SUN Bucks (Summer EBT) Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

View our webpage:
https://hhs.iowa.gov/assistance-programs/food-assistance/sun-bucks

General Questions

What are SUN Bucks (Summer EBT)?

The SUN Bucks program, also known as the Summer EBT program, provides benefits for low-income families with school-aged children to purchase food in the summer.

Families receive a one-time issuance of **$120 for each eligible child** and can use the money to buy food during the summer at grocery stores, farmers' markets, and other authorized retailers.

How do children qualify for SUN Bucks?

There are two ways children can qualify: automatic eligibility and application.

Who is automatically eligible for SUN Bucks?

A child is automatically eligible if:

They were in grades K–12 during the 2025–2026 school year, and their school took part in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), **OR** are 6-16 years old between July 1, 2025, and August 14, 2026.

All automatically eligible children must also meet at least one of the following:

- They received SNAP or FIP
- They received Medicaid at or below 185% of the federal poverty level
- They are in foster care
- They were approved for Free or Reduced-Price School Meals (through an application with their school or because they are homeless, a runaway, or a migrant)

Who must fill out an application for SUN Bucks?

In order to be eligible for SUN Bucks through an application, children must have been enrolled in a school that participates in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) or School Breakfast Program (SBP) during the 2025-26 school year, and also meet the income guidelines. Visit hhs.iowa.gov/sunbucks to view the income guidelines chart.

If my child meets the eligibility criteria, but isn't automatically eligible, how do I apply?

Once the application is live in early June, you can apply online by visiting My Access Iowa at https://benefits.stateofiowahhs.org/client. Summer 2026 SUN Bucks applications must be received by HHS on or before August 14, 2026.

What if my child goes to a Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) school?

Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) schools are those where every student receives no-cost meals for breakfast and lunch. **Attending a CEP school does not mean the student automatically gets SUN Bucks benefits.** If your student doesn't meet the criteria under "*Who is automatically eligible for SUN Bucks?"* above, you will need to complete a SUN Bucks application.

Can homeschooled children receive SUN Bucks?

Maybe. Homeschooled children must meet the same eligibility criteria that other students are required to meet to receive SUN Bucks. See "*Who must fill out an application for SUN Bucks?"*

Are there other programs that help provide food to children over the summer break?

In addition to SUN Bucks, Iowa children and teens 18 years old and under can also access free meals through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's SUN Meals and SUN Meals To-Go programs.

- SUN Meals are meals and snacks served to kids at an eligible meal site.
- SUN Meals To-Go are meals and snacks that can be taken to-go in rural areas from eligible sites.

Local meal sites can be found in communities across the state. To find the nearest meal site, use the following options:

- By Phone:
  - Call 2-1-1
  - Call 1-866-3-HUNGRY (1-866-348-6479), English
  - Call 1-877-8-HAMBRE (1-877-842-6273), Spanish
- By Text: Text “summer meals” to 914-342-7744
- Online: Visit fns.usda.gov/summer/sitefinder

SUN Bucks Benefits

When will SUN Bucks benefits be available?

Iowa HHS will issue benefits to automatically eligible children no later than mid-June 2026.

Benefits will continue to be issued as applications are completed and processed. The latest application can be received by HHS to be processed for Summer 2026 is August 14th, 2026.

If I receive SNAP, will my SNAP and SUN Bucks benefits arrive on my SNAP card at the same time?

No. SUN Bucks is a **one-time summer benefit** that will be loaded to your EBT card **once**. SNAP is a **monthly benefit** that is added to your card when you are approved and then each month based on the first letter of your last name (between the 1st and the 10th of the month).

Do SUN Bucks benefits expire?

Yes. SUN Bucks benefits are available for 122 days from the date they are issued per 7 CFR § 292. Unused benefits expire at midnight on the 122nd day after being issued and cannot be restored. This means that on day 123, there will be a $0 balance in the account. Expired, lost, or stolen benefits cannot be replaced or appealed.

Can SUN Bucks benefits be replaced?

No. Expired, lost, or stolen benefits cannot be replaced or appealed.

