



Summer EBT and Schools

June 9, 2026



What Happens During the Summer Months?

- Students lose access to school meals
- Higher rates of food insecurity and food insufficiency among children
- Increased vulnerability to accelerated weight gain, increases in body mass index (BMI), and obesity
- Learning loss
- The Summer Nutrition Programs offer free meals to students during the summer but are limited in their reach.
 - Summer EBT can help fill the gap.

Learn more:

Summer Nutrition and Enrichment Programs: Effective Tools to Support Child Food Security, Health, and Learning During the Summertime **FRAC**
Food Research & Action Center

During the summer, far too many children and adolescents experience food insecurity, weight gain, and learning loss, compromising their health and ability to thrive during summer break and beyond. A key strategy to address these issues is to connect more students — especially low-income students — to high-quality summer meal and enrichment programs, which support student food security, health, and learning. This brief first summarizes important research on summertime food insecurity, weight gain, and learning loss, and then describes the value and effectiveness of the federal Summer Nutrition Programs and summer enrichment programming.



Food Insecurity and Weight Increase in the Summer

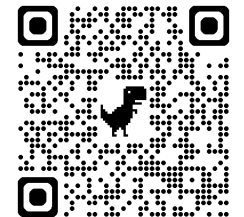
Rates of food insecurity and food insufficiency* among children are higher in the summer — at a time when students do not have access to the school nutrition programs available during the academic year.^{1,2,3} Students who receive a free or reduced-price school lunch during the school year are especially at risk in the summer: research shows these students are more likely to experience increases in food insecurity and food insufficiency in summer months when compared to their eligible, nonparticipating peers.⁴ A considerable body of evidence demonstrates that food insecurity is associated with harmful consequences for health, well-being, and learning in the short and long terms, including lower health status,^{5,6} poor dietary quality,^{7,8} behavioral and social-emotional problems,^{9,10} mental health problems (e.g., depression, anxiety),¹¹ and poor educational performance and academic outcomes.^{12,13}

Summer Nutrition Programs

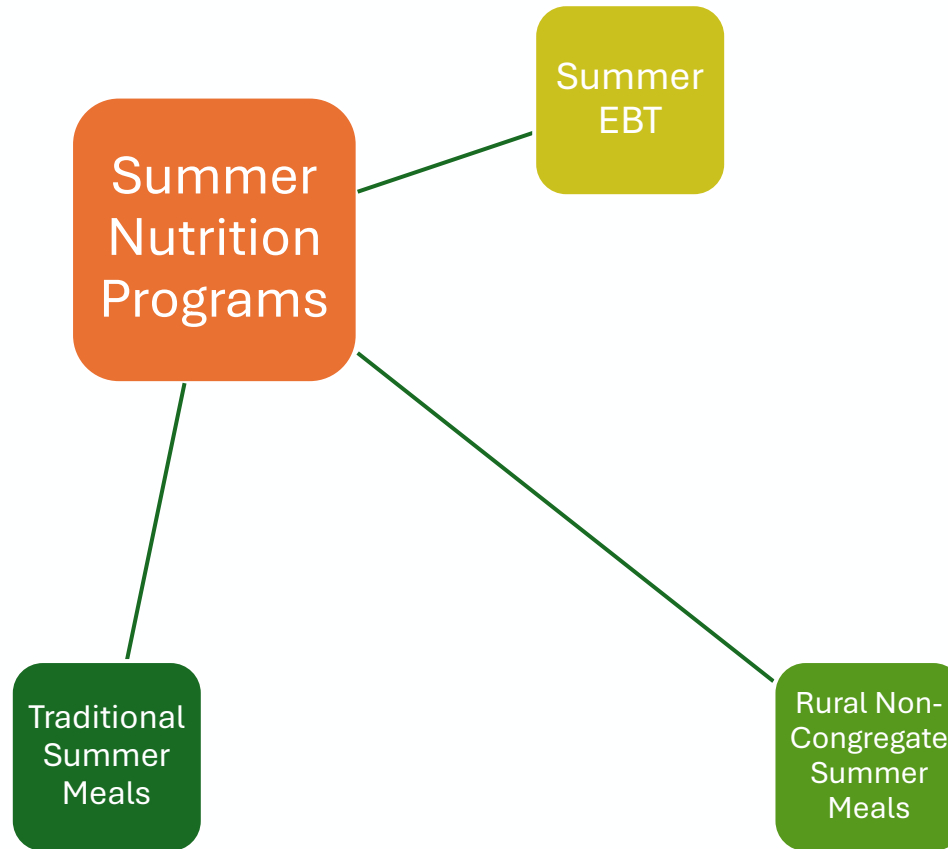
The Summer Nutrition Programs provide nutritious meals that replace the school breakfasts and lunches that low-income children rely on during the regular school year. Schools, local government agencies, and private nonprofit organizations can sponsor the Summer Nutrition Programs to receive federal funding to provide meals at sites in low-income communities or that serve primarily low-income children. Sites can be schools, recreation centers, parks, YMCAs, Boys & Girls Clubs, and other locations where children congregate during the summer months. Camps also can participate.

* Food insecurity is a term defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture that indicates that the availability of nutritionally adequate and safe food, or the ability to acquire such food, is limited or uncertain for a household. Food insufficiency, a related concept, is commonly defined as inadequate food intake due to lack of money or resources.

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The Summer Nutrition Programs



Summer Meals Benefits



Ensures children receive the nutrition they need when the school year ends



Many summer meal sites provide educational, enrichment or recreational activities that keep children learning, active and safe when school is not in session.

