

Summer Nutrition Summit

January 12-13, 2026



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Delivering Summer EBT: Issuance, Redemption, and What's Working

Summer Nutrition Summit 2026



Disclaimer

Our speakers represent their own experience with child nutrition programs in their states and localities. Certain program models and implementation methods may be restricted in some states and localities. Check with your local agency before implementing any new service models or methods.

Today's Conversation

- ★ Setting the stage: the Summer EBT benefit delivery experience from a family perspective
- ★ Panel Discussion
 - **Issuance:** How benefits get created—and where families experience confusion or clarity
 - **Delivery:** What it takes for benefits and information to reach families successfully
 - **Redemption:** What helps families use benefits with confidence
 - **Looking Ahead:** What we hope to improve for 2026 and beyond
- ★ Audience questions and shared strategies



Closing Gaps in Summer EBT: Practical Solutions to Reach All Children



Closing Gaps in Summer EBT
Practical Solutions to Reach All Children

Since Summer EBT was first passed as a permanent program in late 2022, states, Tribes, and Territories have quickly mobilized to design and implement the program to provide nutrition benefits to millions of children when school is out for the summer. While Summer EBT programs are designed to reach all eligible families, certain households face additional barriers to participation. These include foster youth, households without permanent mailing addresses, additional income, Indigenous families, households with limited English proficiency, and families required to apply rather than being automatically enrolled. For these groups, accessing benefits can be significantly more complex to navigate.

In this brief, you'll find:

- Key populations facing additional barriers to Summer EBT access
- Common challenges to access and what worked across the first two summers of implementation
- Solution strategies, with state examples, organized by implementation area
- A look ahead at priorities and considerations for future program years

Key Populations and Identified Solutions

While each population has unique experiences accessing Summer EBT, especially in the program's first year of operation, many share similar barriers. States have pursued innovative approaches to address both universal challenges and those disproportionately affecting specific communities to improve enrollment and utilization. In 2025, as a result of these state solutions and an improved awareness of the program by families, administrative challenges are anticipated to be reduced.

In 2024, the first year of the permanent Summer EBT program, there were several common challenges across populations. Households with limited English proficiency encountered inadequate trair and minimal culturally responsive outreach, leading to enrollment challenges. Indigenous families experienced administrative challenges and, additionally, discouraging participation rates. Indigenous families and tribal communities were affected by unclear state-Tribal coordination, rural access barriers, and limited appropriate outreach, resulting in lower participation rates. While challenges remained in 2025, improvements based on lessons learned from the program's first year, leading to stronger implementation over time.

Additionally, housing-insecure families and foster youth often lacked reliable mailing addresses, making enrollment and participation harder. Households with limited English proficiency encountered inadequate trair and minimal culturally responsive outreach, leading to enrollment challenges. Indigenous families experienced administrative challenges and, additionally, discouraging participation rates. While challenges remained in 2025, improvements based on lessons learned from the program's first year, leading to stronger implementation over time.

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- Draws on conversations with states and Tribes to document strategies used to reach children facing barriers to access
- Focuses on practical, operational improvements across issuance, delivery, and redemption
- Highlights approaches to better serve foster youth, housing-insecure families, Indigenous communities, households with limited English proficiency, and families required to apply

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Session Speakers

- ★ **Zee Zaidoff**, Speaker, Writer, Trainer, Hope808
- ★ **Emily Fulgham-Clay**, Parent
- ★ **Eugenia Gusev**, Maryland Department of Human Services
- ★ **Jonelle Brom**, Wisconsin Department of Health Services



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