUN Bucks Help Form: <https://ido.e.atlassian.net/servicedesk/customer/portal/11>

USDA Information for Families: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/sebt/household>