

WSR 26-01-114
PERMANENT RULES
DEPARTMENT OF
SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES

(Economic Services Administration)

[Filed December 16, 2025, 6:05 p.m., effective January 16, 2026]

Effective Date of Rule: Thirty-one days after filing.

Purpose: The department of social and health services (department) is adopting amendments to WAC 388-487-0010 What is the sun bucks program?, 388-487-0020 Is my child eligible for sun bucks?, and 388-487-0030 General information about sun bucks benefits. These amendments are necessary for the continued implementation and ongoing management of the sun bucks program. As applicable, these amendments make additional changes required to improve clarity, update policy, or better align rule language with state and federal law or regulations. Once effective, this filing supersedes the emergency rule filed under WSR 25-20-045.

Citation of Rules Affected by this Order: Amending WAC 388-487-0010, 388-487-0020, and 388-487-0030.

Statutory Authority for Adoption: RCW 74.04.050, 74.04.055, 74.04.057, 74.04.500, 74.04.510, 74.08.090, and 74.08A.120.

Other Authority: Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 (H.R. 2617).

Adopted under notice filed as WSR 25-22-088 on November 4, 2025.

Changes Other than Editing from Proposed to Adopted Version: The department withdrew the original proposed rule filed as WSR 25-19-037 and refiled as WSR 25-22-088 to better align the proposed WAC language with federal program guidelines and the approved state plan.

Number of Sections Adopted in Order to Comply with Federal Statute: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0; Federal Rules or Standards: New 0, Amended 3, Repealed 0; or Recently Enacted State Statutes: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0.

Number of Sections Adopted at the Request of a Nongovernmental Entity: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0.

Number of Sections Adopted on the Agency's own Initiative: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0.

Number of Sections Adopted in Order to Clarify, Streamline, or Reform Agency Procedures: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0.

Number of Sections Adopted using Negotiated Rule Making: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0; Pilot Rule Making: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0; or Other Alternative Rule Making: New 0, Amended 3, Repealed 0.

Date Adopted: December 16, 2025.

Katherine I. Vasquez
Rules Coordinator

SHS-5089.4

AMENDATORY SECTION (Amending WSR 24-23-099, filed 11/20/24, effective 12/21/24)

WAC 388-487-0010 What is the sun bucks program? The sun bucks program is the summer electronic benefits transfer (~~((summer EBT))~~)

program that provides a one-time food benefit to eligible children during designated summer periods following ~~((the))~~ an academic school year. Sun bucks is administered by the department of social and health services and is not bound by the same state or federal rules, regulations, or procedures governing basic food as described in WAC 388-400-0040.

The following definitions apply to this program:

~~((1) "Compulsory age" means the age children are required by law to attend school; in Washington this is between the ages of eight and 18.~~

~~(2) "Direct certification" means a determination that a child is eligible for free or reduced-priced school meals without further application to the national school lunch program due to:~~

~~(a) Receiving a benefit from a federal means tested assistance program, including supplemental nutrition assistance program, temporary assistance for needy families, food distribution program on Indian reservations, some medicaid programs; or~~

~~(b) Other source eligible categories, including children in foster care, children experiencing homelessness, students enrolled in the migrant education program, and children enrolled in head start or the early childhood education and assistance program.)~~

(1) "Categorically eligible" means a school age child, as defined in this section, who automatically qualifies for sun bucks because they are:

(a) A member of a household receiving the supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP) or temporary assistance for needy families (TANF); or

(b) A foster child, homeless child, migrant child, head start child, or runaway child; as defined in the Richard B. Russell act.

(2) "CEP or provision 2 school" means a community eligibility provision or provision 2 school that provides free or reduced-price meals to all children regardless of meeting income eligibility guidelines.

(3) "CNEEB" means a child nutrition eligibility and education benefit application for free and reduced-price meals, including sun bucks, submitted by a household for a child or children enrolled at a school that participates in NSLP/SBP.

(4) "Department" means the department of social and health services.

(5) "Direct certification" means automatic eligibility for free or reduced-price meals based on documentation provided by the department that a child is categorically eligible as defined in this section.

(6) "Direct verification" means the process of verifying household income or categorical eligibility by matching against data sources or other records without the need to contact the household for documentation.

(7) "Dual participation" means a child simultaneously receiving sun bucks benefits from more than one state or simultaneously receiving multiple allotments from the same state.

