Summer Nutrition Summit

January 12–13, 2026

NO KID HUNGRY®

Connecting More Kids to Summer EBT with Stronger Data
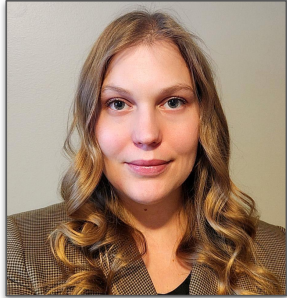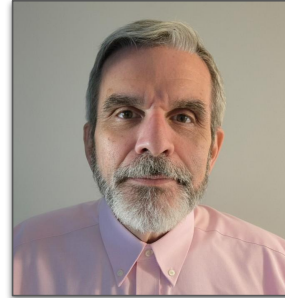
Summer Nutrition Summit 2026

Session Speakers

James Blair
Code for America

Paige Poticher
CSIU Center for Schools & Communities

Ashley Puffenbarger
West Virginia Bureau for Family Assistance

Michael Farquhar
Arizona Department of Economic Security

Zachary Gonzales
New Mexico Health Care Authority

Disclaimer

Our speakers represent their own experience with child nutrition programs in their states and localities. Certain program models and implementation methods may be restricted in some states and localities. Check with your local agency before implementing any new service models or methods.
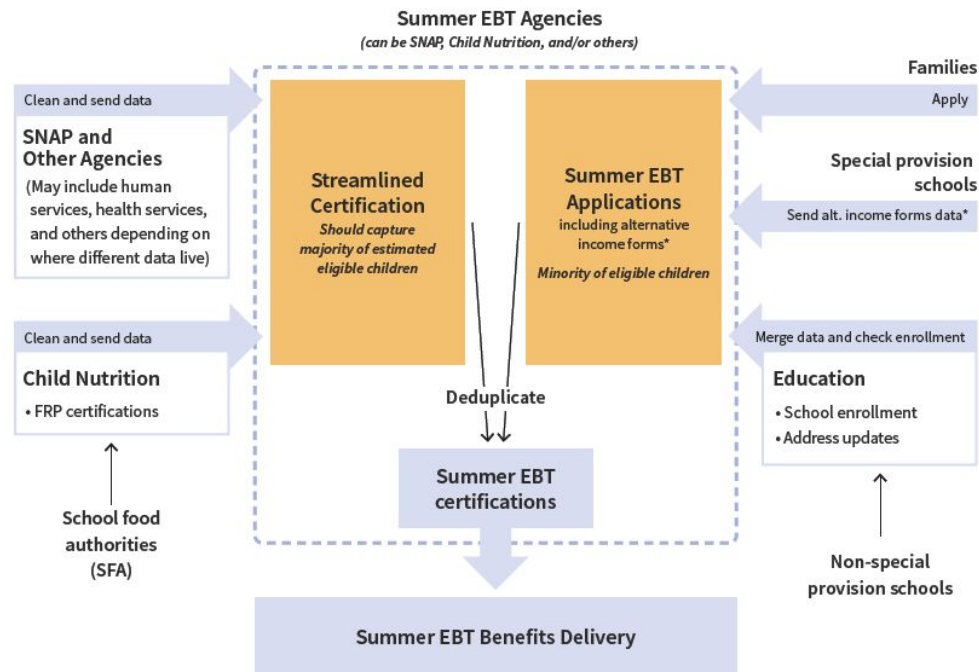
Agenda

- Summer EBT eligibility is hard. 😭

- Good people doing good things with Summer EBT data
  - → James: Data wrangling
  - → Paige: Partnering with schools and their data
  - → Ashley: Integrating Summer EBT with benefits system
  - → Mike: FDPIR and SUN Bucks slips
  - → Zach: Reaching harder-to-reach populations

Summer EBT eligibility is hard. 😭

Figure 4: Overview of the key processes and interagency handoffs needed for Summer EBT eligibility determinations

Summer EBT Agencies
(can be SNAP, Child Nutrition, and/or others)

