

Summer EBT in New Jersey 2024

What is Summer EBT?

Summer EBT (S-EBT) is a new government program that provides a \$120 grocery benefit to eligible children's families to buy food during the summer months when they do not have access to school meals.^{1,2}

Who is NJFSI?

The New Jersey Food Security Initiative (NJFSI) is a three-year (2024-2026) collaborative effort to address food insecurity. The Food Research & Action Center (FRAC), a non-profit organization, is leading this work with funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF).³



How did NJFSI help Summer EBT?

NJFSI awarded grants to organizations throughout the state, including the New Jersey Office of the Food Security Advocate (OFSA). OFSA used this funding to implement S-EBT in New Jersey.



The New Jersey Office of the Food Security Advocate (OFSA) was founded in 2021 and has four key priority areas⁴:

- ◆ Supports state agencies in conducting food security work
- ◆ Supports food security policy advancement
- ◆ Collaborates with the philanthropic sector
- ◆ Supports and participates in community-driven food security work

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OFSA received proposal and started planning for the 2024 New Jersey S-EBT launch

Successful S-EBT launch

Inaugural New Jersey S-EBT Wrap-Up event

August 2023

June 2024

August 2024

What was Summer EBT able to accomplish?

OFSA used money from NJFSI to hire a project manager to coordinate community partners, local governments, and state agencies. OFSA also successfully led outreach efforts to schools, community organizations, healthcare services, and other organizations across the state. Coordinated efforts, including an outreach toolkit created by Hunger Free New Jersey,⁵ led to a summer rollout and exceeded the target number of qualified children. Organizations that utilized the outreach toolkit appreciated its consistent messaging and comprehensiveness, and look forward to using it again in the 2025 S-EBT rollout. New Jersey successfully identified more than 711,000 students who qualified for Summer EBT in 2024 and issued more than \$82M in benefits.

"...it's remarkable that New Jersey was able to issue Summer EBT as a summer benefit, and that a majority of the benefits were redeemed during the summer. I think that's a tremendous achievement for us as a state."

–Mark Dinglasan, Executive Director of the New Jersey Office of the Food Security Advocate



Number of Children Benefitting from Summer EBT

500,000

85,875

Goal Met

Goal Exceeded

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Lessons Learned



Community Engagement

OFSA used New Jersey's past experiences with the Pandemic EBT (P-EBT) rollout to inform S-EBT. For example, P-EBT implementation did not include stakeholders and community members, so OFSA included these groups in S-EBT. However, due to a lack of capacity, they were unable to gather stories during the S-EBT planning and implementation or collect data directly from the families who benefitted from S-EBT.



Budget

Related to planning, OFSA had set up a separate budget account to accept funds from NJFSI for S-EBT and these funds were then given to NJ's lead agency, the Division of Food & Nutrition for use, but this was hard to execute. Reflecting on the experience, they wish they would have executed the program through their own department to create a more streamlined revenue source.



Outreach

Future work needs to prioritize school meal application outreach using the lessons learned from this project. There are 2,508 schools and about 700 school food authorities, and OFSA has an opportunity to use what they learned with S-EBT to make a positive impact across the state.

OFSA plans to take these lessons learned and apply it to their future work in school meals.

Given its success in the first year, OFSA will continue to manage S-EBT in future years, incorporating lessons learned and building off of this first year's success.

To learn more about New Jersey Summer EBT, please visit: <https://www.nj.gov/summerebt>

"So, outreach works...and listening to community and engaging community and actually creating that ownership, it actually works."

-Mark Dinglasan, Executive Director of the New Jersey Office of the Food Security Advocate



References

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5. The School Meals and Summer EBT Application Outreach Toolkit - Hunger Free NJ. August 14, 2024. Accessed January 3, 2025. <https://hungerfreenj.org/schoolmealstoolkit/>