~~((3) "Expungement"))~~ (8) "Expungement" means removal of unused benefits ((due to nonuse)) after 122 days from the date sun bucks benefits were deposited into the EBT account.

~~((4))~~ (9) "Free or reduced-price meals" means meals provided to students qualified as eligible by the Richard B. Russell ((National School Lunch Act)) national school lunch act.

(10) "Household" means a group of related or nonrelated individuals, who are not residents of an institution or boarding house, but who are living as one economic unit as defined in the US department of agriculture food and nutrition service eligibility manual for school meals.

~~((5))~~ (11) "Income eligibility guidelines" means income limits to determine eligibility for free and reduced-price meals adjusted annually by the US department of agriculture food and nutrition service as required by the national school lunch act.

(12) "Instructional year" means the period from July 1 of the prior year through one day prior to the summer operational period.

(13) "NSLP/SBP" means the national school lunch program established under the Richard B. Russell national school lunch act and the school breakfast program established under the child nutrition act.

(14) "Period of eligibility" means the period of time from the first day of the instructional year immediately preceding the summer operational period, through the last day of the summer operational period.

(15) "School-aged" means the age children are required to attend school as defined by state law; in Washington state this is age eight to 18 years old.

(16) "Streamline certified" means automatically enrolling an eligible child for sun bucks without need for further application or confirmation of school enrollment.

(17) "Summer operational period" means the period between the end of the current school year and the start of the next school year, as determined by the state.

~~((6))~~ (18) "Sun bucks application" means an application available to households with potentially eligible children who do not automatically meet streamline certification criteria.

~~((7))~~ (19) "Sun bucks card" means the unique EBT card that accesses sun bucks food benefits issued to individual eligible children.

(20) "Verification" means the confirmation of eligibility for a sun bucks application. Verification includes the confirmation of income eligibility and other information as requested by the department.

~~((8) "Streamline certified" means a child automatically approved for sun bucks because they meet the following criteria:~~

~~(a) A child, regardless of age, who would have access to free or reduced-price school meals through the national school lunch program and school breakfast program during the school year, who:~~

~~(i) Is determined by the school to be eligible for free or reduced-priced school meals; or~~

~~(ii) Attends a school that operates the community eligibility provision or the provision 2 lunch and breakfast program and identified as eligible for free or reduced-price school meals using direct certification or a free or reduced-price school meals application.~~

~~(b) A child who meets compulsory age requirements and resides in a household receiving one of the following public assistance benefits:~~

~~(i) Temporary assistance for needy families as described in WAC 388-400-0005;~~

~~(ii) State funded assistance as described in WAC 388-400-0010;~~

~~(iii) Basic food as described in WAC 388-400-0040; or~~

~~(iv) The state funded food assistance program as described in WAC 388-400-0050.~~

~~(10) "Summer operational period" means the period between the end of the current school year and the start of the next school year, as determined by the state.)~~

AMENDATORY SECTION (Amending WSR 24-23-099, filed 11/20/24, effective 12/21/24)

- WAC 388-487-0020 Is my child eligible for sun bucks?** (1) To be streamline certified for sun bucks benefits, a child must be:
- (a) School-aged and categorically eligible;
 ((Attend)) (b) Enrolled in a school that participates in the ((national school lunch program or school breakfast program)) NSLP/SBP; and
- (i) ((Is determined)) Attends a school that does not operate the CEP or provision 2 program and determined by the school to be individually eligible for free or reduced-price ((school)) meals; or
- (ii) ((Who attends)) Attends a school that operates the ((community eligibility provision)) CEP or provision 2 ((lunch and breakfast)) program and ((identified as eligible)) eligible for free or reduced-price meals using ((direct certification or a free or reduced-price school meals application)) direct certification.
- ((b) Meet compulsory age requirements and reside in a household receiving one of the following public assistance benefits:
- (i) ~~Temporary assistance for needy families as described in WAC 388-400-0005;~~
- (ii) ~~State funded assistance as described in WAC 388-400-0010;~~
- (iii) ~~Basic food as described in WAC 388-400-0040; or~~
- (iv) ~~The state funded food assistance program as described in WAC 388-400-0050.)~~
- (2) ((Children)) For children who are not streamline certified, an adult household member must submit either a sun bucks application to the department or a CNEEB application to the child's school during the ((summer operational)) period of eligibility and the child must ((meet the following criteria)) be:
- (a) ((Attend)) Enrolled at a school that participates in the ((national school lunch program or school breakfast program)) NSLP/SBP; and
- (b) ((Meet)) A member of a household that meets income eligibility guidelines for free or reduced-price school meals.
- (i) Income eligibility guidelines change annually on July 1.
- (ii) The income eligibility guidelines in effect on the date of application are used to determine eligibility.
- (3) Applications received after the end of the summer operational period will be considered for sun bucks in the following year.
- (4) Applications for sun bucks will be selected at random for additional verification prior to approval.
- (a) The department will attempt direct verification prior to contacting a household.
- (b) If direct verification cannot be obtained, households will be notified in writing and required to provide the requested verification within 30 days from the date of request.
- (c) Verification must indicate eligibility for sun bucks at any time during the period of eligibility.
- (d) Failure to provide requested verification will result in a denial of a household's sun bucks application. If denied, households will be notified in writing and may reapply during the period of eligibility.
- ((4)) (5) If information on an application is questionable, verification may be requested and must be provided within 30 days of the date of application.

