



**Summer EBT (S-EBT)  
POLICY AND PROCEDURES  
MANUAL**

STATE OF MARYLAND  
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES  
FAMILY INVESTMENT ADMINISTRATION

## OFFICE OF NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

For additional information contact:

Office of Nutrition Assistance Programs  
25 South Charles Street  
Baltimore, Maryland 21201

Or visit : <https://dhs.maryland.gov/sunbucks/>

## **Table of Contents**

Chapter 1: Program Overview	4
1.1 Background and Overview	4
1.1.1 Staffing Model	5
1.2 Coordination with Other Programs	6
1.3 Eligibility	7
1.4 Benefit Levels	8
1.5 Outreach	8
1.6 Application Process	9
1.7 Denial Process	9
1.8 Review and Hearing Process	9
1.9 Payments	10
Chapter 2: Outreach	10
2.1 Outreach Policy	10
2.2 Local Agency Outreach Plans and Supplemental Funding	10
2.3 Local Outreach Responsibilities	11
Chapter 3: Application Process	12
3.1 Application Policy	12
3.1.1 Personal Safety & Privacy Policy	12
3.2 Application Period	13
3.3 Application Requirements	13
3.3.1 Household Members	14
3.3.2 Social Security Numbers	14
3.3.3 Photo Identification	15
3.3.4 Residency	15
3.4 Application Procedures	15

## **Maryland SUN Bucks (S-EBT)**

---

3.4.1 Application Methods	15
3.5 Application Processing	16
3.6 Pending Cases - Procedures	16
3.7 Referrals to Assistance Resources	17
Chapter 4: Eligibility and Certification	17
4.1 Eligibility Policy	17
4.1.1 Basis for Eligibility	17
4.1.2 Basis for Denial	18
4.2 Income Eligibility	19
4.2.1 Guidelines	19
4.2.2 Countable Income/ Resources	19
4.2.3 Direct Certification	20
4.3 Income Documentation	21
4.4 Citizenship	22
4.5 Certification Policy	23
4.5.1 Certification Procedures	23
4.6 Denial Policy	23
4.6.1 Denial Procedures	23
4.6.2 Denial Letter	24
4.6.3 Timeliness of Denial	24
4.7 Reapplication	24
Chapter 5: Fraud, Repayment, and Administrative Hearing Procedures	25
5.1 Background	25
5.2 Definition of Activities	25
5.3 Responsibilities of Stakeholders	26
5.4 Intentional Program Violation (IPV)	28
5.5 Administrative Hearings	31
Chapter 6 Grant Funds and Fiscal Management of Grant Funds	36

## **Maryland SUN Bucks (S-EBT)**

---

6.1 Payment Schedule and Priority	36
6.2 Collection Procedures for Overpayment or Other Reasons	36
Chapter 7: Program Integrity	37
7.1 Program Integrity Policy and Procedure	37
7.2 Identifying Applicant Fraud	38
7.3 Responding to Suspected Fraud	38
7.3.1 Uncooperative Applicant Fraud	39
7.4 LDSS Employee Irregularities or Fraud	39
Chapter 8: Application Management	40
8.1 General Policy - Application Management, Record Keeping, Reporting	40
8.2 Policy - Application Management Requirements	40
8.3 Application Management - Background	40
8.4 Productivity (Processing) Standards for Applications	41
8.5 Review of Productivity	42
Exhibits	43
Exhibit A: Agency Goals and Objectives	43
Exhibit B: Maryland SUN Bucks Application Workflow	44
Exhibit C: Tips for Timely and Complete Application Processing	45
Tips for Certifying Applications	45
Reports Guide	46
Exhibit D: Income Overview	47
Exhibit E: Program Snapshot	48
Exhibit F: Abbreviations	49

## Chapter 1: Program Overview

### Chapter Contents

- [Program Background and Overview](#)
- [Staffing Model](#)
- [Coordination with Other Programs](#)
- [Eligibility](#)
- [Benefit Levels](#)
- [Outreach](#)
- [Application Process](#)
- [Denial Process](#)
- [Review and Hearing Process](#)
- [Payment Process](#)

### 1.1 Background and Overview

The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 was signed into law by President Biden on December 29, 2022 authorizing a permanent, nationwide Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer (Summer EBT) program beginning in 2024. The program is administered at the federal level by the Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) within the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Each state will implement the program and issue benefits. FNS has authorized that the program be called SUN Bucks. The Maryland Department of Human Services, Family Investment Administration is administering the program at the state level in partnership with the Maryland State Department of Education and calling it Maryland SUN Bucks.

