

Summer Nutrition Summit

January 12-13, 2026



 **NO KID
HUNGRY**®

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.

January 12, 2026

Human-Centered Tech: Practical Innovation for Summer EBT



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Agenda

- Introductions
- Common Tech & Data Issues
- Summer EBT in Colorado and DC
- Practical Innovations in Summer EBT
 - Address Validation
 - Entity Resolution
 - Self-Service Portals
- Q & A

Government can and should work well for *everyone*.

Code for America is a 501(c)3 non-profit.

We work shoulder-to-shoulder with
agencies in over 20 states and tribal nations

Mission: Transform the social safety net by working
shoulder-to-shoulder with our partners and the
communities they serve, utilizing human-centered
technology to remove barriers to public benefit
enrollment, usage, and retention





COLORADO

Department of Human Services

CDHS collaborates with partners in State and county governments, nonprofits, advocates, community residents, providers and many others to empower Coloradans to thrive through bold and innovative health and human services.



COLORADO

Department of Education

CDE supports people and families by connecting them with assistance, resources and support at every stage of their lives. We serve Coloradans through bold and innovative health and human services. And together, we empower Coloradans to thrive.



DC | DEPARTMENT of
HUMAN SERVICES

The mission of the D.C. Department of Human Services is to provide meaningful and equitable services, supports, and access to resources for District residents to realize their goals.

Why we are here: to get hungry kids fed during the summer!

Primary Goal

Code for America and Share Our Strength are working with multiple states* to increase the number of eligible children receiving and utilizing SEBT benefits in 2026 and beyond, through a combination of technology/data and comms/outreach interventions.

Ancillary Goals

- Reducing customer service burden for Summer EBT programs
- The solutions will also be designed with the intent of cost-effective adaptation for other states* in 2027.

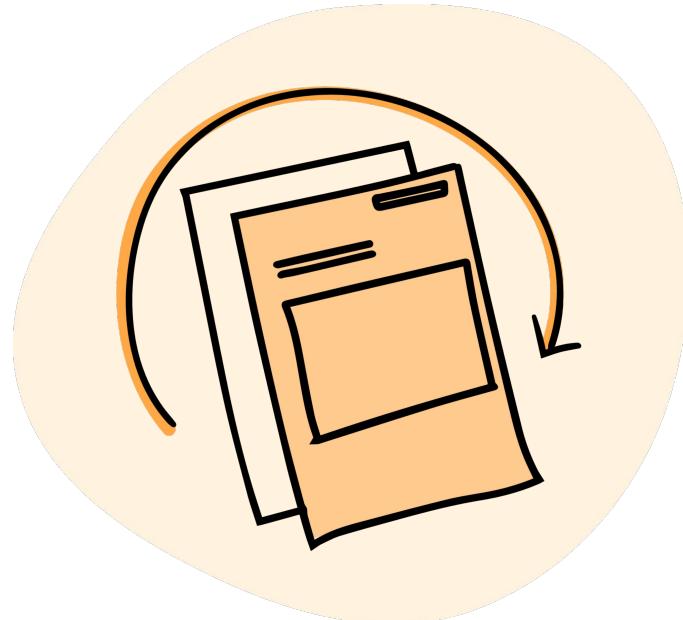
**states, districts, Tribal Nations*



**In our work supporting over 13+
states, districts, and Tribal
Nations, we've seen a few trends.**

Poor mailing address data create headaches

- **Incorrect mailing addresses=delays** in families receiving critical benefits
- Returned mail is common and is **costly to states**
- Across states that co-loaded benefits, redemption rates for **non-SNAP/TANF households** were generally lower than SNAP/TANF households who were SC'ed. Incorrect mailing addresses is a likely contributor.



Data Deduplication and Integration

Many states are still struggling to **collect, clean, and correctly link student data for Summer EBT**.

Main issues include:

- Standardizing data from multiple sources in varying formats
- Integrating school data with other data sources
- Burdensome and time-consuming record linkage processes and manual human review



Customer support staff are overwhelmed



- **Caregivers are confused** if they need to apply or not
- Many states **lack the self-service infrastructure** to divert calls to self-resolution
- Some states have **no dedicated call center staff** for S-EBT
- **Delays in benefits issuance** due to data systems challenges caused families to call customer support lines

Families need an easy way to update their information and check their child's benefits status.

