

# Summer EBT Factsheet

Contact: Tia Shimada

tia@cfpa.net or 510.433.1122 ext.109



## The Opportunity

Research and common sense tell us that children need year-round access to healthy meals. They need those meals to protect them from chronic hunger and food insecurity; to support optimal learning and development; and to prevent obesity and detrimental weight gain.



Nearly two million (or 8 in 10) kids in California who benefit from healthy, affordable school meals during the academic year miss out on similar meals during the summer.<sup>a</sup> Even more worrisome, in our nation of plenty, 1 in 5 families with children are unable to consistently afford enough food.<sup>b</sup> These conditions may seem daunting, but well-tested solutions are within reach. **We can close the summer nutrition gap.**

## Summer EBT Basics

**What:** Summer EBT is a demonstration project administered by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The demonstration provides families with nutrition assistance benefits (on an EBT card) to purchase groceries from supermarkets and other food stores.

**Why:** The goal of the demonstration is to assess the Summer EBT model as a strategy for decreasing food insecurity among low-income children during summer months when school meals are not available.

**Who:** Families with children in grades K-12 who are eligible for free or reduced-price school meals can participate in Summer EBT.

**When & Where:** Over the course of three summers (2011-2013), Summer EBT has been tested in select areas of Connecticut, Michigan, Missouri, Oregon, Texas, Delaware, Nevada, Washington, the Chickasaw Nation, and the Cherokee Nation.

## Effects on Food Insecurity, Food Access, and Nutrition

Summer EBT has been rigorously evaluated by USDA. With Summer EBT...

- ➔ Fewer children and adults experience food insecurity;<sup>c</sup>
- ➔ Children eat more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains;<sup>d</sup>
- ➔ Children consume fewer sugars from sugar-sweetened beverages;<sup>e</sup> and
- ➔ Families are less dependent on the emergency food system (including food pantries and emergency food kitchens).<sup>f</sup>

## Take Action!

Bring Summer EBT to California so our kids can be well nourished and ready to achieve every day of the year.

Summer EBT is a well-tested, effective investment in children's health and wellbeing, but the program is not currently available to children and families in California. Representative Susan Davis (CA-53) and Senator Patty Murray (WA) have introduced the *Stop Child Summer Hunger Act of 2015* in their respective houses of

Congress to make Summer EBT a reality for kids across the country. With the introduction of this legislation and with Congressional reauthorization of the child nutrition programs anticipated this summer (2015), now is the time to act.

- ➔ California's members of Congress should co-sponsor the *Stop Child Summer Hunger Act of 2015* and champion its inclusion in the upcoming Child Nutrition Reauthorization bill.

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## References and Resources

<sup>a</sup> *Schools' Out... Who Ate?: A Report on Summer Nutrition in California*, California Food Policy Advocates, 2014: <http://cfpa.net/sowa-2015>

<sup>b</sup> Food Insecurity in the U.S.: Key Statistics and Graphics, United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, 2014: <http://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/key-statistics-graphics.aspx#children>

Source c-f: United States Department of Agriculture, *Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer for Children (SEBTC) Demonstration: Evaluation Findings for the Full Implementation Year 2012 Final Report*. Available at: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/SEBTC2012.pdf>

<sup>c</sup> Rates of food insecurity were lower among children in households that received Summer EBT benefits compared to the control group that did not receive such benefits. According to the USDA evaluation, "...[Summer EBT] eliminated [very low food security] for almost one-third of the children (33%) who would otherwise have experienced it." (page 5)

While Summer EBT focused primarily on providing nutrition assistance to children, food insecurity also decreased among adults in households receiving Summer EBT benefits. This indicates that Summer EBT can help address a persistent challenge of summer hunger: how to feed hungry parents alongside their hungry children.

<sup>d,e</sup> Children who participated in Summer EBT ate more fruits and vegetables and whole grains, and consumed less added sugars from sugar-sweetened beverages compared to children in the control group. These findings held for both the WIC and SNAP models of Summer EBT.

<sup>f</sup> Children in households receiving Summer EBT were allowed to attend summer meal sites. According to the USDA evaluation, "[Summer EBT] resulted in the slight but statistically significant decrease in use of SFSP programs (from 8.3% in the control group to 7.2% in the treatment group,  $p < .01$ )." (page 124) Summer EBT also decreased households' reliance on food pantries and emergency food kitchens and had no effect on SNAP participation.

USDA's Summer EBTC webpage: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/ops/summer-electronic-benefit-transfer-children-sebtc>

CFPA's annual report on summer nutrition, *School's Out, Who Ate?* <http://cfpa.net/sowa-2015>