The Office of Nutrition Assistance Programs (ONAP), in collaboration with the Local Department of Social Services (LDSS) offices, Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), and the Maryland Department of Health (MDH), is responsible for the administration of the Maryland SUN Bucks (S-EBT) program. Children aged 5 through 18 are automatically eligible and will be directly certified for Maryland SUN Bucks if they have participated in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA), Medical Assistance (MA), or Foster Care in Maryland at any point since July of the prior year. For children not directly certified (mostly children enrolled in

## **Maryland SUN Bucks (S-EBT)**

---

Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) schools), parents and/or guardians may submit an application for Maryland SUN Bucks online or to a LDSS.

The Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) is the agency authorized to receive funds under this Grant. ONAP, an operating unit within the Family Investment Administration, has designed Maryland's SUN Bucks program according to guidelines set forth by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

DHS has allocated funding to the twenty four LDSS offices to administer Maryland SUN Bucks.

ONAP is responsible for allocating the funds to the LDSS and monitoring compliance with program regulations as set forth in the state's Plan for Operations and Management, the Maryland SUN Bucks Operations Manual, and the Maryland SUN Bucks State Plan.

### **1.1.1 Staffing Model**

A regional staffing model that is used to implement the Maryland SUN Bucks program. This model closely follows the Statewide Processing Model (SPM). Two jurisdictions from each of the three SPM regions (a total of six local departments) were selected to process and manage all Maryland SUN Bucks applications, customer service/case management, and handle call center phone inquiries. The number of processing and case management staff assigned to each jurisdiction was based on the number of anticipated Maryland SUN Bucks applications in each region.

The processing jurisdictions selected for each region are highlighted in the table on the next page.

## Maryland SUN Bucks (S-EBT)

---

Region 1	Region 2	Region 3
Baltimore City	Prince George's	Baltimore County
Harford	Anne Arundel	Montgomery
Wicomico	Washington	Charles
Howard	Frederick	Cecil
Allegany	Dorchester	Carroll
Calvert	Caroline	Worcester
Somerset	Saint Mary's	Talbot
Garrett	Kent	Queen Anne's

FIA has designated a total of 95 positions to implement Maryland SUN Bucks. 48 of the 95 available positions are allotted to the six jurisdictions selected to process Maryland SUN Bucks applications, provide case management, answer program-specific inquiries over the phone, resolve eligibility errors, and manage appeals. Using the estimated number of Maryland SUN Bucks customers in each region as a determining factor, Region I has 13, Region II has 17, and Region III has 18 processing PINs.

The rest of the positions (47) are divided among all twenty-four local departments statewide. These positions are responsible for helping customers submit Maryland SUN Bucks applications as needed; issue over the counter EBT cards; conduct outreach in local schools; and answer basic questions about the program. The PIN assignment ensures that each jurisdiction receives at least one Maryland SUN Bucks PIN.

### 1.2 Coordination with Other Programs

ONAP coordinates the delivery of services for its programs with other similar and related programs to assure an effective and diverse food assistance delivery system. Coordination is provided as follows:

- A. MSDE provides a list of children determined eligible for the NSLP.



## **Maryland SUN Bucks (S-EBT)**

---

- B. ONAP and many LDSS offices partner with local community agencies to conduct outreach and ensure public awareness.
- C. At the time of application for any ONAP programs, applicants are given printed information regarding food distribution and assistance programs available in the area.
- D. FIA provides referrals to other available benefits when necessary. The LDSS provides information about all FIA programs that a household may be eligible for.

### **1.3 Eligibility**

Income is the primary eligibility determinant for Maryland SUN Bucks. Eligibility for Maryland SUN Bucks is based on the financial eligibility standards for the NSLP. Income guidelines for Maryland SUN Bucks and NSLP programs are legislatively mandated and published each year by the Federal government. For NSLP, the income guidelines are based on household size and gross income; households at or below 130% of the Federal Poverty Level are eligible for free school lunches and households at or below 185% of the Federal Poverty Level are eligible for reduced price meals. Additionally, children must attend a school that participates in the NSLP in order to be eligible for Maryland SUN Bucks.