Clean and send data

SNAP and Other Agencies
(May include human services, health services, and others depending on where different data live)

Clean and send data

Child Nutrition
• FRP certifications

School food authorities (SFA)

Streamlined Certification
Should capture majority of estimated eligible children

Summer EBT Applications
including alternative income forms*
Minority of eligible children

Deduplicate

Summer EBT certifications

Families
Apply

Special provision schools
Send alt. income forms data*

Merge data and check enrollment

Education
• School enrollment
• Address updates

Non-special provision schools

Summer EBT Benefits Delivery

* Alternative income applications will be able to be used for Summer EBT beyond 2024 if they meet the minimum requirements for a Summer EBT application. In 2024, income forms that don't meet the minimum requirements will be allowed, provided that they contain enough information to make an income determination for the family.

from The Summer EBT Playbook

NO KID HUNGRY®

James Blair, Code for America
Summer EBT Record Linkage

NO KID HUNGRY®

Entity Resolution in Summer EBT

Summer EBT involves collecting and using data from a number of agencies and sources:

- Data from SNAP, TANF, Medicaid, FDPIR, and free/reduced price meals need to be *deduplicated* in order to *automatically issue benefits*
- Data from SEBT applications need to be *linked* to National School Lunch Program/School Breakfast Program participating school attendance to determine application *eligibility*

Why does this matter?

The entity resolution approach you use for Summer EBT directly impacts who receives benefits and the speed of benefits issuance!

Summer Nutrition Summit 2026

NO KID HUNGRY®

Entity Resolution in Summer EBT

It is not always easy to tell if two records represent the *same person* or two separate *people with similar information*.

First Name	Middle Initial	Last Name	Date of Birth
Thomas	L.	Jones	10/4/15
Tom		Jones	4/10/15

Are these the same student? 🧐

NO KID HUNGRY®

Entity Resolution in Summer EBT

- ***No universally perfect method***
  - Data in each state are bespoke
  - Differing populations may present varied challenges across states
- Some ***common principles and best practices*** exist
- We spoke with several states that have been successful to learn from and ***share their stories***

NO KID HUNGRY®

Entity Resolution in Summer EBT: Case Studies

- **Washington, D.C.**
  - Hub-and-spoke approach with unified data representation, **preserving source data references**
  - Tooling for **simplified manual review**
- **Ohio**
  - Custom scripts make for **automatic processing of exact matches**, using first 6 characters of first and last name, DOB, gender, first 8 characters of mailing address, and zip code
  - Partial matches are run through scripts to deduplicate data, which has resulted in **a reduction of over-issuances.**

NO KID HUNGRY®

Entity Resolution in Summer EBT: Case Studies

- **Wisconsin**
  - Technical infrastructure provided by Deloitte and built upon by DPI and DHS to **reduce manual reviews**
  - Runs through primary, secondary, and tertiary sets of data as well as houses a unique identifier to help match data
  - Matching done in batches, with **90-95% of data matched in first load**
- **New Jersey**
  - Uses rules-based matching and open-source tools for modeling and matching data
  - Data science enabled automatic issuance of **additional 100,000 children a year**

NO KID HUNGRY®

Key Tips for Improving Entity Resolution in Your State/District/ITO/Territory

- Improving **quality of upstream data** sets is key, including understanding which data sources have the most reliable mailing addresses.
- A variety of approaches including **exact, fuzzy, and probabilistic matching** can be used and tuned to each state's unique datasets.
- Many states are using proxy measurements for algorithm performance. There is room for continued growth toward more sophisticated measurements of algorithm performance.

