

Summer Nutrition Summit

January 12-13, 2026



Summer EBT Outreach & Communications Playbook

Summer Nutrition Summit 2026



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

- Introduction & Background
- Guiding Principles of the Playbook
- Playbook Overview
- Playbook in Action
- Q&A



Speakers:



Amanda Bunch
Social Services
Manager,
Arkansas
Department of
Human Services



John H. Cain,
MPH, MSPAS, PA
Kentucky Kids Eat
Program Director,
Feeding Kentucky



Amanda West
Child Nutrition
Director, Monticello
School District

Background

- Confusion about eligibility especially that some need to apply
 - “School-age”
 - Free meals for all settings
- Challenges with benefit receipt and utilization
 - Card activation
 - Missing out because of expungement
- Customer service overwhelm
- Hesitation to engage key messengers like schools

Summer 2025 Outreach Pilots



- Simplified messages & calls to action
- Created eligibility checkers in KY, MI, and NE
- Engaged partners, particularly schools:
 - Training
 - Ready to use materials
 - Funding & support to larger CEP districts
- Leveraged social media

Highlights & Learnings

- Partners very willing to participate
- Ready-to-use materials with clear CTA made outreach easier
- Answers to key questions & demystifying eligibility decreased burden on schools, families, and customer service
- Social media supported broader reach but schools and parent-to-parent amplified



Highlights & Learnings

Pilot State 1:

- 152% increase in applications from 2024 to 2025
- Consistent 40% approval (2024 & 2025), drop in denials from 46% in 2024 to 23% in 2025

Pilot State 2:

- Number of children who received Summer EBT via application doubled from 2024 and 2025
 - ~9,000 to over 18,000

Summer EBT Outreach Playbook



bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/programs/summer-ebt-outreach-playbook



Playbook Guiding Principles

- Consistent, concise, and clear messaging from multiple trusted messengers builds program trust and awareness
- Agencies are the source of truth for families, partners and schools
- Schools and community organizations want to partner on outreach but need guidance and transparency
- Clear calls to action with simple steps for families ensure benefit receipt and utilization while reducing customer service burden for all

Pilot State Agency Staff

“

Last year I'd reply to 130 emails and still have another 130 to get back to in a day.

This year, throughout the year, I was [ready for more work]. The more people involved, getting it out, with the checker seeing first hand - they could see the requirements instead of waiting for me to get back to them with the eligibility information.

Playbook Overview

- Communicating about Summer EBT
- Leveraging Technology
- Partnering with Schools
- Communicating in the Context of Free School Meals for All
- Agency Communications
- Strategic Partnerships
- Request Materials and Support



This Spring

EARLY APRIL

Sign up for \$120 in extra grocery support over the summer!

Visit [\[short link\]](#) to see if you're automatically enrolled or if you need to apply.



End of School Year

MID-MAY

When school is out, Summer EBT is in!

Summer EBT benefits are loaded onto your existing card or mailed to your address.

If you haven't received Summer EBT, you can still apply. Apply at [\[Short link\]](#).



Over the Summer

JULY

Don't miss out on Summer EBT support!

If you haven't received Summer EBT yet, there's still time! The deadline to apply is [DATE](#).



Back to School

MID-AUGUST

Are your Summer EBT benefits still on the shelf?

Be sure to use them before they expire after 4 months.



Summer EBT is right around the corner!

It provides \$120 in extra grocery support for kids who are home from school over the summer.

**ARE YOU
SIGNED UP?**

Eligibility Checker

- https://mrrawhaley.github.io/summer_ebt/Eligibility%20Navigator/2026/NKH%20Eligibility%20Navigator.html



Summer EBT Eligibility Navigator

Is your child enrolled in any of the following programs?

- ☐ Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- ☐ Medicaid
- ☐ Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
- ☐ Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)
- ☐ Head Start
- ☐ My child is not enrolled in any of these programs
- ☐ I don't know

Back

Next

SUMMER EBT IS BACK!

ARE YOU
SIGNED UP?

Summer EBT provides **\$120 of extra grocery benefits** to children (like yours!) over the summer, when kids aren't getting the meals they usually eat at school. It is available to families who could use support buying food.

Most eligible children are automatically enrolled in Summer EBT, but some will need to apply.