The household's total gross monthly income must be equal to or less than the established poverty level for the NSLP to be considered eligible.

Maryland SUN Bucks utilizes direct certification. Children who applied and were determined eligible for the NSLP, school aged children that are members of households that received Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA/TANF), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and/or Medical Assistance (MA), or are homeless, in foster care, Head Start, determined a migrant or runaway by MSDE during the school year are also eligible for direct certification.

In addition to the income criteria, households that are applying for SUN Bucks because they were not directly certified are determined eligible for SUN Bucks if:

## **Maryland SUN Bucks (S-EBT)**

---

- A. the child(ren) completed the instructional year immediately preceding the summer operational period in a Maryland school that participates in FARMS/NSLP; and
- B. the child(ren) have not already received Summer EBT benefits from another state during the program timeframe at the time of application (see [Chapter 3.3 Application Requirements](#)).

Individuals that are not directly certified can apply for Maryland SUN Bucks online at [Maryland Benefits Consumer Portal](#). Paper applications can be submitted to any LDSS.

### **1.4 Benefit Levels**

The Maryland SUN Bucks grant is \$40 per month for the months of June, July and August (a total of \$120 for the summer) for each eligible child. This benefit amount is the same regardless of household income or time of application. Benefits are not prorated, so if a child is deemed eligible at any point for the Summer Operational Period the full benefits will be issued.

### **1.5 Outreach**

Maryland has developed and implemented an outreach plan to educate the target parents and guardians about the Maryland SUN Bucks program, its intent, and how to access the benefits. Beginning in June 2024, the state established a dedicated Maryland SUN Bucks hotline to enable households to reach a representative to address needs.

A dedicated webpage was established to provide Maryland SUN Bucks information and address frequently asked questions. DHS has developed a flier for Maryland SUN Bucks, which includes a QR code for ease of information and online application access.

In addition to the webpage and fliers, mass emails are sent to contacts in DHS' online consumer portal and DHS conducts meetings with hunger advocates as avenues for public outreach. Meetings with advocates and SNAP outreach providers to share updates regarding Maryland SUN Bucks.

MSDE leverages existing meetings with LEAs to share Maryland SUN Bucks information and answer questions that school administrators and

## **Maryland SUN Bucks (S-EBT)**

---

teachers may have. Maryland SUN Bucks outreach materials are shared with local school systems.

### **1.6 Application Process**

Customers whose child(ren) are not directly certified may apply for Maryland SUN Bucks through a variety of channels. [Chapter 3.4.1](#) provides a list of application methods. Customers should choose the method that works best for them. Applications are processed by eligibility workers. Workers, at their discretion, have the authority to request verification from an applicant if information on the application is questionable. Applications are required to be reviewed within 10 days and processed within 15 days from the receipt of the application.

### **1.7 Denial Process**

An application may be denied for the following reasons:

- A. The applicant does not provide requested verification to the agency within 10 days from the date the Request for Information notice was generated;
- B. The applicant does not meet the eligibility criteria for the program; or
- C. The child(ren) on the application have already received SUN Bucks/Summer EBT in Maryland or from another state.

Applicants who are denied receive a written notice of the denial. For additional information and denial procedures, see [Chapter 4.19 Denial Policy](#).

### **1.8 Review and Hearing Process**

Maryland SUN Bucks applicants have the right to appeal the eligibility determination made on their application. The processing jurisdiction should attempt to settle all disputes in an informal and timely manner. However, Maryland SUN Bucks applicants are guaranteed access to a formal review and hearing process if the matter cannot be resolved at the local level. Complete details on this process can be found in [Chapter 5 Fraud, Repayment, and Administrative Hearing Procedures](#).

### **1.9 Payments**

Maryland SUN Bucks benefit payments are made on a monthly basis to eligible households' existing EBT cards or, if a child has never received EBT benefits, a white Maryland SUN Bucks card will be issued.

## **Chapter 2: Outreach**

### Chapter Contents

- [Outreach Policy](#)
- [Local Agency Outreach Plan](#)
- [Local Outreach Responsibilities](#)

### **2.1 Outreach Policy**

ONAP designs its outreach activities to ensure that eligible households are made aware of the availability of food assistance and all related food resources.