Summer Nutrition Summit 2026

NO KID HUNGRY®

Entity Resolution in Summer EBT: Updated Best Practices Resource

Summer Nutrition Summit 2026

Summer EBT Playbook

CODE for AMERICA | NO KID HUNGRY

Summer EBT Data Wrangling: A Technical Best Practice Guide for Summer 2026 and Beyond

Introduction

Summer EBT (also known as SUN Bucks), the first new federal food assistance program in over 50 years, represents a unique opportunity to help close the summer hunger gap. The program provides at least $120 in nutritional assistance to eligible children in participating states, territories, and Tribal Nations; this benefit helps bridge the gap in food access during the summer months when children are not in school. However, there is technical complexity in ensuring that eligible children receive benefits. Some families receive benefits automatically due to their existing enrollment in another benefit program(s) (e.g., Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Medicaid), while others have to apply in order to get benefits. Because of the dual pathways to enrollment and the vast array of data sources that must be checked for eligibility, program administrators face significant hurdles in identifying eligible children, minimizing the burden on families to receive benefits, and sending out Summer EBT cards to the correct home.

Over the first two years of Summer EBT implementation, Code for America provided technical assistance to a range of state partners to help ease the technical difficulties of wrangling and deduplicating datasets to enable the accurate and timely delivery of benefits. Now, after two summers of supporting agencies to navigate the new program, Code for America and No Kid Hungry, a campaign of Share Our Strength, are excited to share this updated resource.

This document defines what entity resolution is, covers its applications for Summer EBT, provides recommendations on how to approach it in your agency context, and goes into greater implementation detail with case studies from three states and one district. It is intended both for Summer EBT program administrators who want to know what they should expect out of their deduplication and matching procedures, as well as technical staff looking for implementation tips and a methodology to use. Additionally, practices laid out in this document can support states, Tribal Nations, and other jurisdictions in promoting integrity in their Summer EBT program (per USDA guidelines) as they prepare Summer 2026.

NO KID HUNGRY®

James Blair, Code for America
Summer EBT Record Linkage

NO KID HUNGRY®

Paige Poticher, CSIU Center for Schools & Communities Partnering with schools and their data

NO KID HUNGRY®

Pennsylvania SUN Bucks Data Sources

DHS Data Sources

Public Assistance Records (SNAP,TANF,MA)

SUN Bucks Applications

SUN BUCKS Benefits

1,126,217 Children Issued Benefits

PDE, BFN & CSC (CSIU)

School Student Records
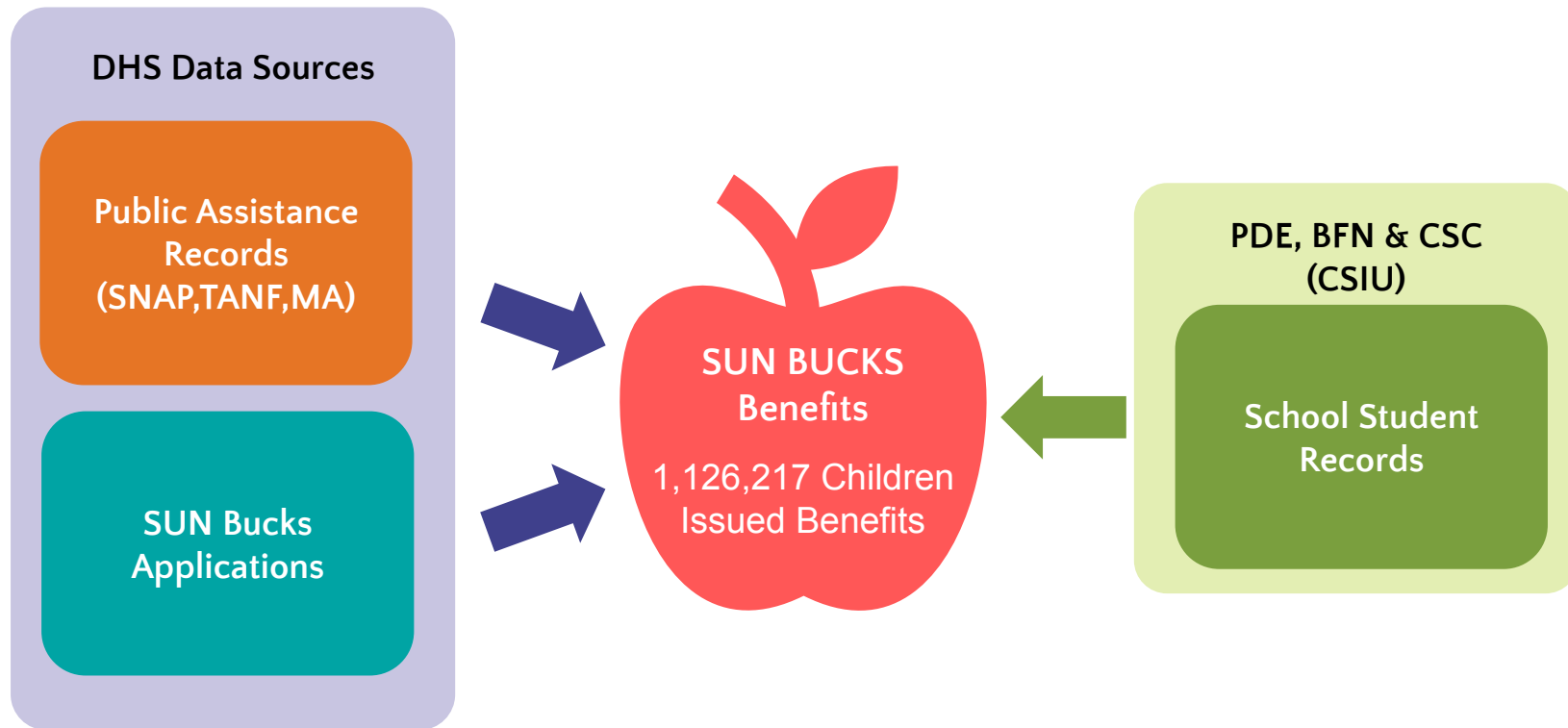
CSC: School Data Collection Process