What can I purchase with SUN Bucks benefits?

You can purchase any item allowable for SNAP. SUN Bucks have the same purchasing rules as SNAP.

Can Double Up Food Bucks (DUFB) be matched when I use SUN Bucks to buy fresh fruits and vegetables?

Yes. Double Up Food Bucks can be matched on any SUN Bucks used to purchase fresh fruits or vegetables at any of the participating Double Up Food Bucks sites.

SUN Bucks Cards

How will SUN Bucks benefits be received?

If your household is currently active for SNAP, you will automatically receive $120 for each eligible child on your SNAP EBT card.

If your household is not active for SNAP, each eligible child will receive $120 on a SUN Bucks card. The card will be in the individual child's name. Automatically eligible children will receive their SUN Bucks cards by the middle to the end of June.

Where will my child's SUN Bucks card be mailed?

- If your household is currently active for SNAP, SUN Bucks benefits will be put on the SNAP EBT card.
- For students receiving FIP, Medicaid, or Foster Care, the address associated with those cases will be used.
- For all others, the address that the household reported to their school will be used.

How do I activate the SUN Bucks card?

Activate your card by following these instructions:

1. Call the customer service number on the back of your card and follow the automated instructions.
2. To activate your card, you will need to enter your:
    - 19-digit SUN Bucks card number (found on the front of the card)
    - 5-digit ZIP code
    - child's 8-digit date of birth (MMDDYYYY)
3. You will be asked to create a 4-digit PIN. **Keep your PIN private to protect your benefits. Once activated, your child's benefit amount will be available to use.**

Once the SUN Bucks card is activated, you can check the balance using the interactive voice response (IVR) system. To do this, enter the child's last four digits of their SSN, along with the child's date of birth and ZIP code when prompted .

If the child's last four digits of the SSN are not working, try entering 0-0-0-0. If you are still unable to access the balance, please call 1-833-631-2508 to verify the correct last four digits of the child's SSN.

What if I don't receive my SUN Bucks card?

If you do not receive your SUN Bucks card and do not have an active SNAP card, verify your eligibility and address with Iowa HHS by calling **1-877-347-5678.**

If I get SNAP, will my SNAP and SUN Bucks benefits arrive on my SNAP card at the same time

No. SUN Bucks is a **one-time summer benefit** that will be loaded to your EBT card **once**. SNAP is a **monthly benefit** that is added to your card when you are approved and then each month based on the first letter of your last name (between the 1st and the 10th).

I lost my EBT card. How do I get a new one?

If your SUN Bucks card has been lost, stolen, or you can't activate it, please call Iowa EBT customer service at 1-800-359-5802, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

If you have moved since receiving your EBT card, you will need to call 1-833-631-2508 to update your address prior to requesting a new card.

I am having trouble setting my PIN or activating my card. What do I do?

Call the number on the back of the card, 1-800-359-5802, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

How do I check the balance of the SUN Bucks card?

Once the SUN Bucks card is activated, you can check the balance using the interactive voice response (IVR) system. To do this, enter the child's last four digits of their SSN, along with the child's date of birth and ZIP code when prompted .

If the child's last four digits of the SSN are not working, try entering 0-0-0-0. If you are still unable to access the balance, please call 1-833-631-2508 to verify the correct last four digits of the child's SSN.

What happens if my child receives multiple SUN Bucks cards/benefits?

Each child is eligible for one SUN Bucks benefit of $120 per summer. Using more benefits than the child is allowed could result in being charged with fraud and/or disqualification from the SUN Bucks program. Families will have to pay back the extra benefits spent. If the child has received more than one benefit, please contact HHS at 1-877-347-5678

What should I do with the SUN Bucks card after the benefits are used up?

Keep your SUN Bucks card in a safe place to use next summer.

I got a SUN Bucks card in the mail, but I don't want it.

Using the SUN Bucks card is voluntary. If you choose not to use the available benefits, please call Iowa HHS at 1-877-347-5678 to opt out and then cut up the card and throw it away.