



**SUMMER NUTRITION PROGRAMS FOR KIDS**

*Educational Stakeholders Webinar*



**NC DEPARTMENT OF  
HEALTH AND  
HUMAN SERVICES**



**NCDPI**



# AGENDA

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1. **Welcome and Introductions (5 min)**
2. **Child Food Insecurity in North Carolina (5 min)**
3. **End of Pandemic EBT (P-EBT Program) (5 min)**
4. **Overview of New SUN Bucks Program (15 min)**
5. **How You Can Help (5 min)**
6. **Reminders for School Data Requests (10 min)**
7. **Q&A Session (15 min)**

## Facilitators



**Cynthia Ervin**

*Assistant Director, Division of Child and Family Well-Being, North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services*



**Angela Morrison**

*SUN Bucks Coordinator, Division of Child and Family Well-Being, North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services*

# FOOD INSECURITY IS A CRITICAL CHALLENGE IN NORTH CAROLINA



1 in 4

North Carolina children face food insecurity or chronic hunger<sup>1</sup>



60%

of North Carolina children eligible for free or reduced-price meals at school<sup>1</sup>



12.8%

of North Carolina residents live below the poverty line<sup>2</sup>



## Causes of Food Insecurity During Summer

- Many students **lose access to school meals** during the summer months
- Lack of **access** to affordable supermarkets and grocery stores
- Dependency on **transportation** to summer meal sites

## Impact to Children

- Reliance on schools to provide meals, **limiting summer access to nutritious food** and impacting children's health
- **Adverse childhood development outcomes**, including heightened stress and worse academic performance<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> North Carolina Department of Public Instruction

<sup>2</sup> Poverty Rate in NC (Statista)

<sup>3</sup> Food Insecurity and Child Development: A State-of-the-Art Review (NIH)

# PANDEMIC EBT (P-EBT) PROVIDED CRITICAL FOOD ASSISTANCE DURING THE SCHOOL YEAR, BUT THE TEMPORARY PROGRAM ENDED IN 2023



## Overview

North Carolina's P-EBT program was a federally funded temporary food assistance program designed to provide grocery-buying benefits to purchase nutritious foods for students and young children during COVID-19. The program began in 2020 but **ended in 2023**.

## Benefits

Like FNS EBT, benefits were provided on a pre-loaded card to buy food at authorized EBT retailers, including most grocery stores.

## Statewide Impact\*



**1.76 million**  
children served



**93% spend rate**,  
indicating a critical need  
for food assistance



**\$2.5 billion** issued in  
benefits

## INTRODUCTION TO SUN BUCKS

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NC DHHS, in partnership with NC Department of Public Instruction (DPI), is expanding its food assistance efforts to become **one of the first states** to administer USDA's **new** summer nutrition program, "SUN Bucks."

### *How much in SUN Bucks benefits will be issued?*

North Carolina will issue **\$120 in benefits** per eligible child, which can be used by families to purchase nutritious food.