The Center for Schools and Communities (CSIU): Collects and validates school student enrollment and school meal eligibility data files from 750+ schools. Provides SUN Bucks support for the schools including communications, training, materials, and technical assistance.

Schools

School Student Data File

Upload

The CSC

CSC Student Data Validation System

CSC Manual Quality Assurance

Upload

DHS System

- 24,000 additional students identified for benefits
- File submission rate: 98.3%
- Student record error rate: 0.2%
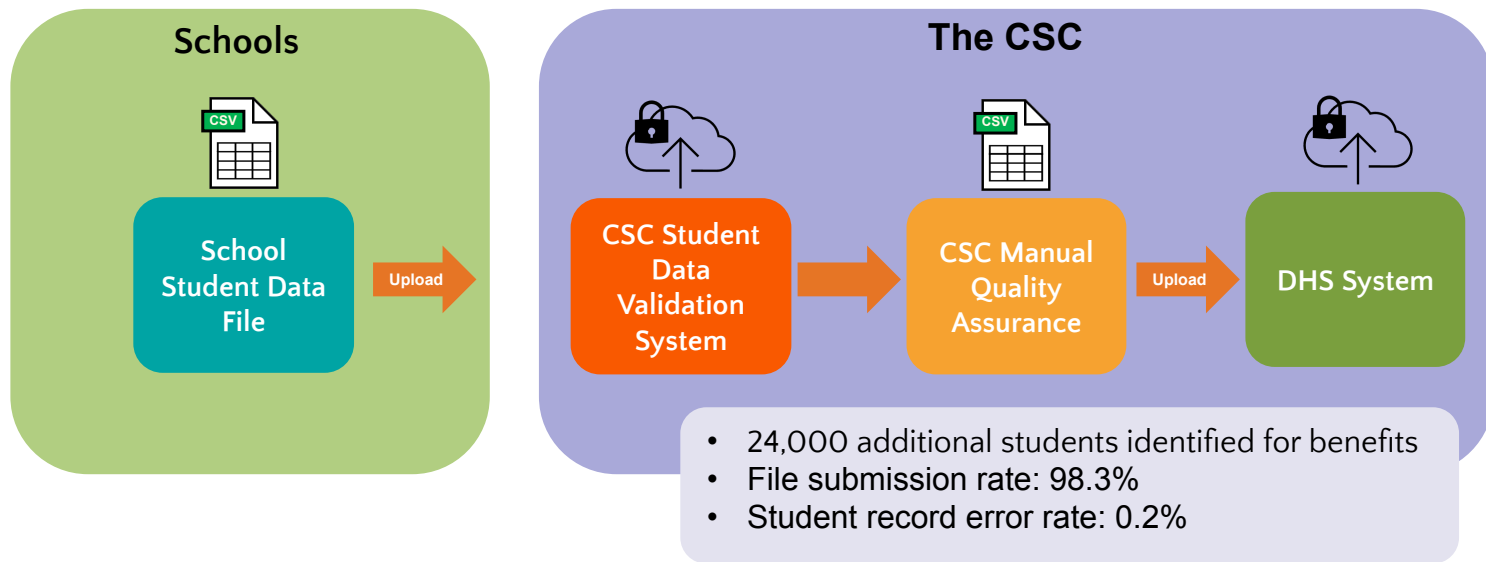
CSC: Data Quality Control

