

SUN BUCKS (Summer EBT) – FAQ

About SUN Bucks:

SUN Bucks is a new program (formerly known as Summer EBT) that provides a \$120 summer food benefit to eligible children in Rhode Island. The program ensures continued access to nutritious meals when school is out.

Q: What is SUN Bucks?

A: The Summer EBT program, now called SUN Bucks, was established to provide nutritional resources to students who may not have access to free or reduced-price meals during the summer months.

Q: Who is eligible for SUN Bucks?

A: Children eligible for SUN Bucks include school-age children who attended a school participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) during the academic year or summer period and are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. There are three categories of eligible students:

1. Children receiving SNAP, Rhode Island Works (RIW), or Medicaid (if income-eligible) will automatically receive SUN Bucks.
2. Children already approved for free or reduced-price meals through RIDE will automatically receive SUN Bucks.
3. Families who submit an online or paper SUN Bucks application will be reviewed for eligibility. RIDE verifies school enrollment and DHS confirms income eligibility.

Q: Should I apply for SUN Bucks if I'm receiving SNAP?

A: No. If your family is already receiving SNAP or RI Works, you do not need to apply. SUN Bucks will automatically be issued to your EBT card.

Q: How do I apply for SUN Bucks?

A: You can apply online at <https://dhs.ri.gov/sun-bucks> or submit a paper application via email to DHS.SummerEBT@dhs.ri.gov.

Q: Do I need to submit documentation with my application?

A: If your child attends a private school, you may need to provide proof of enrollment. No other documentation is required unless DHS contacts you for more information.

Q: What if my application is denied or I didn't receive the correct amount?

A: You have the right to appeal by December 1, 2026. The appeal form will be included in your denial notice.

Q: What if my child becomes newly eligible during the 2025–2026 school year?

A: Submit a Meal Benefit Application by September 2, 2026. The application is available in the Documents, Resources and Links Library on the RIDE website.

Q: How much will my child receive in SUN Bucks?

A: Each eligible child will receive a one-time payment of \$120 for the summer.

Q: When will my child receive SUN Bucks?

A: Distribution dates vary by eligibility category. Most benefits will be issued beginning June 15, 2026.

Q: How will I receive my child's SUN Bucks?

A: If you are receiving SNAP or RI Works, SUN Bucks will be loaded to your EBT card. Others will receive a separate SUN Bucks card by mail. Call the number on the card to activate it by entering your card number, ZIP code, and your child's birth date.

Q: What if I lost my SUN Bucks card?

A: Call 1-888-979-9939 to request a replacement card.

Q: Is my child still eligible if we're not receiving SNAP?

A: Yes. Children may be eligible if they:

- Receive RIW or Medicaid and are ages 6–18.
- Are enrolled in an NSLP-participating school and approved for free/reduced-price meals.
- Have submitted an alternate income form and qualify.
- Submit a SUN Bucks application and meet income and school criteria.

Q: Are SUN Bucks tied to the school's learning model?

A: No. Benefits are not affected by whether a school operates in-person or virtually.

Q: Is my newborn or toddler eligible if we receive SNAP?

A: No. SUN Bucks are only available for school-aged children.

Q: Will my child receive SUN Bucks if their eligibility changes mid-summer?

A: Yes. If your child was eligible during the period from July 1, 2025 – September 2, 2026, they will receive the full benefit.

Q: What if my child graduated after the 2025–2026 school year?

A: Graduating students who were eligible for SNAP or free/reduced-price meals during the school year will receive SUN Bucks.

Q: Is my homeschooled child eligible?

A: Yes, if they are school-aged and receive SNAP, RI Works, or Medicaid (if income eligible).

Q: Is my child eligible if they attend a fully virtual school not participating in NSLP?

A: Yes, if they are school-aged and receive SNAP, RI Works, or Medicaid (if income eligible).

Q: Does using SUN Bucks affect immigration status?

A: No. Using SUN Bucks will not impact you or your child's immigration status.

Q: Can I opt out of SUN Bucks?

A: Yes. If you received a SUN Bucks card but do not wish to participate, destroy the card by cutting through the magnetic stripe. If benefits were issued to your EBT card, call 211 to opt out.

Q: Can I transfer my SUN Bucks benefits to someone else?

A: No. SUN Bucks are non-transferable. Selling or trading benefits is illegal and may result in disqualification.

Q: Can I still receive summer meals in addition to SUN Bucks?

A: Yes. Families can use SUN Bucks and also access available summer meal sites.

Q: Do SUN Bucks expire?

A: Yes. SUN Bucks benefits expire 122 days after the issue date.

Q: I received a notice in the mail prior to the start of the Sun Bucks program period to verify income. What must I do?

A: You must respond to the Additional Documentation Required (ADR) that was sent requesting additional documents by the due date on the notice. Not providing the requested materials can result in benefit denial when benefits would be expected to otherwise be issued.

Q: Will I receive more funding on this card?

A: Each eligible child will receive SUN Bucks only once each summer. It is important to save the card SUN Bucks was loaded on after using the annual benefit. If the child is eligible for future years of SUN Bucks or other benefits such as SNAP or TANF, those benefits may be issued to the same card.

Q: I didn't ask for Sun Bucks and I do not want it. What do I do with the card?

A: If you do not wish to use the card, you can simply cut up and discard it. Unused benefits will be returned to the U.S.D.A 122 days after the issuance, regardless of spending activity. You can also contact 211 to request to opt out of program. SUN Bucks may not be used to purchase food for anyone outside of your child's household.

Q: My kids got free meals at school, will they receive Sun bucks?

A: Students who only receive free meals because everyone at their school received free meals are not automatically eligible for SUN Bucks unless they are found eligible in another way. If you haven't done so already, you may want to complete the Free and Reduced-price Meals application with your school

Q: If my child received Sun Bucks benefits before, do they automatically qualify this year?

A: No, SUN Bucks eligibility is re-determined each year.

Q: Are Summer EBT agencies required to replace benefits when food purchased with those Summer EBT benefits is destroyed due to disaster or household misfortune?

A: Yes, per 7 CFR 292.15(g)(5), Summer EBT agencies must replace benefits when food purchased with those benefits was destroyed due to a disaster or household misfortune. The Summer EBT agency should collect and review household affidavits consistent with their procedures for replacing SNAP benefits in response to a disaster or household misfortune. Summer EBT agencies should replace the lesser of the amount lost (as estimated by the household) or an amount equal to three months of benefits. The Summer EBT agency has the discretion to request additional evidence from a household to substantiate a questionable request.

Q: Will electronically stolen Summer EBT benefits issued for Summer 2024 be replaced by USDA?

A: No. Summer EBT benefits that are lost to skimming, cloning, or similar fraudulent methods will not be replaced by USDA for Summer 2024. Summer EBT Agencies may replace these benefits with non-Federal funds, but it is not a requirement.