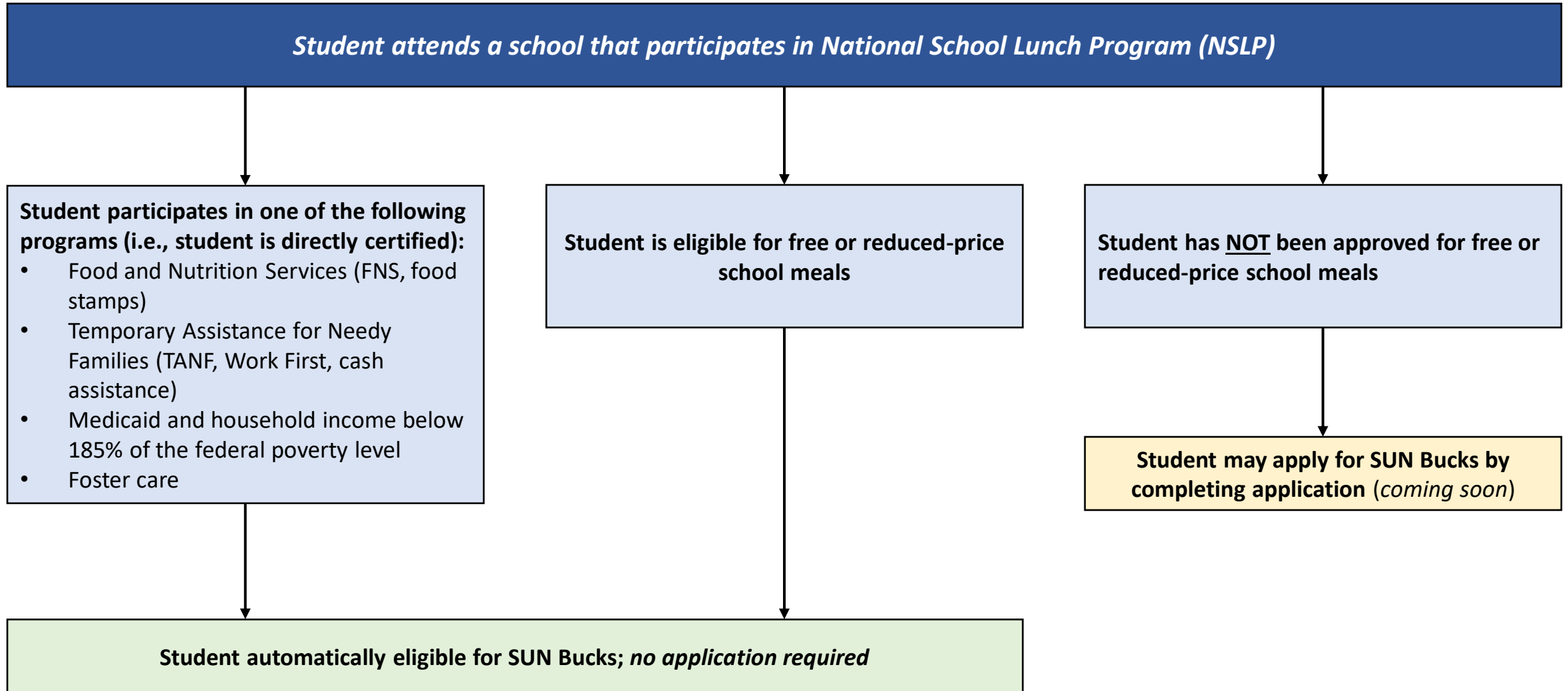
### *Who will be eligible for SUN Bucks?*

Students who participate in certain federal assistance programs will be eligible to **receive benefits automatically**, while other students **may apply** for SUN Bucks.



