



## MONTANA SUN BUCKS FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### 1. What is SUN Bucks (Summer EBT)?

Summer EBT SUN Bucks is for qualifying children such as those who receive free or reduced meals, to provide extra food benefits during summer months when children do not have access to school meals.



### 2. 2025 SUN Bucks Operational Period:

May 22, 2025 – August 31, 2025

### 3. When will I receive benefits and how much will I receive?

Each eligible child will receive one payment of \$120 for the summer on a SUN Bucks Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card.

### 4. What state agency is responsible for administering the SUN Bucks program?

Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) administers SUN Bucks.

### 5. How long are the SUN Bucks benefits available?

SUN BUCKS benefits are available to use within 121 days after benefits are issued to you. Any unspent Summer EBT SUN BUCKS benefits will be removed from your account 122 days after being issued. 7 CFR 292.15(h)(1)(i)

### 6. Where can I use the card?

Use your SUN Bucks card at locations that display the SNAP logo and supported remarks such as "EBT Accepted Here." Online retailers currently do not accept SUN Bucks.



### 7. How do I take care of my card?

- NEVER tell your PIN to anyone.
- Do NOT write your PIN on your card or keep your PIN in your wallet or purse.
- Do not bend your card, keep near magnets, etc.
- To avoid theft of your benefits, change your PIN often.

### 8. Foods you may purchase with SUN Bucks:

- Fruits and vegetables
- Meat, poultry, and fish
- Dairy products
- Bread and cereals
- Other foods such as snack foods and non-alcoholic beverages; and
- Seeds and plants that produce food for the household to eat



**9. Foods you may not purchase with SUN Bucks:**

- Beer, wine, liquor, cigarettes, or tobacco
- Vitamins, medicines, and supplements. If an item has a Supplement Facts label, it is considered a supplement and is not eligible for SUN Bucks
- Live animals (except shellfish, fish removed from water, and animals slaughtered prior to pick-up from the store)
- Foods that are hot at the point of sale, including hot food from the deli counter at the grocery store
- Any nonfood items such as: pet foods; cleaning supplies, paper products, and other household supplies

**10. When do I contact Montana's SUN Bucks program?**

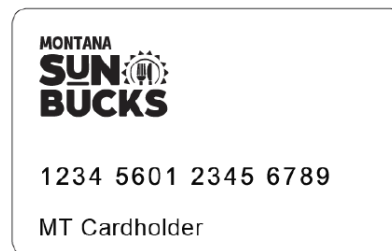
- For general questions about participation
- To opt out of SUN Bucks benefits
- To update your address
- To check on your benefit available date or end date

**Email:** [SUNBucks@mt.gov](mailto:SUNBucks@mt.gov) or **Phone:** (406) 444-0044

Representatives are available Monday-Friday from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM except for State holidays. If your call is sent to voicemail, please leave a message and your call will be returned in the order it is received.

**11. How do I activate the SUN Bucks card?**

Call 1-833-433-8263. You will need the SUN Bucks/Summer EBT card number on the front of the card. You will then need to follow the instructions on the insert included with your card



**12. When to call Customer Service for your SUN Bucks EBT Card**

1-833-433-8263 (Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week)

- To activate your card and select a PIN
- To check your balance and transactions
- To report your card lost, stolen or damaged
- To request a replacement card
- To change your PIN
- To ask questions or report problems with your card

**13. Who is eligible to participate?**

Children in Montana who may be eligible to participate:

- Children attending a school that offers the National School Lunch or School Breakfast Program, and your household income meets the requirements for free or reduced-price school meals, such as:



- Students at non-Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) schools who have been approved as eligible for free or reduced-price school meals through direct certification or an approved Free or Reduced-price meal Application
- Students attending a CEP school and have an approved SUN Bucks application.
- Children who are compulsory-aged (7-15 years old) and participated in eligible programs like SNAP or TANF during the eligibility period.

**14. Do all children in CEP schools automatically qualify for SUN Bucks?**

No, children in CEP schools must be income eligible and their caregiver must submit a complete SUN Bucks application to qualify for SUN Bucks, unless they are ages 7-15 and determined eligible through participation in programs such as SNAP or TANF during the eligibility period.

**15. Which children qualify automatically?**

Children who are directly certified for free and reduced-price school meals due to participating eligible programs such as SNAP, TANF, or FDPIR; or are directly certified for free and reduced-price meals from having foster, migrant, or homeless/runaway status.

**16. What is direct certification?**

Direct certification is a process conducted by states and schools to certify eligible children for free meals without the need for household applications.

**17. How can children qualify for SUN Bucks who are not directly certified for free and reduced-meals?**

Children who are not already directly certified for free and reduced-price meals may apply using a free or reduced-price meal application to be eligible for both free or reduced-price meals and SUN Bucks if approved. In order to issue SUN Bucks benefits to households through this method, schools must report free and reduced-price meal application information to DPHHS. Households may apply using a SUN Bucks application if they wish to only participate in SUN Bucks. Families must meet the federal income eligibility guidelines to qualify based on household size and income.

**18. My child receives free meals at school based on a submitted application. Do I need to apply to receive SUN Bucks benefits?**

No, the application for school meals eligibility will be used to distribute SUN Bucks benefits if this information is provided to the state agency for benefit issuance.

**19. What other resources are available for meals over the summer?**

The SUN Meals and SUN Meals To Go may be offering free meals over the summer for kids at a site near you. To find the nearest site to your location, please visit <https://www.fns.usda.gov/meals4kids> or text 'Summer Meals' to 914-342-7744.

**20. How can I opt out if I don't want to receive SUN Bucks benefits?**

Families can opt out by emailing [SUNBucks@mt.gov](mailto:SUNBucks@mt.gov) ; or calling 406-444-0044. If you receive a card you do not wish to use, you may opt out by cutting through the magnetic strip on the card and disposing of the card in a secure manner.