**Check to see if you
need to apply today!**

THE BLUEGRASS BLUEPRINT

Summer EBT Outreach Strategies from Kentucky

KENTUCKY
KIDS EAT

FEEDING
KENTUCKY

SUN 
SUMMER NUTRITION PROGRAMS FOR KIDS

 **NOKID
HUNGRY**

KENTUCKY





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Feeding Kentucky

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FEEDING KENTUCKY



**State's Largest
Charitable Response to
Hunger**



**Network of 7 Feeding
America Food Banks &
900+ Partner Pantries
Serving All 120 Counties**



**Mission: Work collectively to
create a hunger-free
Kentucky**



**Focus on Child Hunger,
Food Sourcing for
Network, SNAP Outreach,
& Advocacy**



- Child hunger relief program of Feeding Kentucky
- Mission-Aligned Goal: Food security for every KY child every day
- Connect KY kids to healthy foods 365 days a year
- 4P's to Hunger Free Approach fosters connections
- Co-manages No Kid Hungry Kentucky

1

PUBLICIZE

the Problem of Child
Food Insecurity &
Hunger in KY

2

PROMOTE

Evidence-Based
Strategies that
Reduce Child Food
Insecurity & Hunger
in KY

3

PARTNER

to Support Those
Strategies in Practice
in KY

4

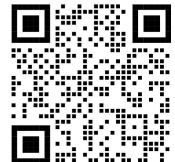
PUSH

Policies that Serves as
Legislative Solutions
to Child Food
Insecurity & Hunger
in KY



- Private-Public Coalition Between Share Our Strength & Feeding Kentucky
- Shared Goal: Ending Child Hunger in Kentucky
- Key Strategy: Increase Access to School & Community Nutrition Programs
- Began in 2015 - Summer Hunger a Focus From Day One

10 YEARS OF **NO KID HUNGRY**
IN KENTUCKY



Child Food Insecurity

A Public Health, Education, & Workforce Readiness Crisis in Kentucky

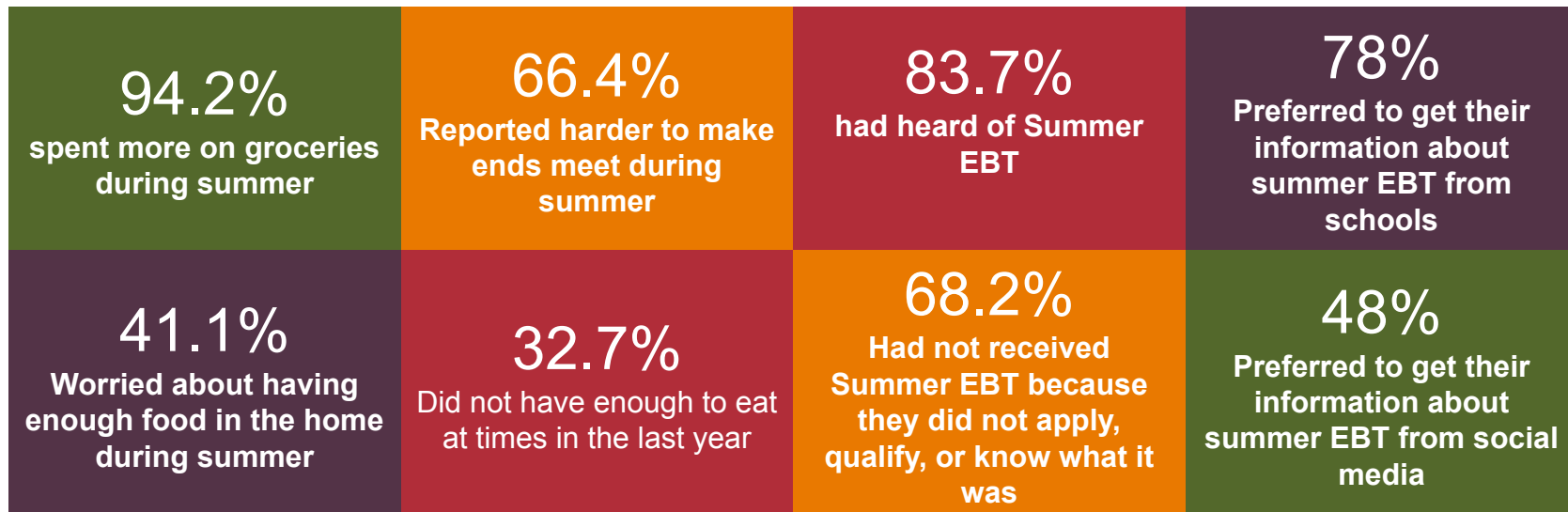
- One in 5 Kentucky kids lack access at times to enough food to be healthy and active
- 213,830 Food Insecure KY Kids in 2023
- All KY counties are home to food insecure kids
- Counties disproportionately impacted include rural, Appalachian, and those with larger Black and/or Hispanic populations
- Without school meals, summer the hungriest time of year.

Source: Map the Meal Gap

Informing Outreach

Family & Caregiver Survey around USDA's Summer Nutrition Programs for Kids

- 104 Families & Caregivers from 17 KY counties across the state



During the School Year



1,302 KY schools participate in NSLP.
~569,000 Kentucky kids are program or income eligible for free & reduced-price school meals.