~~((5))~~ (6) Children approved for sun bucks receive a notice of approval describing their eligibility and other information related to the program.

AMENDATORY SECTION (Amending WSR 24-23-099, filed 11/20/24, effective 12/21/24)

WAC 388-487-0030 General information about sun bucks benefits.

(1) The amount of sun bucks each eligible child will receive is \$120 for the summer of ~~((2024))~~ 2025 and ~~((will))~~ may be adjusted annually for inflation.

(2) Sun bucks benefits are deposited into an account accessible with a designated sun bucks card. Each sun bucks card is:

(a) Linked to a sun bucks account for each eligible child; and
 (b) Mailed to the last known address as reported by the parent or caregiver to ~~((either))~~:

(i) The child's school if ~~((directly))~~ streamline certified via individual eligibility for free or reduced-price meals at an NSLP/SBP school; ~~((or))~~

(ii) The department ~~((for the eligible child's cash or food assistance household.))~~ if streamline certified via categorical eligibility; or

(iii) The address reported by a parent or caregiver via a sun bucks application, CNEEB, or an address update to the department.

(c) It is the parent's or caregiver's responsibility to accurately and timely report any address changes to the child's school and to the department. The department or school is not responsible for the expungement of benefits due to unreceived sun bucks notices or cards sent through the mail.

(3) To use a sun bucks account:

(a) The sun bucks EBT card can be used by the eligible child or responsible household member, such as a parent or caregiver on behalf of the eligible child, to purchase eligible food items.

(b) A personal identification number (PIN) must be created to use the sun bucks card. Families are responsible for keeping the sun bucks card and PIN of an eligible child in a safe and secure place.

(c) Sun bucks benefits are only accessed from the sun bucks card and cannot be transferred to a bank account or issued as a check.

(4) The purpose of sun bucks benefits is to help low-income families have a more nutritious diet by providing food benefits to eligible children during the summer months between academic school years.

(a) Any remaining sun bucks benefits not used within 122 days from the date of deposit into each eligible child's account are expunged.

(b) Sun bucks benefits cannot be replaced ~~((, redeemed,))~~ if they are expunged, lost, or stolen due to fraudulent activity or use.

(c) Sun bucks benefits ~~((are))~~ may be used to buy food items under WAC 388-412-0046 (2)(c) for an eligible child from a food retailer authorized to accept supplemental nutrition assistance program benefits.

(d) Intentional misuse of sun bucks benefits may be subject to fines or legal action including criminal prosecution.

(5) ~~((The household))~~ Households must request a hearing within 90 days of the end of the summer operational period when disagreeing with a decision ~~((explained in the notice))~~ made by the department.

~~(6) ((Children cannot receive sun bucks from more than one state at a time for the same summer operational period))~~

The department will restore lost benefits if the loss was caused by an administrative error, no more than 12 months prior to either:

(i) The date the department receives a request for restoration from the household; or

(ii) The date the department is notified or discovers the loss.

(7) Households may be subject to overpayments if dual participation is identified.

(8) Continuance of the program is contingent upon annual approval of federal and state funds specifically for the sun bucks program. The department may discontinue the program when funding is no longer available.