### **2.2 Outreach Plan**

DHS conducts activities to inform the public about the Maryland SUN Bucks program. Examples of outreach activities undertaken by the ONAP staff include:

- A. Development of the DHS Maryland SUN Bucks webpage, FAQ, paper application, and on-line Consumer Portal application;
- B. Printing and supplying brochures and fliers to local agencies to display in strategic locations throughout its geographic area;
- C. Issuance of press releases, social media campaigns, email blasts, and articles about the program;
- D. Participation in public forums to increase the awareness of the Maryland SUN Bucks program;

## **Maryland SUN Bucks (S-EBT)**

---

- E. Availability of a toll-free number 1-800-332-6347 with a Maryland SUN Bucks dedicated option for customers to receive specific information and inquire about the Maryland SUN Bucks program.

### **2.3 Local Outreach Responsibilities**

DHS and Maryland SUN Bucks staff statewide conduct outreach. Outreach demonstrates the establishment of relationships and partnerships with other organizations and LEA's serving the community. Outreach activities suggested for the LDSS include but are not limited to:

- A. Provide additional outreach sites;
- B. Provide application assistance by telephone;
- C. Work in conjunction with the LEA's in their jurisdiction to help educate and spread the word about Maryland SUN Bucks.
- D. Conduct special events to increase program awareness or to take applications;
- E. Inform the applicants of other DHS benefits that are available;
- F. Promote articles in local newspapers or broadcast media or social media announcements; and
- G. Place posters/fliers in strategic locations throughout local and county areas.

LDSS offices are encouraged to use a variety of methods to increase outreach activities that are widely spread out across its serving jurisdiction and include multi-cultural contacts (i.e. faith based, disabilities, seniors, non-English speaking participants, etc).

### Chapter 3: Application Process

#### **Chapter Contents**

- [Application Policy](#)
- [Application Period](#)
- [Application Requirements](#)
- [Application Procedures](#)
- [Application Processing](#)
- [Pending Cases – Procedures](#)
- [Referrals to Other Utility Assistance Resources](#)

#### **3.1 Application Policy**

State law and regulations require that ONAP, MSDE, and MDH provide confidentiality safeguards for the use of DHS client records and reports.

- A. Parents or guardians of children that are not directly certified for Maryland SUN Bucks must complete an application for assistance. Completion of the application form and the submission of requested documentation (if any) constitute a completed application for processing. Whether they apply by mail, in person, or electronically, applicants must be informed about the basic application requirements.
- B. The Maryland SUN Bucks application may only be used to determine eligibility for Maryland SUN Bucks and may not be used for any other DHS program.

##### **3.1.1 Personal Safety & Privacy Policy**

Applicants who experience domestic violence or are concerned for their personal safety may apply for Maryland SUN Bucks while still maintaining their privacy. The LDSS must ensure that the customer's personally identifiable information remains confidential and protected.

To protect the location of children in foster care, all SUN Bucks mailing must be routed to the nearest LDSS.

## Maryland SUN Bucks (S-EBT)

### 3.2 Application Period

Applicants may apply for Maryland SUN Bucks at any time of the year. In order to be eligible for the upcoming Summer Operational Period (June, July, and August) in a given year, applications must be received by August 31 of the same year. For example, applications received between June 15 and August 31, 2024 will be considered for eligibility for the 2024 summer operational year. Applications received September 1 or later will be evaluated for eligibility for the next Summer Operational Period. Applications determined eligible for SUN Bucks that are received between July 1 when the NSLP guidelines update each year and August 31 when the Maryland summer operational period ends are eligible for both the current summer as well as the following summer. Applications are processed according to specific program guidelines.

Application Periods*	
June 15	The Maryland summer operational period begins
August 31	The last day to submit an application for Maryland SUN Bucks for the current summer operational period (June, July, August)
October 31	Maryland SUN Bucks must be dispersed by this date for directly certified children and applications approved during the summer operational period

*\*These dates are subject to change by ONAP at any time if program requirements warrant.*

Maryland SUN Bucks is a monthly \$40 benefit for the Summer Operational Period (June, July, and August) for each eligible child. Each eligible child will receive a total benefit of \$120.