During Summer Break



% FR KIDS REACHED BY SUMMER MEALS IN KY – 2024 ESTIMATES

STATE	RURAL	NON-RURAL
18%	26%	6%

Despite a 230% increase in summer meals served in Kentucky thanks to rural, non-congregate option, summer meals site reach only fraction of these kids.

The Critical Need for Summer EBT in Kentucky

IMPACT OF WIDESPREAD CEP ADOPTION

1,157 of Kentucky's 1302 NSLP participating schools have adopted the Community Eligibility Provision

~600,000 KY kids have no-cost access to school meals during the school year thanks to CEP BUT no free reduced priced school meal application to streamline certify for summer EBT.



**100% of Kentucky
counties are home to
CEP Schools**

Summer EBT Outreach Strategies in Kentucky

Support Schools as Trusted Messengers

Work with NSLP-participating school districts, especially those adopting CEP, by providing training, toolkits, and strategic grant funding to spur or enhance existing outreach .



Leverage Community Partnerships

Utilize existing and build new partnerships with state and local community-based organizations, particularly those working eligible families, to connect kids to Summer EBT,



Advocate for Kids

We prioritize support for summer EBT among elected officials by engaging them in outreach, educating key decision makers on program benefits and need.



Engage Lead State Agencies

Engage lead state agencies in outreach efforts including sharing best practices and providing strategic grant funding, and in-kind technical assistance to maximize streamline certification/minimize families having to apply.



Interventions in Kentucky

- Summer EBT eligibility screener development
- Ready-made materials for school staff & the families they serve
- Webinar presenting materials to partners
- Additional outreach and social media for community partners

Eligibility Screener

- Developed with the No Kid Hungry team to create a Kentucky-specific eligibility screener that families could be directed to to determine if they needed to apply.
- Received 38,718 views throughout the summer months. Over 12,000 of those views were through organic outreach and sharing - not promoted posts!

How to complete this form

For each question, tap/click the radio button (☐) or checkboxes (☐) that best describe your child, and then tap/click the "next question" button. If you need to change your answer to a previous question, tap/click the "go back" button.

Tap or click the "next question" button to get started!

Is your child enrolled in any of the following programs?

- ☐ Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- ☐ Income-based Medical Assistance (Medicaid)
- ☐ Kentucky Transitional Assistance Program (KTAP)
- ☐ Kinship Care
- ☐ My child is not enrolled in any of these programs
- ☐ I don't know

go back

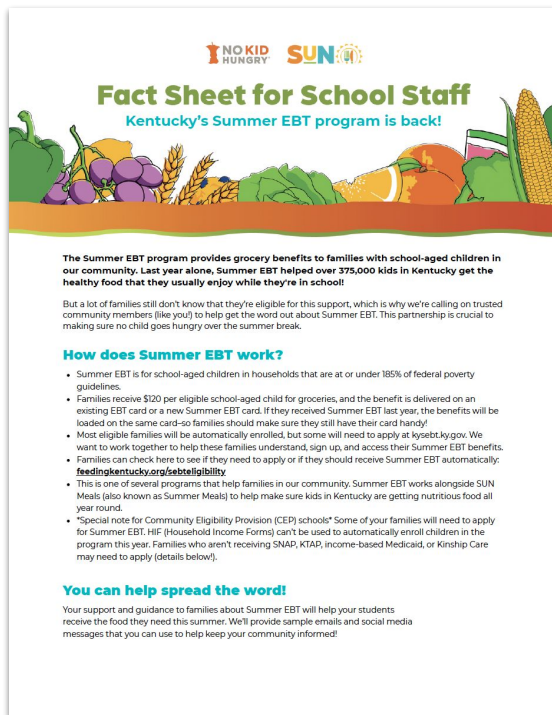
next question

Webinar & Ready-Made Materials for School Staff

- Hosted a webinar in mid-May that had over 110 registrants from throughout the state - from schools to food bank partners to healthcare organizations.
- Debuted materials that would be available at their disposal to share about Summer EBT.
- Answered common questions about the program and FAQs that they might get from families as well.
- Gave space for them to share information with one another.



Webinar & Ready-Made Materials for School Staff



CEP schools

Some of your eligible families *won't* be automatically enrolled, so they may need to sign up.

Your families **need to apply** for Summer EBT if they are not:

- ☐ Receiving SNAP, KTAP, income-based Medical Assistance (Medicaid), or Kinship Care

Remember that Household Income Forms (HIFs) cannot be used to enroll children automatically in Summer EBT.

Non-CEP schools

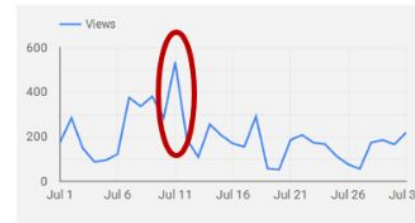
Most of your eligible families will be automatically enrolled, so they don't need to sign up.

