



# Summer EBT Outreach and Advocacy Toolkit

The [Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer Program for Children](#) (Summer EBT) offers an exciting opportunity to reduce childhood hunger in the summer by providing families whose children are eligible to receive free or reduced-price school meals during the school year additional resources to purchase food during the summer months.

Summer EBT provides approximately \$40 a month per eligible child to help with food costs during the summer months. Monthly benefits for states with a higher cost of living — such as Alaska, Hawaii, and the territories — will be slightly higher.

As this is only the second year of the nationwide program, it is important that states, school districts, cities, community organizations, and state and local advocates work to ensure that all states operate Summer EBT and all eligible families are aware of the program and receive benefits. Based on best practices and lessons learned throughout the first year of implementation, the Food Research & Action Center (FRAC) has developed and compiled resources that can be adapted to encourage states to implement the program and to spread the word about Summer EBT.

## **This guide includes the following sections about Summer EBT:**

- I. State and Local Advocates: Resources for State Advocacy
- II. State Agency: Communication and Outreach Plan
- III. School District: Communication and Outreach Tips
- IV. Cities and Community Organizations: Communication and Outreach Materials
- V. Additional Resources

## **I. State and Local Advocates: Resources for State Advocacy**

### *Making the Case for Implementing Summer EBT*

- Have conversations early and often with your state’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and education agencies. In these conversations, [utilize data](#) on how many children the state would serve and the amount of benefits that would be distributed throughout the state.
- Build a coalition of relevant stakeholders and send a sign-on letter to the governor, state policymakers, and other key decision-makers in support of Summer EBT. Interested stakeholders include parent groups, education groups, child advocacy organizations, retailer associations, community and faith-based groups, and anti-hunger groups.

### **Examples:**

1. [Model Sign-On Letter](#)
  2. [Example of a sign-on letter from the Tennessee Justice Center](#)
  3. [Example of a sign-on letter from Empower Missouri](#)
- **Leverage the media to elevate the importance of the state implementing Summer EBT.**
    - A [press release](#) can be used to pitch a story to reporters on the money being left behind for hungry children if states do not opt in to Summer EBT. **Examples:**
      1. [Example Press Release from the Florida Policy Institute](#)
      2. [Example Press Release from the Iowa Hunger Coalition](#)
    - A [Letter to the Editor](#) can be placed in local media outlets to spread the word about the state opting out. **Examples:**
      1. [Example Letter to the Editor from the North Texas Food Bank](#)
      2. [Example Letter to the Editor from a Tennessee newspaper](#)

**Promising Practice:** Choose the arguments that will be the most effective in your state, which may be an economic frame, an emotional frame, or another angle specific to the state's stakeholders and culture.

## ***Troubleshooting Common Barriers to State Participation***

### **Administrative Funding**

To participate in Summer EBT, states, territories, and Indian Tribal Organizations are required to cover 50 percent of the Summer EBT administrative expenses from nonfederal sources. This is a departure from Pandemic EBT, which provided federal funding to cover 100 percent of the administrative costs. While the change aligns Summer EBT with federal-state administrative cost sharing in SNAP, it requires planning and investment from the state.

States can use FRAC's resource on [Planning for Summer EBT Administrative Costs for 2024](#) to help identify and plan for covering the funding.

### **Administrative Considerations**

The Summer EBT Program is a relatively new program and may present new administrative considerations for agencies that choose to operate it. During the first year of implementation, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) worked with regional offices and state agencies to streamline processes and remove any unnecessary responsibilities. This included offering flexibilities around deadlines, applications, and customer service

materials. States should continue to connect with their USDA regional offices for technical assistance.

For more on these flexibilities, see the [Guide on Reducing Administrative Burden](#) by FRAC and the Southern Economic Advancement Project.

## Data Sharing and Infrastructure

During the first year of implementation many states must set up data systems and infrastructure to support Summer EBT operations. While some states had already implemented these through Pandemic EBT, others were relying on temporary systems that were not always the most practical. The following resources can help states develop and implement databases and applications.

- FRAC has hosted webinars to provide information and share best practices for states on both [databases](#) and [statewide applications](#).
- For data and infrastructure resources, refer to Code for America's [Summer EBT Playbook](#).

**Promising Practice:** If your state is struggling to overcome barriers that are keeping them from participating, reach out to other states that are similar politically and geographically to determine best practices and opportunities for implementation.

## II. State Agency: Communications and Outreach Plan

Once a state, Tribal organization, or territory chooses to participate in Summer EBT, it is important that they develop a public awareness campaign to let students and families know about Summer EBT and how to access the program, which can help ensure that the program reaches all eligible families.

### *Components of a Robust State Communications and Outreach Plan*

#### **Partner Engagement**

- Identify and reach out to key partners within the state who can help with sharing information about Summer EBT to ensure eligible families utilize Summer EBT.
- Develop and share an easy-to-use communications toolkit that partners and school districts can use to share information about Summer EBT resources. Include resources such as [flyers](#), [sample social media posts](#), and a [question and answer section](#). **Examples:**
  1. [Illinois Summer EBT Materials Dropbox](#)
  2. [Ohio Summer EBT Outreach Materials](#)
- Hold statewide webinars to share information about Summer EBT with community partners, and outline steps they can take to ensure eligible families

are aware of and use Summer EBT. Make sure to leave time for Q&A.