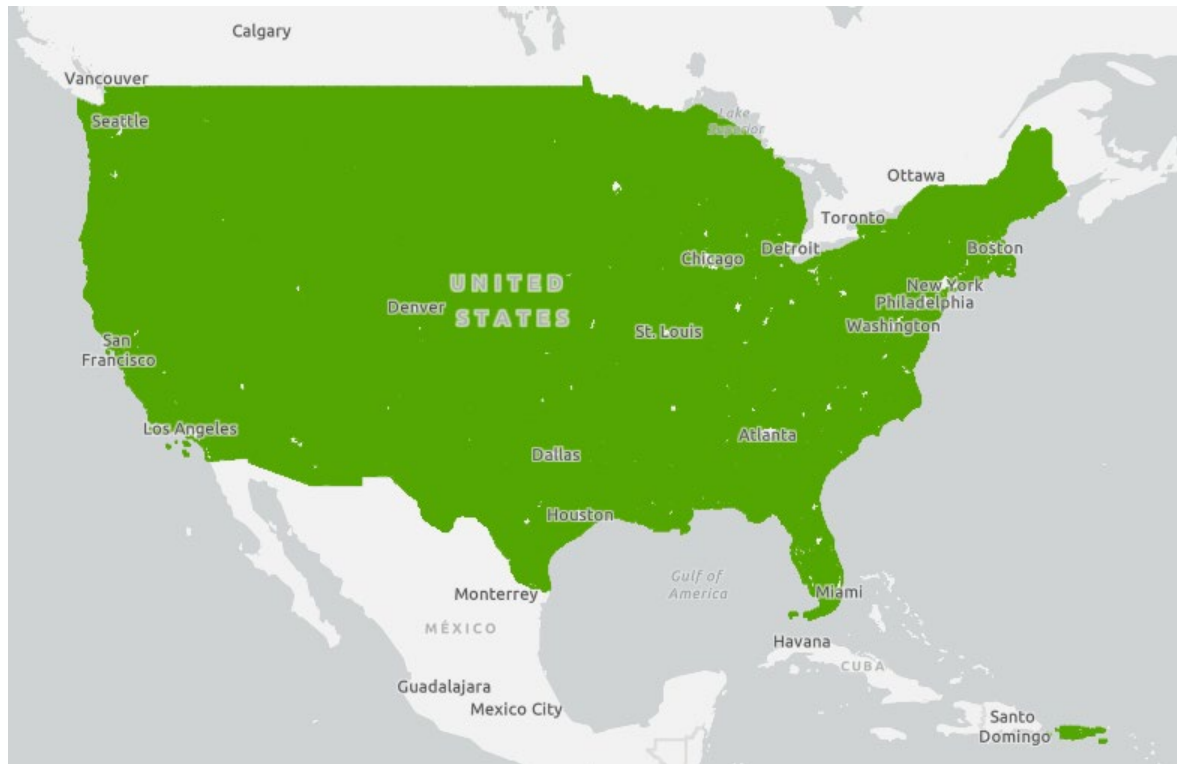


Allows program providers to stretch their budgets and for sponsors to strengthen their overall operations by operating year-round

Summer Meals Basics

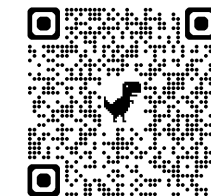
- Sites in areas where 50 percent or more of children qualify for free or reduced-price lunches are considered open sites.
 - All children 18 years of age and younger can get free meals
- Sites are often in areas where children gather: parks, libraries, schools, etc.
- Children can receive up to two meals, or one meal and one snack per day, depending on the site.
- Many meal sites require a child to consume food provided on-site.

Rural Non-Congregate Option



- In areas designated as rural by USDA, sites can operate the Rural Non-Congregate Option.
- These sites allow for meals to be eaten off site.
 - Parent/guardian pick-up
 - Home delivery
 - Mobile meal routes

See our resource
for more
information!



Finding a Summer Meals Site

USDA

Summer Meals Site Finder 2026 Last Updated June 1, 2026

Eat On-Site Meals To-Go

Type an address or zip code here

Esri, USGS | Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, EPA, USFWS Powered by Esri

Summer Meals Site Finder



Summer EBT



- Permanent and nationwide program that began in Summer 2024.
- Provides \$120 per child per summer period on an EBT card for groceries
- Complement to the Summer Nutrition Programs
 - Reduces food insecurity for low-income households particularly in rural areas or areas with low access to summer meals

Summer EBT Eligibility

Receives Benefits Automatically

- Those enrolled in a school that operates the National School Lunch Program **and** receives free or reduced-price school meals through an application.
- Those who receive benefits through SNAP, TANF, FDPIR, or in some states Medicaid (state-specific), must be school age.
- Those categorically eligible for meals: currently unhoused, classified as a runaway, is a foster child, is in Head Start, or is considered from a migrant household.

Must Apply for Benefits

- Those income eligible in schools that provide free meals to all students **and** are **not** enrolled in SNAP, TANF, FDPIR, or Medicaid.
- Those who are income eligible in National School Lunch Program schools that did **NOT** submit a school meals application.

How to Learn More!

- Kelsey Boone, kboone@frac.org
- Visit <https://frac.org/programs/summer-nutrition-programs>
- State summer meals and Summer EBT websites

Questions for Discussion

- Have you heard about summer meal sites in your area?
 - If so, where did you hear about them?
- Have you received information on Summer EBT?
 - If so, who did you receive information from?
 - If not, who would you expect to hear it from?
- What would make participation in either program easier for you and your family?
- Have you experienced specific barriers to participating in either program?