They will receive Summer EBT automatically if they:

- ☒ Receive SNAP, KTAP, income-based Medical Assistance (Medicaid), or Kinship Care
- ☒ Completed a Free/Reduced Meal Application through school and were approved

Additional outreach

- Focus district engagement - selected two districts, Bullitt & Jessamine County to give small grants to conduct additional outreach to families around Summer EBT
 - Supported individualized outreach
 - Partnerships with pantries and local organizations within their community to share information
 - Expanded translation of materials to languages spoken in their district
- Opportunity for take-home flyers to be shared with multiple districts in time for back-to-school events.
- Toolkit specific to elected officials and community partners developed mid-summer to promote the application deadline.



City	Sessions	Views
1. Louisville	461	
2. Indianapolis	288	
3. Lexington	236	
4. Boardman	131	
5. Atlanta	126	
6. Chicago	109	
7. Ashburn	99	
8. Frankfort	83	
9. Mount Washingt...	73	
10. New York	71	
11. San Jose	69	
12. Shepherdville		
13. Columbus		
14. Bowling Green		

NO KID HUNGRY KENTUCKY

KENTUCKY KIDS EAT FEEDING KENTUCKY

SUMMER EBT RESOURCES

These resources provide ways to educate and connect with families about Summer EBT.

Social Media Graphics

No Kid Hungry/Feeding Kentucky:

NKH Logo

- English graphic containing No Kid Hungry & Feeding KY logo: Google folder access ([pdf download](#))
- Spanish graphic containing No Kid Hungry & Feeding KY logo: Google folder access ([pdf download](#))

Add Your Own Logo

- English graphics with space to add a logo: [Canva access](#) (editable graphics)
- Spanish graphics with space to add a logo: [Canva access](#) (editable graphics)

Social Media Posts

No Kid Hungry

About Summer EBT

- Kentucky families! #SummerEBT is back to provide \$120 in grocery benefits to families with eligible school-age kids throughout the summer. Find out if you are eligible: [feedingky.org/sebteligibility](#)
- Are you leaving \$120 in benefits on the table? Eligible school-age children can get \$120 in grocery benefits via #SummerEBT. Apply now: [https://kysebt.ky.gov/](#)

Bullitt County Public Schools · Follow
Jul 11 ·

Summer EBT Program

Summer EBT gives each eligible child from birth through 12th grade \$120 in extra grocery benefits.

1 Check to see if you're eligible for Summer EBT! If your student is getting SNAP, KTAG, income-based Medicaid, or Kinship Care, they'll be automatically enrolled. If not, you'll need to apply! <https://feedingky.org/sebteligibility/> Scan the QR code below or at to find out!

2 If you're eligible, you can sign up online at kysebt.ky.gov.

Summer grocery help is here!

Each eligible BCPS student can get \$120 in extra grocery benefits through the Summer EBT Program to help your family this summer. See more

Share
shares

Looking Ahead

- Deepening collaboration with the state agencies
 - Utilizing data to determine opportunities for continued growth with application outreach
- Incorporating other interventions like free-and-reduced meal applications and SNAP during the school year
- Targeted outreach with other staff within the school district
- Development of additional FAQ and outreach materials based on common questions

Lessons Learned

- School districts and community partners were eager for the information! They wanted to help support & educate their families.
 - But they also needed the information sooner to reach them before the end of the school year.
 - There are also positions within the district outside of school nutrition that can support engaging students they work closely with.
- Opportunity to co-promote summer meals & Summer EBT!
- Information spread organically and quickly

Arkansas Summer EBT

Division of County Operations - SNAP Policy Unit



humanservices.arkansas.gov

Summer EBT Outreach Partnerships



Arkansas DHS has worked closely with Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance and Department of Education to ensure that families are aware of the Summer EBT program.



Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance (AHRA) has assisted DHS by working closely with provisional school districts to determine children who are eligible for the SEBT benefit but would need to apply.



Department of Education assisted DHS by coordinating to identify students who qualify for automatic benefits without the need for an application.

Summer EBT 2024 vs 2025

Arkansas experienced a **14.443% increase** in SEBT recipients from 2024 to 2025.

Year	Direct Eligible SNAP and TEA (ARIES)	Percentage of Direct Eligible (ARIES)	Direct Eligible NSLP	Percentage of Direct Eligible (NSLP)	Applications	Percentage of Applications	Total	
2024	123,801	42.15 %	159,290	54.23%	10,636	3.62%	293,727	
2025	126,813	37.73%	200,265	59.58%	9,058	2.69%	336,136	
	+3,012	-4.42	+40,975	+5.35	-1,578	-0.93	+42,409	+14.443%

We Care. We Act. We Change Lives.

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humanservices.arkansas.gov





Questions & Answers

Reflections