

This document provides information about student eligibility for free and reduced price meals through the S-EBT Program and the addition of that information to the Direct Certification List.

S-EBT (Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer)

The S-EBT is a permanent, nationwide program that began in summer of 2024. The S-EBT was established under the Consolidated Appropriations Act passed in December 2022. S-EBT gives families with children extra benefits, like SNAP, to help pay for food in the summer. S-EBT benefits can also determine a student to be eligible for free and reduced priced school meals. This program has recently undergone a name change to the SUN Bucks program and will be referred to as SUN Bucks throughout this document.

Starting July 1, 2026, under an MOU between DHHS and DOE, the SUN Bucks application will be available for SAU's to use as an online platform for a Free and Reduced Meals Application. DHHS will receive, process and send notices of decision to families. Students who qualify for the free or reduced benefit will be sent to SAU's via the Direct Certification List. To support this update, two new codes have been added to the Direct Certification & SUN Bucks list:

- B = SUN Bucks Free
- K = SUN Bucks Reduced

LEA's/SAU's should notify and work with their point of sales (POS) software companies regarding these changes and the new categories.

Although "B" and "K" students will appear on the Direct Certification and SUN Bucks List in NEO, they are NOT considered directly certified because their eligibility was determined through a household submitted application rather than an automatic data matching.

Requirements and Guidance

- DHHS will process the application and issue a parent/guardian notification letter to households where a student has been determined eligible based on a "B" or "K" status
- DHHS will share that status with Maine DOE, and Maine DOE will add children with a "B" or "K" status to the Direct Certification and SUN Bucks List
- The "B" or "K" codes are NOT considered to be directly certified since an application was submitted
- A student with a code of "B" or "K" cannot count toward a school's Identified Student Percentage (ISP) for the purposes of the Community Eligibility Program.
- Students with these codes are NOT subject to LEA verification and are not part of the verification pool selected on October 1

Direct Certification & SUN Bucks Approval List



There may be cases where the sibling's name does not appear on the Direct Certification & SUN Bucks list, even though they may live in the same household as a student identified as "B" or "K" on the list. In such situations, free or reduce price benefits must NOT be automatically applied to the sibling whose name is missing. When this occurs, the determining official should contact Maine Child Nutrition Director, jane.mclucas@maine.gov or (207) 624-6880, for guidance.

Hierarchy for Direct Certification

Direct Certification Hierarchy			Use for ISP for CEP	Use for SPII	Can extend sibling benefits
1	SNAP	S	✓	✓	✓
2	TANF	T	✓	✓	✓
3	Foster Care	F	✓	✓	
4	Migrant	M	✓	✓	
5	Homeless	H	✓	✓	
6	Maine Care Free	A	✓	✓	✓
7	SUN Bucks Free	B		✓	
8	Maine Care Reduced	Z		✓	✓
9	SUN Bucks Reduced	K		✓	

- Only lines 1-6 are Directly Certified and can be used for your ISP for CEP
- Lines 1-6 & Lines 8 & 9 can be used for SPII