

# Applications Now Open for New SUN Bucks Summer Food Program

Bt Sen. Lisa Boscola

BANGOR -

The Pennsylvania Department of Education and the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services recently announced that applications are open for a new seasonal program that will help children stay fed by providing a one-time benefit each summer for purchasing healthy, nutritious meals through the federal SUN Bucks program.

SUN Bucks will provide households a SNAP-like benefit to purchase food for the summer months when school is not in session. Applications are open now through August 31, and families can use the SUN Bucks Eligibility Navigator to determine whether they need to apply or if they are automatically eligible.

This year, Pennsylvania opted in to the new nationwide Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer program, also known as SUN Bucks or Summer EBT. This federal program allows Pennsylvania to offer a nutrition benefit that functions like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

for the summer months to families who receive free or reduced priced meals during the school year. This program will provide households a one-time payment of \$120 for each eligible child to buy food. Because this is the first year of the program, benefits will be issued beginning in mid-August for Summer 2024. All 2024 SUN Bucks benefits will be issued by the end of October.

Most children who will receive SUN Bucks are automatically eligible and do not need to apply. If families already have an EBT card, SUN Bucks benefits will be automatically added to this card, if possible, starting in mid-August. Families who do not have an EBT card will receive a Summer EBT card in the mail. There are several ways for a child to be automatically eligible for SUN Bucks without needing to apply, including:

- if they or their family already qualify for SNAP or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF);
- if they already qualify for Medicaid with qualifying income for the National School Lunch or Breakfast Program (NSLP); or
- if they applied for and were eligible for free or reduced-priced school meals.

Families whose children are not automatically eligible, including those who attend a school where all students receive free or reduced-price school meals under the Community Eligibility Provision, but the family does not meet the automatic eligibility criteria will need to complete a paper SUN Bucks application. Households can determine if their child is eligible and whether they need to apply by using the Shapiro Administration's SUN Bucks Eligibility Navigator. If households are not automatically eligible and believe their child is eligible, a paper application is available to complete. Applications can be submitted by mail or through a local County Assistance Office.



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