



SUMMER ELECTRONIC BENEFITS TRANSFER

ALLEVIATE SUMMER HUNGER FOR 3+ MILLION KIDS

In December 2022, a bipartisan Congress created a new, permanent program to provide food dollars to low-income families with school-age children over the summer months but made it optional for states to enact. Officially called Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer, or Summer EBT, it would provide \$40 per summer month per child on a debit card for families with eligible school-age children to buy groceries. \$120 in Summer EBT benefits will help families close the summer hunger gap when kids are on summer break and not getting nutritious school meals.

TEXAS NEEDS SUMMER EBT

Child hunger spikes in Texas every summer as children do not have access to free or reduced-price meals when schools close. In Texas, 2.6 million children eat free or low-cost lunch, and 1.6 million eat school breakfast every day. When schools are closed, parents often struggle to afford to replace those meals. While some children can access local summer meal sites run by some school districts or youth programs, most kids in Texas do not have an option nearby. **For every 100 children who ate lunch during the school year, only 4.6 children ate a summer lunch.** Children in rural and suburban areas are the least likely to have access to a summer meal site or a way to get to school when school buses are not running.

While Texas does have a law that requires high-poverty school districts to provide summer meals for at least 30 days, many smaller districts opt out because of the difficulty and cost, while others do not run the program for the entire summer.

SUMMER EBT WORKS

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has been running Summer EBT pilots since 2011; rigorous evaluations show that providing families with summer grocery benefits reduces child hunger and supports healthier diets. Summer EBT decreased the number of kids with very low food security (children who missed meals because their family could not afford food) by one third. The extra benefits also meant **families could afford better quality food, and children ate more fruit and vegetables, whole grains, and dairy.** Consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages dropped among children using Summer EBT.

The Summer EBT pilots were used as a model for the larger Pandemic EBT (P-EBT) program, which Congress created when schools across the country were closed at the beginning of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency. **P-EBT was considered a success, reducing children's food hardship by 33% and lifting millions of children out of hunger.** Since its start in 2020, P-EBT provided \$7.5 billion of benefits to Texans through multiple rounds during the pandemic, ultimately helping millions of families provide for their children and prevent hunger.



ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for Summer EBT, a child must be income-eligible for free or reduced-price meals (less than \$55,500 annually for a family of four). Children eligible to receive Summer EBT benefits automatically, without filling out a new application, include:

- Any child, including homeschooled and virtual students, who is directly certified for free school meals because they are enrolled in programs such as Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF); and
- Children who are certified for free or reduced-price meals through a school meals application.

A Summer EBT application will be available for children who attend a Community Eligibility or Provision 2 school, are not directly certified through another benefits program, and did not fill out a school meal application during the school year.

IMPACT

Texas is one of the few states not operating Summer EBT this year. The USDA estimates that up to 3.7 million children in Texas would have been eligible for Summer EBT in 2024, which would have brought \$450 million in federal food aid to families across the state.

According to a USDA analysis, every dollar spent on SNAP generates between \$1.50 and \$1.80 in local economic activity. Based on the number of children eligible, **Texas could have seen an economic impact of \$675 million to \$810 million** from Summer EBT benefits in summer 2024.

HOW SUMMER EBT OPERATES

Running Summer EBT in Texas would require collaboration between our SNAP agency, the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC); the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA), which operates the child nutrition programs; and the Texas Education Agency (TEA), which oversees schools. As HHSC manages the infrastructure to distribute EBT cards to families, they would be the lead agency. While Texas failed to adopt Summer EBT in 2024, **the state has until January 1, 2025, to inform USDA if it intends to run the program in summer 2025.**

The USDA covers 100% of the EBT benefits for families and 50% of the cost to run the program. The Texas Legislature must provide the remaining 50%.

Given the positive impact on Texas children, **state officials should prioritize adopting Summer EBT for 2025.**