SUN-DVS: Reasonability Checks

- School Type/Status
- Total Enrollment & Eligibility Counts
- Record De-Duplication
- Site ID Matching

Final Staff Procedures

- Proactive Outreach
- Manual Quality Assurance

New: Secondary Data Collection

September Submission (non-CEP schools)

- 83% Participation Rate
- 3,800 additional students identified for benefits

Ashley Puffenbarger, West Virginia Bureau for Family Assistance
Integrating Summer EBT with benefits system

The PATH to Efficiency: Project Overview

Goal: Integrate West Virginia's SEBT program into the PATH eligibility system to interact and exist adjacent to other major benefit programs.

Justification:

- The need to reduce administrative burden, while increasing efficiency and program integrity.

- The need to reduce card issuance to reduce costs.

- The need to streamline benefit delivery to meet federal timeline requirements.

Cost: $2 million total; paid in part by 2025 Summer EBT tech grant funds

Streamlined Operations:
Why PATH Integration Matters

- **Maximizes Administrative Efficiency and Frees Up Resources**
  - By automating processes like record clean-up, deduplication, and benefit removal (which were previously manual and time-consuming), the state significantly reduces the administrative burden on personnel. This allows staff to shift their focus from tedious data management to higher-value activities, such as constituent services, accurate eligibility determination, and program oversight. Promotes consistency statewide across all DoHS districts and county Boards of Education.

- **Improves the Customer Experience and Benefit Accessibility**
  - Integration allows SEBT benefits for already-enrolled families (SNAP, TANF, Medicaid) to be placed directly onto their existing Mountain State EBT cards. This eliminates the confusion and delay associated with receiving and managing separate, new SEBT-only cards, ensuring families can access their benefits in a familiar and consistent way.

- **Ensures Program Compliance and Timely Support to Families**
  - Leveraging the established PATH system is critical for meeting strict federal mandates and timelines. This guarantees the state's compliance with federal rules, while safeguarding personal identifiable information. Most importantly, it ensures benefits are issued on time, every time.

Operational Efficiency:
Positive Effects on State Administration

- **Reduced Administrative Challenges**
  - Eligibility staff can make changes on demand instead of waiting on state level staff to assist in data management. This change has promoted local level program ownership.

- **Streamlined Data Management**
  - All data housed in a single source, promoting better reporting, evaluation and oversight.
  - Elimination of workaround processes
  - Creation of Summer EBT client notice history

- **Real-Time Data Access**
  - Increased ability to respond to FOIA requests

- **Enhanced Data Matching**
  - The available information provided to SNAP, TANF, Medicaid and LIHEAP. The use of data matching from external state partners – WorkForce WV, WV DRS, and SSA.

- **Further Defined Administrative Roles**
  - Reduced operational overlap

Minimizing Mistakes: Enhanced Data Accuracy and Integrity

- **Decreased Fair Hearings Due to Accurate Eligibility Determinations**
  - By processing SEBT through PATH, the system leverages established and verified eligibility rules for programs like SNAP and Medicaid. This significantly reduces the likelihood of manual errors, duplicate issuances, or incorrect benefit amounts that often lead to fair hearings. The high integrity of PATH data ensures that benefits are issued only to eligible children, resulting in fewer disputes and a more efficient allocation of resources.

