

# Summer EBT for Children: The Basics



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## Overview

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**What:** Summer EBT for Children (SEBTC) provides nutrition assistance for the purchase of groceries when school is out of session and school meals are not available. To date, SEBTC exists as a demonstration project administered by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

**Why:** The goal of the demonstration is to assess SEBTC as a strategy for decreasing food insecurity among low-income children.

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

**When & Where:** Since 2011, SEBTC has been tested in 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

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Summer EBT for Children has been rigorously evaluated by USDA. With SEBTC...

- + Fewer children experience food insecurity. **The most severe form of food insecurity is eliminated for one-third of children who would have otherwise experienced it.**<sup>a</sup>
- + Children eat more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains and consume fewer sugars from sugar-sweetened beverages.<sup>b</sup>

Summer EBT for Children...

- ➔ Decreases demand on an already over-stretched emergency food system (including food pantries and emergency food kitchens).<sup>c</sup>
- ➔ Complements existing federally funded summer meal programs. Those programs are often inaccessible to children due to distance, lack of transportation, adverse weather, or concerns about neighborhood safety, among other barriers.<sup>d</sup>

## What's Next

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SEBTC works but it's not (yet) at work in California. As federal leaders increase funding and authority for SEBTC, California leaders should seize all opportunities make SEBTC a reality for children across our state. For more on CFPA's Summer EBT bill, visit: <http://cfpa.net/ab2054>

*For more than 20 years, CFPA has been the state's trusted food policy advocacy organization dedicated to increasing low-income Californians' access to healthy food at home, at school, and throughout entire communities. CFPA's advocacy agenda draws on the anti-hunger, nutrition, and health movements. Working as both a policy leader and supportive policy ally, CFPA continues to build on its long history of success.*

## References and Resources

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Citations a-d: (1) 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>

(2) *Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer for Children (SEBTC) Demonstration: 2013 Final Report*. Available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/ops/sebtc2013.pdf>.

<sup>a</sup> Rates of food insecurity were lower among children in households that received SEBTC benefits compared to the control group that did not receive such benefits. From the 2012 USDA evaluation, "...[SEBTC] eliminated [very low food security] for almost one-third of the children (33%) who would otherwise have experienced it" (page 5). From the 2013 evaluation, given varied benefit levels, both had the same impact on decreasing very low food security among children.

<sup>b</sup> Children who participated in SEBTC ate more fruits and vegetables and whole grains, and consumed less added sugars from sugar-sweetened beverages compared to children who did not receive SEBTC. These findings held for both the WIC and SNAP models of Summer EBT. From the 2013 evaluation, varied benefit levels had similar impacts on the nutritional quality of children's diets with higher benefits having slightly more positive effects for fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.

<sup>c</sup> SEBTC decreased households' reliance on food pantries and emergency food kitchens. The impact was similar across SEBTC benefit levels.

<sup>d</sup> From the 2013 USDA evaluation, "Logistical and practical considerations still present barriers to [the Summer Food Service Program – SFSP] serving more children during the summer...In addition, most SFSP sites operate for fewer than eight weeks, leaving low-income children without access to the program for some summer weeks" (page 4). Children in households receiving Summer EBT were allowed to attend summer meal sites. From the 2012 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).

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>