### 3.3 Application Requirements

The applicant must submit the following items in order for an application to be considered complete:

- A. A signed and dated application form. An application can only be accepted as a valid and complete application if it is signed and dated by the parent or guardian of the child(ren) being applied for.

## **Maryland SUN Bucks (S-EBT)**

---

1. Applications may be submitted in person, through the mail, or scanned and submitted via fax or email. Original signatures are not required unless the document is questionable. Electronic signatures are not accepted, except for the online Maryland SUN Bucks application through myMDThink.
- B. Names of the applicant and all household members.
- C. Declaration of all gross monthly income for all household members (see [Chapter 4.2.2 Countable Income/Resources](#))

The following children are eligible for Direct Certification and do not need to apply if at point since July 1 of the prior year they have:

- A. Received SNAP, TCA, MA, or Foster Care;  
  
Not all Medical Assistance coverage groups are directly certified for SUN Bucks, only those with income thresholds of 185% or less of the federal poverty level (P07, P13, and F02).
- B. Applied and were approved for the NSLP; or,
- C. Been identified as homeless, runaway, or child of a migrant worker by MSDE.

Records of applications, issuance, reconciliation, and other accountability measures must be maintained for at least three years and are subject to audit. E&E will maintain the record of case information and eligibility, but the case manager is responsible for ensuring that all documents related to the case are scanned or uploaded to Case Documents within E&E.

### **3.3.1 Household Members**

Any person currently residing in the household the day the application is signed must be listed on the application and their gross monthly income must be counted. Where there is a question as to the residency of household members, documentation should be requested to ensure that the person is residing at the applicant's address (see [Chapter 3.3.4 Proof of Residence](#)).



## **Maryland SUN Bucks (S-EBT)**

---

### **3.3.2 Social Security Numbers**

Social Security numbers are not required in order to receive Maryland SUN Bucks. Applicants have the option to provide Social Security numbers which may aid in matching them to existing cases. Verification is not required.

### **3.3.3 Photo Identification**

Proof of identity (including photo identification) is not required for Maryland SUN Bucks.

### **3.3.4 Residency**

In order to qualify for Maryland SUN Bucks, applicants and household members are not required to be Maryland residents, but rather the child(ren) must have completed the instructional year immediately preceding the summer operational period at a FARMS/NSLP participating school in Maryland.

Where there is a question as to the residency of household members, additional documentation should be requested to ensure that the child is residing at the applying parent/guardian's address.

## **3.4 Application Procedures**

Application procedures may not prevent a potential applicant from completing an application. There may not be any barrier that prevents a potential applicant from applying. Customers that wish to apply must submit an application and can do so at any time. Children that meet direct certification requirements will be automatically certified for Maryland SUN Bucks and do not need to apply.

### **3.4.1 Application Methods**

The Applicant may apply through any of the following methods:

- A. Online using the MDThink Consumer Portal  
<https://mymdthink.maryland.gov/> (preferred)

## **Maryland SUN Bucks (S-EBT)**

---

### **B. In Person at LDSS Offices**

Applicants that come into a LDSS office to apply for Maryland SUN Bucks should be encouraged to utilize agency computers and apply on the MDThink Consumer Portal. Paper applications can also be submitted at any LDSS office which must be scanned into E&E. A LDSS staff member must then enter the application into the MDThink Consumer Portal on the customers' behalf.

### **C. Mail, Fax, or Email**

At the customer's request, the LDSS should mail, fax, or email a Maryland SUN Bucks paper application to them. Customers may mail, fax, or email the completed application to the LDSS. Once received, it must be scanned to E&E and a staff member must enter the application into the MDThink Consumer Portal on the customers' behalf. The application date is the date it is received in the LDSS.

## **3.5 Application Processing**

Once an application is submitted, the following steps are taken to process that application to ensure a timely determination of eligibility. Applications shall be reviewed within 5 days of receipt and entered into the E&E system. The application must be processed and an eligibility determination made within 15 calendar days of receipt of the application.

## **3.6 Pending Cases - Procedures**

- A. If the applicant provides questionable information on the application, they are subject to Verification for Cause. The case manager must manually generate a 1052 (Request for Information form) detailing exactly what information is needed. The date this information is due back must be clearly stated, which is 10 days from the date the notice is generated. The case manager's name and telephone number must be included on the form.
- B. The application remains in a pending status until the information is returned or the due date of the request for information, whichever is later.

