



SUN Bucks

(Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer Program)

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Office of Income Maintenance

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What is SUN Bucks?

SUN Bucks, also known as the Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer program (Summer EBT), was authorized by the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023 as a new permanent summer nutrition program.

Unlike other Child Nutrition programs that are operated through the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), SUN Bucks is operated through DHS, with support from PDE.

Benefit Information

- SUN Bucks provides a benefit of \$40 for each summer month (June, July, and August). In Pennsylvania, SUN Bucks will be issued as a single \$120 maximum benefit per eligible child.
- There is no pro-ration of SUN Bucks benefits. A child is either eligible and receives the full \$120 or is ineligible and does not receive SUN Bucks.
- The benefit is functionally equivalent to SNAP.

Eligibility

A child can qualify for SUN Bucks through three methods:

- Automatic eligibility based on being eligible for Direct Certification
 - Must be age 6 through 18; or enrolled in a school that participates in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP); and
 - SNAP and TANF household enrollment; or
 - Medicaid with qualifying income for the NSLP.
 - » Note: PH 95 and CHIP do NOT qualify for Direct Certification.
- Automatic eligibility based on information provided by school
 - Must be an NSLP-participating school; and
 - Must have been determined eligible for Free or Reduced-Priced meals through an NSLP application; or
 - Be a foster child, a runaway, a migrant, homeless, or participating in Head Start.
- Determined eligible through a SUN Bucks application.

Eligibility Continued

- A child must apply for SUN Bucks if:
 - They attended a school that participates in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP); AND,
 - They did not receive TANF or SNAP or they did not receive Medicaid with qualifying income for the NSLP; AND,
 - They did not apply for or were not determined eligible for Free or Reduced-Priced meals through their school; AND,
 - They are not a foster child, homeless, a migrant, or a runaway.
- If a child was not enrolled in a school that participates in the NSLP, they cannot qualify for SUN Bucks through an application.

Eligibility Continued

- Students receiving free/reduced price meals at Community Eligibility Provision Schools will not be automatically eligible for SUN Bucks unless they meet one of the previous eligibility criteria:
 - Received SNAP or TANF; or,
 - Received Medicaid with qualifying income for the NSLP; or,
 - Is homeless, a foster child, a runaway, or a migrant.

Benefit Receipt

- If a child is eligible for SUN Bucks and the household has an EBT card for SNAP or TANF, the benefit will be issued to the regular EBT card, into the SNAP account.
- If the child is eligible for SUN Bucks and received a SUN Bucks card last year, benefits will be issued on last year's SUN Bucks card.
- If a child is eligible for SUN Bucks through Medicaid eligibility, the benefit will be loaded onto a SUN Bucks card and sent to the address associated with the Medicaid case.
- If a child is eligible for SUN Bucks based on information submitted by the child's school, the benefit will be loaded onto a SUN Bucks card and sent to the address provided by the school.
- If a child is eligible for SUN Bucks through an application, the benefit will be loaded onto a SUN Bucks card and sent to the address on the SUN Bucks application.
- DHS anticipates that benefits will begin being issued in mid-July with all benefits being issued by October.

Application Eligibility

- Paper applications must be submitted to local County Assistance Office (CAO).
 - Online applications will be available in mid-July.
- The income limit for SUN Bucks is 185 percent of the Federal Poverty Limit.
- Immigration status is not an eligibility factor.
- Client self-attestation of income and household composition will be accepted.
- School enrollment must be verified.
- Application must be signed.

Application Processing

- An application will be rejected for the following reasons:
 - The child is already eligible for SUN Bucks.
 - The child is not enrolled in an NSLP-participating school.
 - The household is over the income limit.
 - The application is not signed.
- Applications should be processed within 15 days.

Verification for Cause

- A required component of SUN Bucks is called Verification for Cause.
 - Verification for Cause only applies to children who are eligible through an application.
 - If the caseworker has known information that contradicts what is reported on the application, the application is still processed and approved, but a Verification for Cause is selected. This will hold the benefit from being issued until the Verification for Cause can be completed.
 - The caseworker will send a pending letter requesting verification of the conflicting information and then will either release the benefit, if provided information confirms the application information, or reject the benefit if the verification confirms the child is not eligible or the household fails to provide the verification.

NEW* - Three Percent Verification

- States are required to verify up to three percent of all approved applications received prior to the start of the summer period
 - Federally required program integrity measure
 - DHS will select three percent of all applications received prior to summer period through sample and indicate them to workers for verification
 - The caseworker will send a pending letter requesting verification of income and then will either release the benefit, if provided information confirms the application information, or reject the benefit if the verification confirms the child is not eligible or the household fails to provide the verification.

Program Timeframe

- All year – Applications available
- July – Online application launch
- Mid-July – Benefits issued to automatically eligible children
- 8/31 – Last day to accept applications for 2025 Program Year
- 9/1 – First day to accept applications for 2026 Program Year
- 9/15 – Target deadline for all 2025 Program Year Application Processing completion
- 11/13 – Approximate timeframe for unspent 2025 Program Year SUN Bucks automated expungement to initiate based on first issuance
- 11/29 – Last day for 2025 Program Year SUN Bucks appeals to be submitted

Key Changes for 2025

- Earlier issuances and application processing
- Online application availability
- Three Percent Verifications
- Applications received prior to July 1, 2025, will use the Federal Poverty Income Guidelines (FPIGs) from July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025. Applications received on or after July 1, 2025, will use FPIGs from July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026.
- System updates to enhance issuance targeting

Key Anticipated Challenges

- Unnecessary applications for children who are automatically eligible
- No legislatively required statewide enrollment/NSLP database
- Community Eligibility Provision school eligibility
- Application deadline
- Fixed appeal deadline
- Self-attestation on applications
- Fixed benefit expungement deadline

FAQs

What if a student household's circumstances changed during the year?

- If found eligible at any point in the year, the student will remain eligible for that program year. If you need to report a change of address you can report this through COMPASS or the myCOMPASS PA Mobile App or calling the Customer Service Center.

Will all children in a household get the benefit on the same card?

- If possible, only one SUN Bucks account will be created but if your children qualify for the SUN Bucks benefit in different ways they may be separate.

FAQs Continued

What should a household do if they believed they would receive an automated benefit, but do not receive one?

- Benefits will be distributed beginning around mid-July and all issuances will be complete by October 2025. Contact the Statewide Customer Service Center at 1-877-395-8930 or 215-560-7226 in Philadelphia to inquire about your automatic eligibility.

What should a household do if they received benefits for one child but not another?

- Siblings might receive benefits at different times. Some children younger than 6 or older than 18 may not be eligible, even if a child in the same household is eligible.

FAQs Continued

What should a household do if they were denied but believe they were eligible?

- The household should appeal their eligibility determination.

What should a household do if they lose the SUN Bucks Card?

- To request a replacement, contact the CAO or the Statewide Customer Service Center at 1-877-395-8930 or 215-560-7226 in Philadelphia.

What should a household do if they receive a benefit but do not wish to receive a benefit?

- If received on an EBT card, the parent or guardian can contact the CSC and request the benefit be expunged. If received on a SUN Bucks card, the card can be destroyed.

- If assistance is needed households should contact DHS through the CAO or the Statewide Customer Service Center at 1-877-395-8930 or 215-560-7226 in Philadelphia.
- Schools are NOT able to assist households with SUN Bucks programing questions. Households should not be directed to contact their school or PDE.

Resources

- www.dhs.pa.gov/SUNBucks
 - Eligibility Navigator
 - More FAQs
 - How to apply
 - Promotional materials