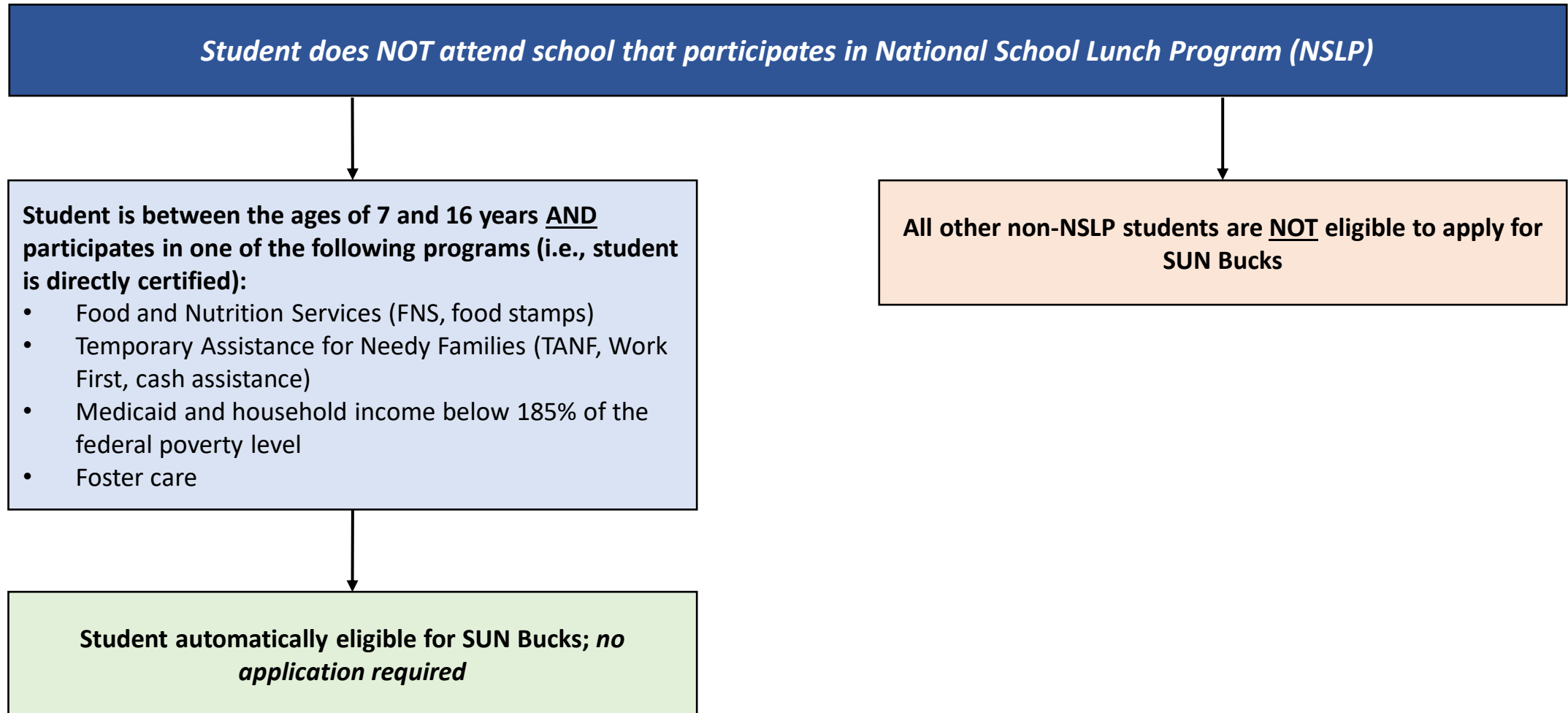
# SUN BUCKS ELIGIBILITY FLOW (REGULAR NSLP COUNTING, NON-CEP SCHOOLS)

NSLP ONLY



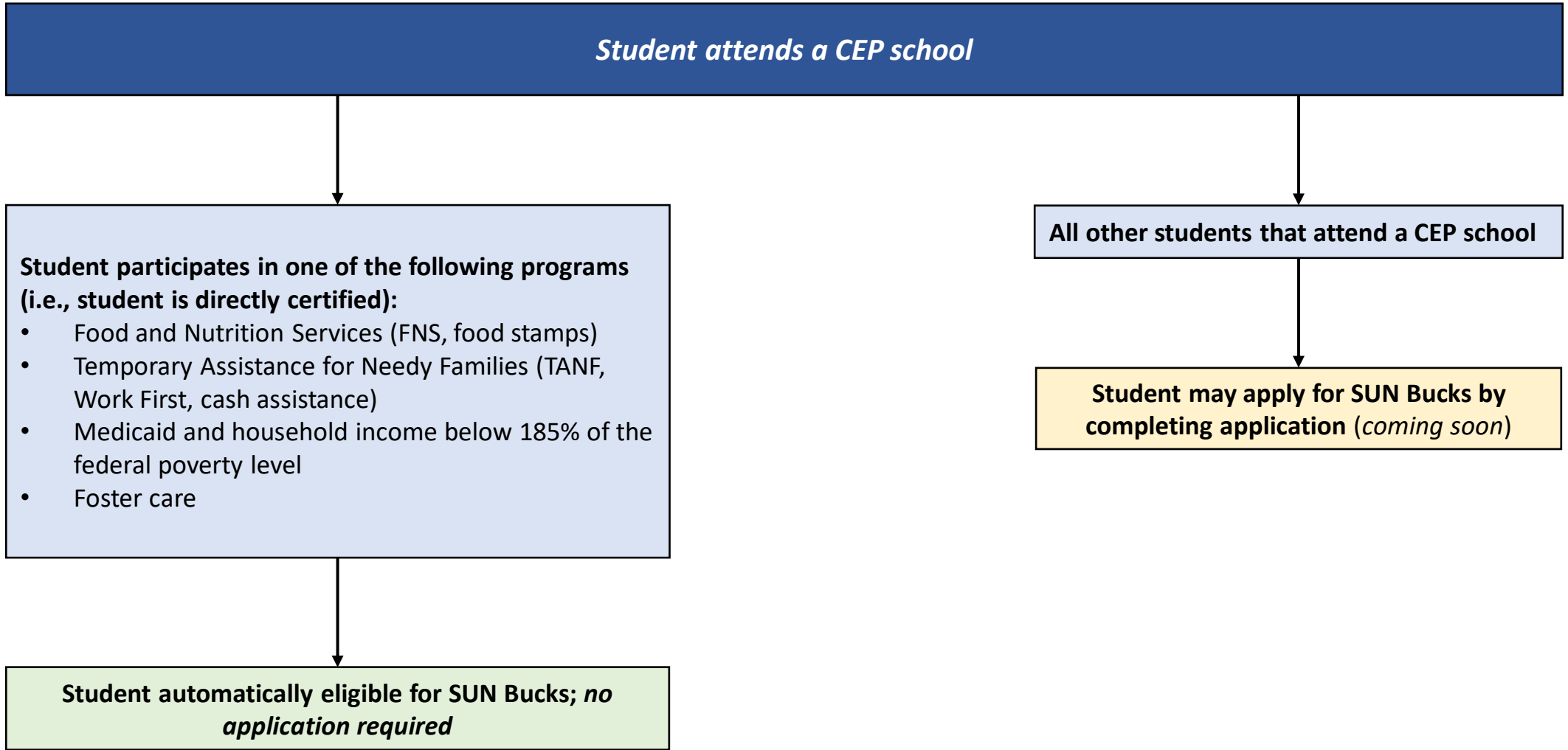
# SUN BUCKS ELIGIBILITY FLOW (REGULAR NSLP COUNTING, NON-CEP SCHOOLS)