- **Established Benefit Recovery Pathway for SEBT Issuances**
  - Integration creates a formal mechanism for recovering incorrectly issued SEBT benefits. Previously, benefit recovery for a standalone program could be complex and difficult to track. Using PATH provides a legal and established process for managing fiscal integrity, mirroring SNAP, which is essential for any government program. This ensures accountability, minimizes waste, and safeguards public funds by allowing the state to track and recoup over-issuances effectively.

- **Access to Established Program Data for Thousands of Individuals**
  - PATH already serves as the central hub for eligibility data for SNAP, TANF, and Medicaid, encompassing thousands of West Virginia residents. By integrating SEBT, the system can instantly use this current and historical data to verify eligibility for the majority of SEBT recipients. This eliminates the need to import, validate, and clean entirely separate data sets, thereby ensuring a high level of data accuracy from the start and drastically accelerating the benefit delivery timeline.

WEST VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF
HUMAN SERVICES
Bureau for Family Assistance

- **Significant Time Savings from Reduced Manual Admin Labor**
  - The integration automates tasks that were previously manual and time-consuming, such as cleaning up data, removing duplicate records, and canceling benefits on incorrect SEBT cards. By automating these backend administrative processes, state personnel save countless hours, which can then be redirected to managing other vital programs or providing direct service to constituents.

- **Major Cost Savings from Eliminating Mass Card Issuances**
  - For families already enrolled in SNAP, TANF, or Medicaid, their SEBT benefits can now be issued directly onto their existing Mountain State EBT card via the PATH system and tracked historically. This eliminates the substantial cost associated with manufacturing, mailing, and tracking thousands of new, separate SEBT-only cards, leading to immediate and ongoing material and postage cost reductions.

- **Accelerated Benefit Delivery and Compliance**
  - PATH's established eligibility and issuance platform allows the state to meet strict federal deadlines for benefit delivery, like SNAP, SEBT is processed daily and runs in nightly issuance batch to our EBT processes, FIS. The Benefit Recovery feature allows for SEBT to be repaid via WV's TOPs system.

- **Reduced Card Issuance**
  - Applying all household benefits to a single, familiar card.

- **Timely Issuance**
  - PATH guarantees timely issuance of benefits. PATH sends worker alerts that remind staff to work pending verification.
  - PATH makes available real-time data that is readily available to the Board of Review and assists households in the fair hearing process.

- **Improved Support**
  - State MIS can trouble shoot case for eligibility staff in PATH.
  - Any eligibility staff member at DoHS can provide household the status on a SEBT application.

- **Real-Time Notices**
  - Approvals, denials, verification requests, and expungement notices are batched daily out of PATH based on program business rules.

- **Centralized Customer Service**
  - Utilizing DoHS Office of Constituent Services and Client Services divisions

Real-World Results:
Key Metrics and Outcomes

WEST VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF
HUMAN SERVICES
Bureau for Family Assistance

Increased Benefit Redemption

2024 – 86.09% vs 2025 – 90.65%

Goal for 2026 is 92% benefit redemption!

Sharp Decrease in Fair Hearings

2024 – 75 vs 2025 – 1 statewide!

Strong Return on Investment

Low – 50%; High – 80%

Decrease in overall Client Services/GO inquiries

Down by 22%!

The Road Ahead:
Sustaining Success and Future Opportunities

- There are no major PATH changes planned for 2026. Instead, West Virginia is focusing efforts internally at the local level for district DoHS offices to drive SEBT moving forward.

- Focus on stability, consistency and integrity

- Continued coordination with WVDE; changing to meet the evolution of the benefit program.

- Yearly evaluation of program efficiency.

Questions?