Agencies need better customer contact data to efficiently administer benefits.

Quick Facts: Summer EBT in Colorado



of children eligible for Summer EBT: ~550,000

Diverse population, with a high number of immigrants, with some school districts having **more than 50+ languages spoken**, including specific dialects

Many children are streamlined certified through **household income forms** even though all children in public schools receive free school meals through Healthy School Meals for All

Summer EBT Challenges in CO

- **Outdated Mailing Addresses Impacting Card Delivery:** Complex and untimely process for clients to update their address. Source of address data is confusing/unclear.
- **Data Deduplication:** Complex collection, and sometimes incomplete data makes it difficult for staff with limited time and resources to clean the data.
- **Overwhelmed Program and Client Support Staff:** Staff received thousands of calls, voicemails, and emails from clients requesting assistance.
- **Lack of Awareness:** Clients' lack of awareness about the SEBT program and confusion about eligibility are barriers to participation/benefit utilization.

Quick facts: SUN Bucks in DC

of children eligible in DC: ~80,000

DC DHS serves children that are **frequently moving between the DMV (DC, Maryland, Virginia)**, meaning their home address may regularly change, making it difficult to get cards to families.

DC DHS has **limited access to Medicaid data**, making it difficult to reach that population, and adding challenges to address validation and entity resolution.



SUN Bucks Challenges in DC

- **Poor Address Quality:** Some of the existing address data was of poor quality, making issuance difficult, and data matching hairy, and many addresses undeliverable.
- **Deduplication and Entity Resolution:** DC Addresses pose unique problems, especially when factoring in directional addresses and address line character limits.
- **Return Mail:** Because many addresses were incorrect or rejected by USPS for a lack of deliverability, DC received boxes of return mail, with little to no time to process, and a lot of costly reissuances required.

Addressing S-EBT's toughest challenges

Creating
human-centered tech
solutions



**Creating solutions that help solve
their biggest Summer EBT
challenges with minimal staff
intervention**

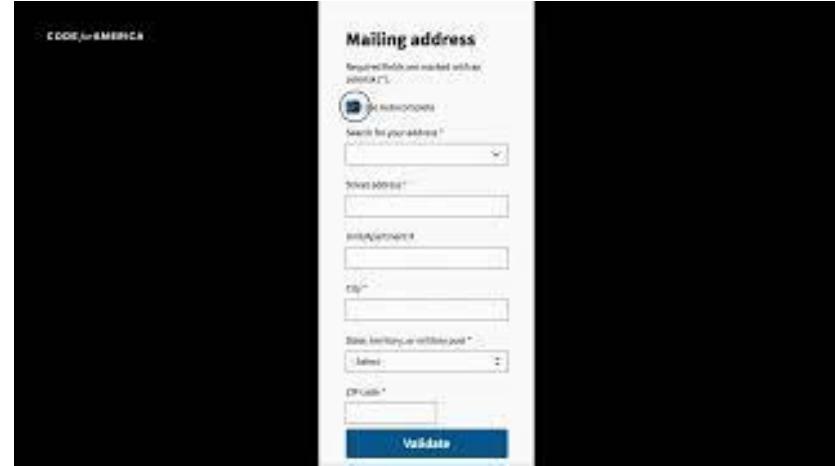
What is Address Validation

- Addresses are error prone data, often not entered in a standard format
- Verifying correctness and deliverability is critical for ensuring clients receive notices and EBT cards in a timely manner
- Address correctness and standardization are critical when addresses are used in entity resolution (matching records across datasets)
- The USPS and several commercial services provide APIs for validating and standardizing addresses
- Addresses can be validated at the point of entry and on the backend for bulk processing

Building a better system for address validation

Code for America partnered with DC DHS to assist in validating addresses on the front-end of their applications as well as **automate validation of their existing data**, using a service called Smarty.

These systems ensure both new and existing addresses are deliverable.