NSLP ONLY



# SUN BUCKS ELIGIBILITY FLOW (COMMUNITY ELIGIBILITY PROVISION (CEP) SCHOOLS)

CEP ONLY





## REMINDERS FOR CEP SCHOOLS

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***Unlike P-EBT, where it was allowable for all children in CEP schools to be eligible, SUN Bucks eligibility is determined at the individual level***

Not all CEP students will qualify for SUN Bucks. NCDHHS will automatically enroll into SUN Bucks as many CEP students as possible using available information, but some families will need to submit an income-based application.

CEP students will be automatically enrolled into SUN Bucks if they fit **at least one** of the following criteria:

- Receives Food and Nutrition Services (FNS, food stamps), **or**
- Participates in Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF, WorkFirst, cash assistance), **or**
- Receives Medicaid **and** has a household income below 185% of the federal poverty level, **or**
- Categorically eligible such as foster care, runaway, migrant, homeless

Families with children enrolled in CEP schools who do not meet the above criteria will receive an **invitation to apply** via electronic notification (e.g., email, text).

No new actions are required of the directly certified CEP schools for NCDHHS to identify which students will be automatically eligible for SUN Bucks. **Please direct families to the NCDHHS SUN Bucks webpage at**

**[www.ncdhhs.gov/sunbucks](http://www.ncdhhs.gov/sunbucks) for the most up-to-date information.**

## SUN BUCKS 2024 PROGRAM GOAL AND IMPACT

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***NC DHHS and NC DPI aim to combat hunger among North Carolina's most food insecure children and teens.***

**1 million\***

NC children will receive benefits to increase access to healthy food choices during the summer months.

**\$120 million\***

in food assistance benefits during the 2024 summer months, feeding children while boosting NC's economy.

*\*All figures are approximate and rounded*



# SUN BUCKS WILL ADDRESS EXISTING ACCESSIBILITY GAPS IN FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

SUN Bucks will transform North Carolina’s summer food assistance strategy into a **three-pronged approach** that emphasizes **accessibility**.