Ashley Puffenbarger

Senior Program Manager

Summer EBT and SNAP

350 Capitol St., Charleston, WV 25301

304-352-4553

Ashley.n.Puffenbarger@wv.gov

Michael Farquhar, Arizona Department of Economic Security
FDPIR and SUN Bucks slips

NO KID HUNGRY®

FDPIR and Summer EBT

Arizona Department of Education, Health and Nutrition Services in partnership with the Department of Economic Security, Tribal Liaison met with 13 of the 22 Arizona Tribes and presented Extending FDPIR through Direct Certification and SUN Bucks.

The goals of the presentation:

- Aim to strengthen partnerships with FDPIR program representatives statewide.
- Collaborate to enhance the capacity of the widely used FDPIR program.
- Propose an existing method to automatically qualify children for Arizona's child nutrition programs.
- Highlight the SUN Bucks grocery benefit as an impactful program for communities.

NO KID HUNGRY®

FDPIR and Summer EBT

- FDPIR regulations allows for the disclosure of information for the purpose if NSLP direct certification
- Schools may directly certify students through data provided by FDPIR

FDPIR Agreement Impact
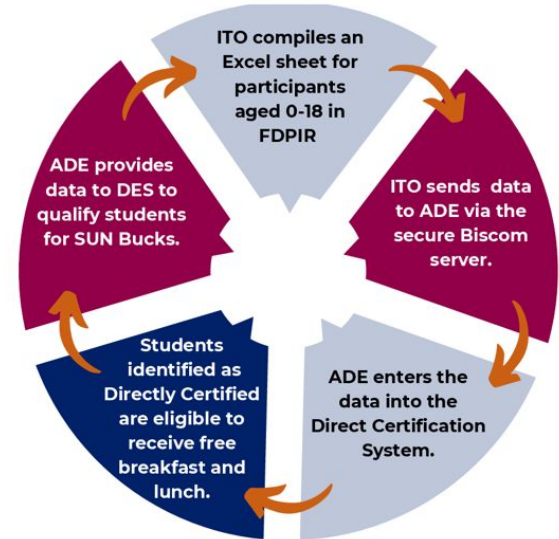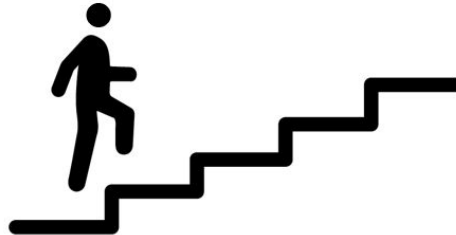
Students' current process **without** FDPIR agreement

Students process **with** FDPIR agreement

NO KID HUNGRY®

FDPIR and Summer EBT

The Tribes were requested to send the participant date for children 0 - 18 years of age monthly to the Department of Education via secure email. The Department of Education would enter them into the Direct Certification System.

How It Works! Step by Step

ITO compiles an Excel sheet for participants aged 0-18 in FDPIR

ITO sends data to ADE via the secure Biscom server.

ADE enters the data into the Direct Certification System.

Students identified as Directly Certified are eligible to receive free breakfast and lunch.

ADE provides data to DES to qualify students for SUN Bucks.

NO KID HUNGRY®

SUN Buck slips

HERE IS YOUR SUN BUCKS CARD

You may use your child's SUN Bucks card attached below at participating SNAP/EBT authorized food retailers nationwide. If you do not want to accept Summer EBT food benefits or you received this card by mistake, then please destroy this card. Summer EBT food benefits are non-transferable.

Important!
- You can download the ebtEDGE mobile app to view locations that accept EBT food benefits.
- You must select a Personal Identification Number (PIN) before you can use the card.
- To select a PIN use the ebtEdge mobile app or call Customer Service at the phone number on the back of the card.
- When setting your PIN – you need the dob of the child's named on the card and the 8-digit case number.
- If you lose or damage the card, a replacement can be requested via the ebtEDGE mobile app or by calling Customer Service.
- To find out about Arizona Sunbucks, please go to: https://www.azed.gov/SUNBucks

If you are receiving a replacement card:
- You do not need to select a new PIN, your current PIN will carry over to this replacement card.
- If you need to select a new PIN you can change your current PIN anytime by logging onto ebtEDGE or by calling Customer Service.