**Examples:**

1. [California Department of Social Service's Webinar on Summer EBT](#)
2. [Hunger Solutions New York's Webinar on Summer EBT Rollout](#)

- Ask school districts to share information about Summer EBT with families. Create sample communications with necessary and consistent information for districts to disseminate. Examples of materials can be found in Section III.
- Ensure school districts know how families apply for Summer EBT, the state's troubleshooting process, and who families should contact if they need help.
- Provide outreach materials (including, if applicable, the free and reduced-price school meal application) in multiple languages to school districts and community partners. Guidance about how Summer EBT does not impact public charge status should be included in all materials. **Examples:**
  1. [Sample Social Media Posts in Multiple Languages](#)
  2. [Sample Fact Sheets in Multiple Languages](#)
- Provide a clear, adequately staffed troubleshooting process for families who have questions, or believe there is an issue with their benefits. This may be an online inquiry form or a staffed call center with the ability to troubleshoot Summer EBT issues in real time. If delays occur around distribution, be sure to communicate early and often with families.
- Create clear standards for appeals if a family is ruled ineligible. For example, during Pandemic EBT, [Wisconsin Hunger Task Force created a form for families to request a fair hearing](#).
- Notify families who participate in SNAP when Summer EBT benefits will be added to their EBT card, e.g., via letter, text, or call (any of these options could be automated). Explain what the benefit is, how much the family will receive for each child, and the total benefit amount.
- Work closely with the EBT vendor to ensure that information to families explains clearly when and how Summer EBT cards will be sent and how to activate them.
- Design identifiable envelopes for mailing cards (that also protect privacy) and communicate to families what to look out for so they do not mistake their card for junk mail and dispose of it. It is important for families to understand the card's purpose and to not suspect that it is a scam.
- To ensure vulnerable populations, such as those who are in foster care or are experiencing homelessness, receive critical food and nutrition benefits, implement these FRAC strategies to [ensure their access to Summer EBT](#).

## *Components of an Informative Summer EBT Website*

A state's Summer EBT website offers an important opportunity to share state-specific information with families and other stakeholders. Both the state SNAP agency and the state child nutrition agency should have information linking to the main Summer EBT website. Websites should contain the following components to maximize access for families:

- [informative text with detailed processes](#)
- [eligibility information](#)
- [robust Q&A](#)
- link to [Summer EBT application](#)
- public charge guidance:
  - clear process for troubleshooting
  - instructions on how to activate a Summer EBT card
  - links to other food assistance programs
  - how to find [meal sites in the community](#)

## **III. School District: Communications and Outreach Tips**

### *Opportunities for School Districts to Spread the Word About Summer EBT*

- Use all communications channels — website, letters to parents/guardians, social media, summer meal sites, robocalls, and texts — to share information with families about Summer EBT.
- Share information about Summer EBT with school district liaisons for homeless children and families, migrant education coordinators, foster care caseworkers, social workers, and educators.
- Collect and process school meal applications continuously, even if you are offering free meals to all your students. See FRAC's [Strategies to Increase School Meal Application Returns](#) for more information, including sample resources that make the connection between the school meal application and Summer EBT.
- Encourage families to update address changes with the school district to ensure that the Summer EBT card will be received and to avoid delays in families receiving benefits.
- For information on the Summer EBT Program for education partners, watch FRAC and The Education Trust's webinar on [Addressing Summer Hunger Through Summer EBT](#). **Example:**
  1. [Sample Summer EBT Communications for School Districts](#)

## IV. Cities and Community Organizations: Communications and Outreach Materials

### *City Partners*

- Share information about Summer EBT with partner organizations, service providers, and families (via website, flyers, social media, webinars, and community meetings).
- Work with community groups to translate Summer EBT materials into languages that are particularly helpful to your population and communicate clearly with immigrant families that this program does not affect public charge status.
- Ask the state to share Summer EBT data with you. Identify areas with a high incidence of cards that were not pinned Summer EBT cards for additional outreach. This can help increase access to much-needed benefits and ensure that the positive economic impact from the Summer EBT funding will be realized in your community.

### *Community Partners*

- Share information about Summer EBT with partner organizations, service providers, retailers, and families (via website, flyers, social media, webinars, and community meetings). **Example:**
  1. [Sample outreach materials for Summer EBT](#)
- Engage with your state governor's office to ensure they are aware and up-to-date on the Summer EBT Program. Ensure that they understand the benefits of the program for families in their state.
- As a trusted partner within your community, reinforce in your communications that Summer EBT does not impact the public charge test.
- Provide application assistance to families encountering barriers, e.g., language, literacy, and access to an online application.
- Within your community, partner with other organizations that work with immigrant communities to spread the word about Summer EBT to those populations.

## V. Additional Resources

- [FRAC's Summer EBT Communications Resources Shared Drive](#)
- [FRAC's Summer EBT webpage](#)
- ["Six Things You Need to Know About Summer EBT Benefits"](#)
- [The Importance of Summer EBT: Why States Must Operate Summer EBT and Summer Nutrition Programs](#)

If you have any questions about Summer EBT, please reach out to FRAC Senior Child Nutrition Policy Analyst Kelsey Boone, [kboone@frac.org](mailto:kboone@frac.org).