The image shows a user interface for address validation. At the top left, it says "CODEforAMERICA". The main area is titled "Mailing address" and contains a form with the following fields:

- Required fields are marked with a red asterisk (*).
- Search for your address:
- Street address:
- Apartment:
- City:
- State/territory/country/post*:
- Zip/Postal Code*:

A blue "Validate" button is located at the bottom right of the form. The right side of the image is a solid black rectangle.

We used our work in DC as a foundation for our address validation resource.

Building a better system for address validation

We implemented a demo of address validation, including autocomplete in the user interface, using the address validation web service from a tool called [Smarty](#).



Best Practices



Code Samples

We used our work in DC as a foundation for our [address validation resource](#).

What is Entity Resolution?

- Process of identifying the sets of elements in one or more datasets that correspond to the same unique individual
- Outcomes of entity resolution are record linkage and data deduplication
- Shows up in Summer EBT in several crucial ways:
 - Identifying children eligible for automatic benefits issuance across various datasets
 - Linking SEBT applications to NSLP-participating school enrollment
 - Deduplicating SEBT applications against the streamlined certification file

What Entity Resolution Looks Like

Entity Resolution helps us understand if two or more 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? 🤔

A Success Story: DC SUN Bucks Entity Resolution

- DC DHS uses a **rules-based tool that utilizes strategies such as:**
 - Phonetic matching and string edit distance comparisons
 - Standardizing and correcting address data using a commercial service
- Linkage of records using **a core set of PII** & then additional identifiers, like gender and addresses
- Matching algorithms in T-SQL scripts helped with fuzzy matching



Impacts of DC Entity Resolution

- **Minimal Manual Review:** DC's custom tool results in minimal manual review and streamlined deduplication
- **Centralized Data:** Allows for efficient and reliable processing of updates
- **Replicable Processes:** Process and tools that has been well-suited to SEBT entity resolution in a similarly sized state



Best Practices for Entity Resolution

In partnership with No Kid Hungry, a campaign of Share Our Strength, Code for America updated its recent **best practices in entity resolution resource**, which includes multiple case studies from DC, WI, OH, and NJ on strategies that helped improve their Summer 2025 benefits issuance.

This resource is now available on Code for America's website to **assist technical stakeholders** in improving their entity resolution and data deduplication processes.



January 2026

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 implementing initiatives in their Summer EBT environment (and EBT6 enrollment) as their respective Summer 2026

Best Practices for Entity Resolution Resource



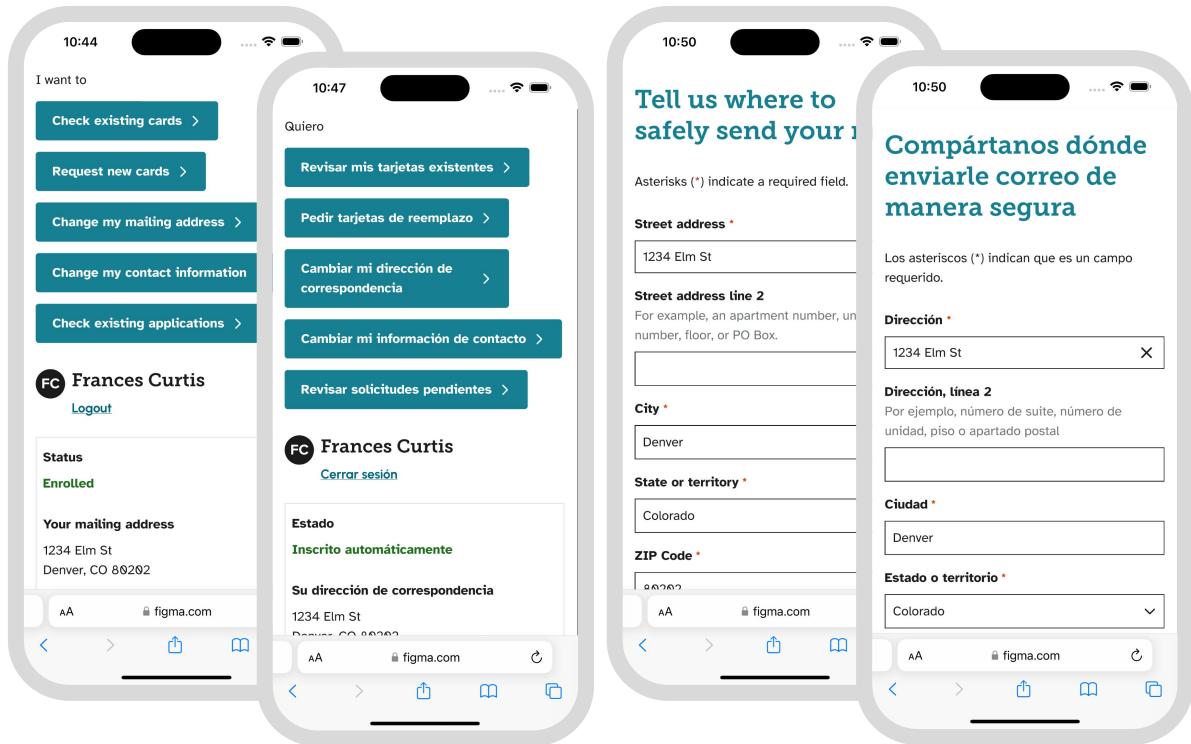
You can also find this resource on Code for America's website:
<https://codeforamerica.org/resources/summer-ebt-playbook/>