**21. Will applications for SUN Bucks be subject to verification?**

Yes, states are required to comply with SUN Bucks federal verification rules per 7 CFR 292.14.

**22. What is the timeframe for submitting applications and application processing?**

Applications can be submitted by families at any time during the year and they will be processed by the state within 15 business days.

**23. What should families do if they received a duplicate benefit, or received benefits in error?**

Do not spend any benefits received in error. If you are issued benefits for the same child from multiple States or Indian Tribal Organizations, you must only use the benefits from the State or Indian Tribal Organization where the child had completed the school year just prior to receiving benefits. Under no circumstances may households use both benefits per 7 CFR 292.12(f)(4).

**24. I have a question, which includes Personally Identifiable Information (sensitive) information about my child. How should I relay this information?**

Questions may be received either by email or by phone. Any PII (personally identifiable information) should not be sent via unsecured methods; email is considered unsecured.

**25. Retailers: How do I accept SUN Bucks benefits?**

If you do not currently accept SNAP (which will also allow you to accept Summer EBT/ SUN Bucks), you may apply for FNS Retailer Certification to process EBT Transactions at the link:

[How Do I Apply to Accept Benefits? | Food and Nutrition Service \[fns.usda.gov\]](https://fns.usda.gov/)

If you currently accept SNAP transactions but are having issues with accepting Summer EBT/ SUN Bucks, please reach out to whomever maintains your POS (Point of Sale Terminal) equipment to have the new MT SEBT BIN 984000161 added. The TPPs have added the MT SEBT to the BIN file that needs to be applied to your POS system.

*Note: if you have followed the steps above and added the new BIN and are still experiencing issues, please let us know.*

**26. Penalties for Misuse:**

Intentional program violations include intentionally: 1) Making a false or misleading statement, or 2) misrepresenting, concealing or withholding facts; or committing any act that constitutes a violation of SUN Bucks (Summer EBT) regulations, or any State statute for the purpose of using, presenting, transferring, acquiring, receiving, possessing or trafficking of SUN Bucks benefits or EBT cards.

The penalties for intentional SUN Bucks program violations are applicable to individuals 18 years of age or over who: allegedly committed an intentional SUN Bucks program violation; or allegedly ordered, coerced, persuaded, encouraged, or otherwise induced a person under the age of 18 to commit an intentional SUN Bucks EBT Program violation.



#### Penalties

- A. A person found by a Federal, State, or local court to have used or received benefits in a transaction involving the sale of a controlled substance (21 U.S. C. 802) will be ineligible to participate in SUN Bucks:
  - a) For a period of 24 months upon the first violation.
  - b) Permanently upon the second violation.
- B. A person found to have committed an intentional program violation through an administrative disqualification hearing or by Federal, State, or local court, or who has signed a waiver of right to a hearing or a disqualification consent agreement in cases of prosecution, is ineligible to participate in SUN Bucks:
  - a) For a period of 12 months for the first intentional program violation.
  - b) For a period of 24 months upon the second violation.
  - c) Permanently upon the third violation.
- C. Except for section B above, a person found to have made a fraudulent statement or representation with respect to the identity or place of residence of the individual in order to receive multiple SNAP benefits at the same time shall be ineligible to participate in SUN Bucks for a period of 10 years.
- D. Individuals found by a Federal, State, or local court to have used or received benefits in a transaction involving the sale of firearms, ammunition, or explosives shall be permanently ineligible to participate in SUN Bucks upon the first violation.
- E. A person convicted by a Federal, State or local court of having trafficked benefits for a total amount of \$500 or more shall be permanently ineligible to participate in SUN Bucks after the first violation.
- F. The household is responsible for paying back the State for an overpayment

Authority for this action is 7 CFR 273.16(b)

#### 27. Disclosures:

- A. The State of Montana may adjust benefits incorrectly posted to household accounts.
- B. Per 7CFR 292.15(g)(3) A household may appeal, within 90 days of the end of the summer operational period:
  - 1. A decision made with respect to 1) An application the household has made for SUN Bucks benefits; 2) A streamlined certification for SUN Bucks benefits; or 3) A verification process or procedure.
  - 2. Any adverse action taken against the household by the SUN Bucks program.
- C. To dispute a SUN Bucks benefit adjustment, you may call (406) 444-0044 or email [SUNBucks@mt.gov](mailto:SUNBucks@mt.gov)
- D. If you disagree with the decision, you may request a fair hearing using one of the following methods:
  - 1. Verbally request a fair hearing by calling (406) 444-0044
  - 2. Email your fair hearing request to [SUNBucks@mt.gov](mailto:SUNBucks@mt.gov) or [hhsofh@mt.gov](mailto:hhsofh@mt.gov)
  - 3. Fax a written request to the Office of Administrative Hearings at (406) 444-3980.
  - 4. Write to Office of Administrative Hearings, PO Box 202922, Helena, MT 59620-2922
- E. For 2025 SUN Bucks benefits, the deadline to appeal and request a fair hearing is **November 29, 2025**. A fair hearing means that an official will review the facts of your case in a fair and objective manner as required by law.



- D. Households have a right to notice in the following situations:
- a. Notice of benefit approval per 7 CFR 292.12(f),
  - b. Notice of benefit denial per 7 CFR 292.12(g),
  - c. Notice to consent of outside household contact for verification per 7 CFR 292.14(f)(3)(ii),
  - d. Notice of benefit eligibility changes at 7 CFR 292.14(f)(8)(iii)(A),
  - e. Notice of expungement at 7 CFR 292.15(h)(1)(ii), and
  - f. Notice of fair hearings at 7 CFR 292.26(b)(4)



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