Currently, North Carolina operates two federally-assisted summer meal programs: the **Congregate (Group) Meal Service** and the new **Non-Congregate Meal Service (Meals To-Go)**. Accessibility challenges associated with these programs that **SUN Bucks will directly address** include:



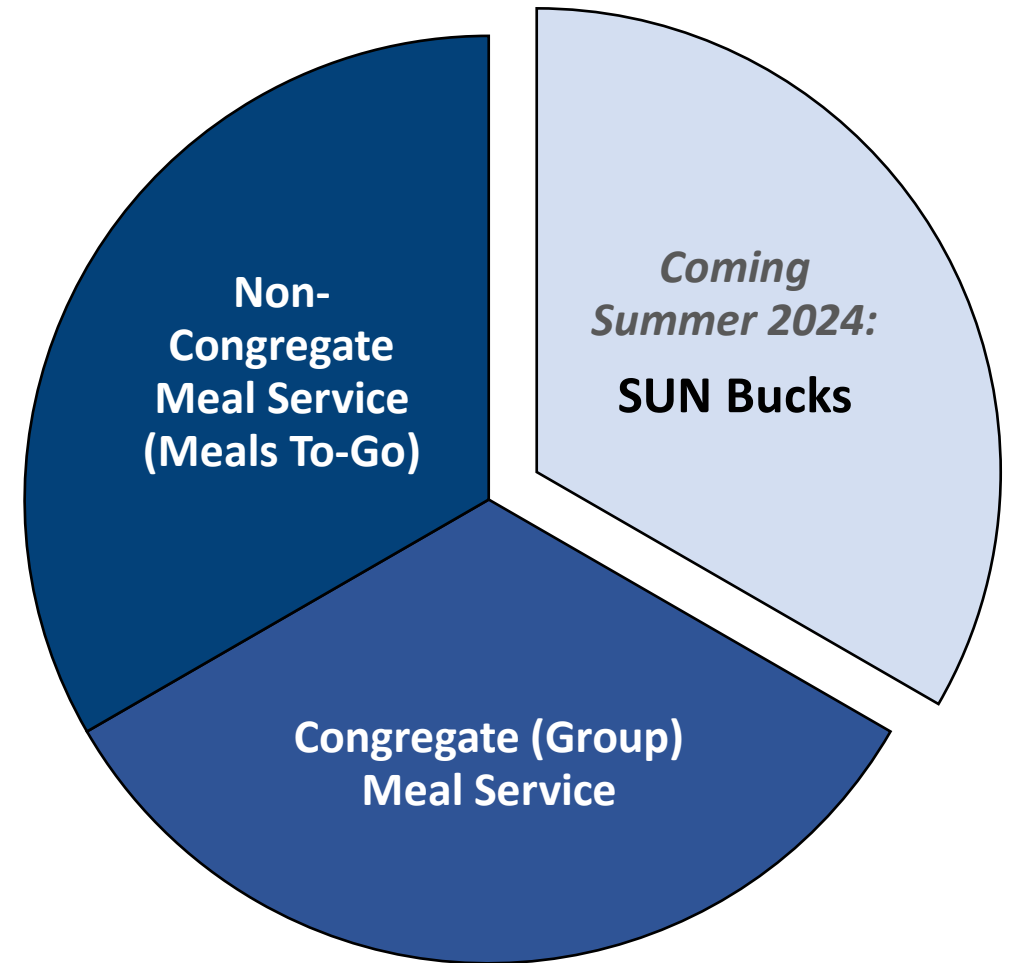
Children may live in areas that do not meet income requirements for summer nutrition meals.



Locating rural sponsors who can provide meals may be challenging due to transportation barriers.



89% of Group Meal Service sites require transportation to access, but only 30% of sites provide transportation.<sup>1</sup>



## HOW YOU CAN HELP

***SUN Bucks eligibility, application, and issuance date information is coming soon! In the meantime, school stakeholders can help prepare for this new program in two ways:***

1

**Assist students with updating their mailing address on file by Sunday, March 31, 2024**

**Update or add mailing addresses in PowerSchool (or your school's data system) by March 31, 2024, when requested by the student or their caregiver.**

***Why is this important?***

Many qualifying students will receive a SUN Bucks card to the **mailing address on file** with their school which should be the address to where the student **lives during the summer period**. A qualifying student's mailing address on file with their school as of March 31, 2024 is where the SUN Bucks card will be sent.