Self-Service Portal for Summer EBT

VISION

A client-friendly SEBT portal that will..

- Increase benefit participation
- Reduce administrative burden
- Improve program integrity by enabling self-service benefits management



Self-Service Portal for Summer EBT

Primary Goal:

Enable guardians to update their mailing address.

Ancillary Goals:

- Confirm enrollment status
- Order new cards
- Check SEBT applications

Iterative user testing ensures user-friendly tech solutions.

Participant quotes:

“The whole process was good. It's all the information I needed to update my address. Much better than waiting on the phone for 2 hours.”

“This answers a lot of questions that I have. You are actually giving me information here that I get when I try to call in.”

“This is much easier and saves me time.”

The image displays three mobile phone screens, each showing a different step in a user flow, with a large teal checkmark icon in the top right corner of each screen.

- Check enrollment for multiple children**
12:10
Here's the information we have so far
Review your child(ren)'s information below. You may add another child to see if they need to apply, too. Tap "Submit" if you've finished adding children.
Name: Kalai Frances Curtis
Birthdate: August 13, 2017
[Update this child's information](#)
Back Submit
[Add another child](#)
figma.com
- Change their address**
10:44
I want to:
[Check existing cards >](#)
[Request new cards >](#)
[Change my mailing address >](#)
[Change my contact information >](#)
[Check existing applications >](#)
FC Frances Curtis
Logout
Status: Enrolled
Your mailing address: 1234 Elm St Denver, CO 80202
AA figma.com
- Order new cards**
12:13
Do you want to request replacement Summer EBT cards to be sent to this address?
5678 Maple Ave Boulder, CO 80301
We can send replacement cards if:
 - You haven't received them in the mail after two weeks
 - Or you no longer have themAsterisks (*) indicate a required field.
Select one *
 Yes
 No
AA figma.com

Our approach to SEBT self-service portal



User-tested. All products are informed by rigorous testing with clients and interviews with staff, CBOs, schools, and other key stakeholders.



Digital security is key. As we work to unlock benefits for families, we're balancing accessibility with industry-standard privacy and security measures to protect child and guardian PII.



Built for scale. We are building a self-portal product that will be able to be customized and deployed across multiple states in 2026 and beyond.

Creating a human-centered SEBT portal

1. **Balance security with accessibility:** The security hoops a user has to jump through should be commensurate with the sensitivity of the data being accessed. See our guide to Summer EBT Self-Service Portals for a deeper dive.
2. **Pair digital tools with targeted human support:** A digital self-service portal cannot completely replace human customer service – but if done well, it can significantly reduce volume and direct human effort towards more complex customer questions/challenges.
3. **Invest in data quality and management:** A self-service portal is only as good as the data and data systems behind it.

What's Next

-  We are launching self-service portal products in D.C. and Colorado in April
-  Portal design and backend software infrastructure is designed to be adaptable across different state contexts and technical systems
-  All technical documentation and software code will be openly available for non-commercial use by Q4 2026

Thank You!

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