Check your balance and get other account information on ebtEDGE at www.ebtedge.com or download the ebtEDGEmobile app.

To get your 8-digit case number, please call 1 (833) 648-4406 and write it down here: _____

DO NOT THROW THIS CARD AWAY!
It is the only way to get your benefits!

Keep these instructions for your records

Summer Nutrition Summit 2026

NO KID HUNGRY®

ARIZONA

Summer EBT Snapshot

- **646,932** children issued benefits
- **$77,631,840** benefits issued
- **76.48%** of benefits redeemed (12/15)

- Programs/statuses used for streamlined certification: SNAP, TANF, Medicaid, NSLP/SBP.
- New Summer EBT cards issued to SUN Bucks only cases by households where possible in 2025.
- Children on existing EBT cases receive co-loaded on SNAP card for SNAP households or we reused the child's 2024 SUN Bucks cases wherever possible.

Additional Programs/Statuses

- FDPIR files manually sent to Dept of Ed
- Fosters are provided monthly to Dept of Ed
- Dept of Ed Homeless Education Program has daily updates
- Dept of Ed Migrant Education Program has monthly updates
- Dept of Ed receives daily updates from Head Start locations who are NSLP/SBP sites

Summer Nutrition Summit 2026

Questions?

Mike Farquhar
EBT Business Analysis Manager
Division of Benefits and Medical Eligibility
Department of Economic Security

mfarquhar@azdes.gov

Zachary Gonzales, New Mexico Health Care Authority
Reaching Harder to Reach Populations

NO KID HUNGRY®

HEALTH CARE AUTHORITY

SUN BUCKS

INVESTING FOR TOMORROW, DELIVERING TODAY.

MISSION

We ensure New Mexicans attain their highest level of health by providing whole-person, cost-effective, accessible, and high-quality health care and safety-net services.

VISION

Every New Mexican has access to affordable health care coverage through a coordinated and seamless health care system.

GOALS

LEVERAGE purchasing power and partnerships to create innovative policies and models of comprehensive health care coverage that improve the health and well-being of New Mexicans and the workforce.

ACHIEVE health equity by addressing poverty, discrimination, and lack of resources, building a New Mexico where everyone thrives.

BUILD the best team in state government by supporting employees' continuous growth and wellness.

IMPLEMENT innovative technology and data-driven decision-making to provide unparalleled, convenient access to services and information.

HEALTH CARE
AUTHORITY

Hard to reach populations in New Mexico

- Homeless students
- Tribal areas

Challenges in Reaching Students Experiencing Homelessness in New Mexico

- Mailing addresses may be inaccurate.

- Students experiencing homelessness may move or change schools during the year, older data (up to nine months old) can make outreach challenging.

- School district liaisons, Mckinney-Vento Coordinators, each played a key role in delivering cards to the correct students.

Challenges in Reaching Tribal Students in New Mexico

- Mailing addresses may be inaccurate, as Tribal address structures often do not conform to USPS standards.

- Data issues that existed before the implementation of Pandemic EBT (P-EBT) continue to persist, and many schools choose not to submit any data at all.

- NM solution: Food Distribution Programs on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) are now SUN Bucks partners in New Mexico. Data training is currently underway, and several sites have signed on.

James Blair - Code for America
jblair@codeforamerica.org

Paige Poticher - PA CSIU
ppoticher@csc.csiu.org

Ashley Puffenbarger - WV DHS
ashley.n.puffenbarger@wv.gov

Mike Farquhar - AZ DES
mfarquhar@azdes.gov

Zach Gonzalez - NM HCA
Zachary.Gonzales2@hca.nm.gov

Kara Williams - APHSA
kwilliams@aphsa.org

Regis Whaley - No Kid Hungry
rwhaley@strength.org

NO KID HUNGRY

We want to hear from you!
Scan to take our survey:

Summer Nutrition Summit 2026 - Post Summit Feedback