2

**Stay up to date on SUN Bucks information (as it becomes available) and NC DHHS food assistance programs**

- More information about SUN Bucks will be shared over the next few weeks on the NCDHHS SUN Bucks webpage ([www.ncdhhs.gov/sunbucks](http://www.ncdhhs.gov/sunbucks)) and social media (@NCDHHS).
- Scan the QR code below to learn more about **North Carolina's Nutrition Education Partners (SNAP Ed)**!



<https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/child-and-family-well-being/food-and-nutrition-services-food-stamps/north-carolina-nutrition-education-partners>

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

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*The SUN Bucks application is still in development, but schools will play a role in making a paper version of the application available to students:*

**NC DHHS and NC DPI** expect to share SUN Bucks paper application copies with schools in May 2024.

**Schools:** Please make paper applications available to students (e.g., main office) before end of school year.

**Students:** Apply online or by paper application for SUN Bucks by August 31<sup>st</sup> deadline. Paper application will have return instructions.

# REMINDERS FOR SCHOOL DATA REQUESTS

*Two asks for Student Information System (SIS) Coordinators, Principals, Superintendents, and Public Information Officers (PIO)*

1

**Ensure that all mailing address change requests are logged in PowerSchool and/or your data system by March 31, 2024**

**DPI will be pulling aggregate enrollment and student data on April 1<sup>st</sup>**, which will encompass all data up through March 31<sup>st</sup>.

The mailing addresses (or physical if no mailing exists) in this data will be used to mail benefit cards to students who automatically qualify for the program.

NC DHHS and DPI are messaging to families that their mailing addresses should be updated by March 28<sup>th</sup>.

2

**Complete the submission of your school's data by June 3, 2024**

**If your school ends in May**, please pull your data on your last day of school, or on / before June 3, 2024 (whichever is more convenient).

**If your school ends in June or later**, please pull your data on Monday, June 3, 2024.

**Thursday, March 28<sup>th</sup>:**

Deadline for families to request school address update

**Sunday, March 31<sup>st</sup>:**

Deadline for schools to update addresses in their data system

**Monday, April 1<sup>st</sup>:**

Process to pull and aggregate data begins following established process

## REMINDERS FOR DATA MANAGERS

*While SUN Bucks has similarities to Pandemic EBT (P-EBT), the data requirements to administer the program are simpler. Here are key differences to know:*

### Pandemic EBT (P-EBT)

#### School Data Requests:

- **Monthly** data pulls through school year and during summer (10+ data pulls)
- **Onerous, detailed asks** of the schools (e.g., special attendance coding, detailed attendance records, attendance updates, attendance thresholds)

**USDA Guidance:** Frequent changes to USDA Guidance and program expansions

### SUN Bucks 2024

#### Simplified School Data Requests:

- **2 data pulls** as part of normal operations and **one final** data pull at the end-of-school year/start of summer
- Data is part of “**normal**” school data collection and reporting
- Attendance-level data is **not** needed

**USDA Guidance:** Established rules for the program with some operational flexibilities for 2024

# Questions?



## THANK YOU FOR JOINING!

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*Thank you for your continued support of North Carolina children and teens!*

### Where can I go for more information about SUN Bucks?

- **NCDHHS Website:** [www.ncdhhs.gov/sunbucks](http://www.ncdhhs.gov/sunbucks)
- **NCDHHS Social Media (Instagram, Facebook, and X):** @NCDHHS
- **Carolina Hunger Initiative Website:** [www.carolinahungerinitiative.org](http://www.carolinahungerinitiative.org)

*Please reach out to [DCFW.SUNBucks@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:DCFW.SUNBucks@dhhs.nc.gov) with any questions!*



#### **Attendee Handouts**

- 1.) SIS Manager Guide
- 2.) Text, Email, and Robocall Templates

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1320 Braddock Place, Room 334  
Alexandria, VA 22314; or

**2.fax:**

(833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or

**3.email:**

[FNSCIVILRIGHTSCOMPLAINTS@usda.gov](mailto:FNSCIVILRIGHTSCOMPLAINTS@usda.gov)

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