

NEWS RELEASE

California Department of Social Services

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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OVER \$162 MILLION IN FOOD PURCHASED THROUGH CALIFORNIA'S NEW SUN BUCKS PROGRAM

SACRAMENTO – Today, the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) announced that through [SUN Bucks](#), a new federal food program recently launched by the CDSS, more than \$162 million in food purchases have already been made by families across the state. Through July 14, 2024, more than 3.2 million SUN Bucks cards have been issued with more than five million total cards expected to be distributed to families across California over the coming months. Each card represents a child who will have more food on the table during this year's summer break, when they won't have access to school meals.

“Just a few weeks after California was one of the first states in the nation to launch this new federal program, an incredible 3.2 million kids across the state have received a card to stay fed this summer,” **said Kim Johnson, Director of the CDSS**. “The \$162 million dollars spent thus far are not only helping families put food on the table – they are being infused directly into local economies across California.”

HOW SUN BUCKS WORKS: Children who qualify for free or reduced-price school meals through a school meal application or an alternative income form, or who receive CalFresh, CalWORKs, or Medi-Cal, were automatically enrolled. Most families will not need to take action to receive SUN Bucks. Eligible families are receiving SUN Bucks electronic benefits transfer (EBT) cards, which can be used just like CalFresh benefits to purchase groceries. SUN Bucks is providing \$120 per child, which is equivalent to \$40 per month for the three months schools are typically closed during the summer.

This new program was implemented in partnership with the California Department of Education (CDE). In addition to SUN Bucks, [Summer Meal Programs](#) provide opportunities for children in need to access meals during the summer. Families can locate summer meal sites in their communities using the [CA Meals for Kids App](#) or by visiting the [Summer Meal Service Sites](#) webpage.

ABOUT THE SUN BUCKS PROGRAM: In December 2022, Congress passed the [Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023](#), which created a new, permanent [Summer EBT](#) program for states to provide food benefits to families with school-age children and low-income beginning in 2024. The Summer EBT program is known as SUN Bucks. In July 2023, California passed [Assembly Bill 120](#), establishing the CDSS as the lead

implementing agency, in partnership with the CDE, to maximize Summer EBT program participation for summer 2024.

SUN Bucks is being rolled-out in [many parts of the country](#). To learn more about SUN Bucks implementation in California, access these videos: [English](#), [Spanish](#).

ADDITIONAL DETAILS: Children not automatically enrolled must apply for free or reduced-price school meals by completing and submitting a school meal application or alternative income form by August 31, 2024, or they will not receive SUN Bucks benefits for summer 2024. Families may obtain the free or reduced-price school meal application from their school or school administrator's office.

The SUN Bucks helpline is available at (877) 328-9677 to support cardholders who have questions about their specific SUN Bucks card. The helpline provides automated support 24 hours a day, seven days per week. Live agents are available Monday through Friday, 6 a.m. – 8 p.m. People with general SUN Bucks questions are encouraged visit the [CDSS webpage](#) for information. Receiving SUN Bucks will have no bearing on eligibility for CalFresh or any other state public benefit program. Also, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services do not consider many healthcare, food, housing services, and other public benefits as part of the public charge determination. Additional information about public charge is available on the [CDSS website](#).

Regardless of when a card is mailed or received, every SUN Bucks card will be loaded with the full \$120 per child. Per federal rules, funds must be used within 122 days of the funds being loaded to the card. Any unused funds on the card will expire after 122 days. Expired benefits cannot be replaced.

BIGGER PICTURE: California has a long-standing commitment to fighting hunger. The CDSS supports delivery of [CalFresh food benefits](#) to families in need, [Disaster CalFresh benefits](#) for victims of natural disasters, emergency food resources to local communities, and other nutrition services to ensure the health and well-being of all Californians. The Department also recently supported the delivery CalFresh Emergency Allotments to help meet nutrition needs during the pandemic.

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