## **Maryland SUN Bucks (S-EBT)**

---

- C. If the information is not returned by the date requested, the application is denied as described in [Chapter 4.19.1 Denial Procedures](#).
- D. Once the additional information is received, the pertinent documents are scanned to Case Documents and the information is entered into the case.
- E. Requested information is accepted by mail, in-person, email, fax, and submission through the MDThink Consumer Portal.

### **3.7 Referrals to Other Food Assistance Resources**

Each LDSS should maintain a list of food assistance providers for referral purposes if Maryland SUN Bucks grants are not adequate to meet the needs of the applicant.

## **Chapter 4: Eligibility and Certification**

### **Chapter Contents**

- [Eligibility Policy](#)
- [Income Eligibility](#)
- [Income Documentation](#)
- [Citizenship](#)
- [Certification Policy](#)
- [Denial Policy](#)
- [Reapplication](#)

This chapter explains the guidelines and procedures for Maryland SUN Bucks.

### **4.1 Eligibility Policy**

#### **4.1.1 Basis for Eligibility**

A child is determined eligible for Maryland SUN Bucks through application if they are:

- A. School aged (between 5 and 18); and

## **Maryland SUN Bucks (S-EBT)**

---

- B. Enrolled in a FARMS/NSLP participating school; and
- C. The household's total gross income is equal to or less than the established poverty level by family size.

A child is eligible through Direct Certification when they are school aged (between 5 and 18) and:

- A. In Foster Care, are considered homeless, a runaway, or the child of a migrant worker by the school, or;
- B. Receiving one of the following benefits at the time of application:
  - a. Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA)
  - b. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
  - c. Medical Assistance/Medicaid (MA)

### **4.1.2 Basis for Denial**

An applicant-household is determined ineligible for Maryland SUN Bucks if the:

- A. Total gross household income exceeds the income criterion established for the program;
- B. Required information needed to complete the application is not provided within the prescribed time;
- C. Child(ren) did not complete the instructional year immediately preceding the summer operational period at a FARMS participating Maryland school and the child's household does not receive SNAP, TCA, or MA, and the child(ren) are not in Foster Care, homeless, migrant, or runaway;
- D. The applicant requested that the application be withdrawn;
- E. The applicant or head of household died.

### **4.2 Income Eligibility**

#### **4.2.1 Guidelines**

Income eligibility is based on all gross (before taxes and other deductions) monthly income received by the household. This includes income received by any child within the household.

Income guidelines are those of the NSLP and are based on the federal poverty level that is established each year. Households with total monthly gross income below 185% of the federal poverty level are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. NSLP income guidelines are updated annually on July 1 in alignment with the state fiscal year.

#### **4.2.2 Countable Income**

Household income is defined as compensation, income, or financial resources received from one or more of the following sources (gross amounts, unless otherwise noted below) that is received by any household member (including children):

- A. Gross wages, tips and commissions received as compensation from employment or service rendered
- B. Self-employment and rental income, less operating expenses except for depreciation necessary to produce the income
- C. Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Social Security Retirement, etc (not including retroactive payments)
- D. Dividends
- E. Interest on savings or checking accounts
- F. Interest or dividends received from the redemption of bonds
- G. Estate or trust income
- H. Royalties
- I. Child or Alimony/spousal support

## **Maryland SUN Bucks (S-EBT)**

---

- J. Pensions, veteran's compensations; workmen's compensations
- K. Disbursements from annuities, individual retirement accounts (IRAs) or other retirement accounts
- L. Railroad Retirement Benefits
- M. Mine Workers Benefits
- N. Armed Forces Dependent Allowances
- O. Criminal Injuries Compensation Board Payments
- P. Stipends for fellowships (educational or research) for living expenses excluding that portion that covers tuition and required fees
- Q. Monetary gifts and loans (excluding student loans). For example, money given or loaned to the applicant/household to help pay the rent or buy groceries is countable as income. The loan or gift is considered to be the full amount that has been received within the 30-day income period. This includes loans from financial institutions and monies borrowed off of credit cards.
- R. Severance pay
- S. Monetary settlements received as the result of insurance claims, lawsuits, etc.
- T. Unemployment benefits
- U. Inheritance and lottery

### **4.2.3 Direct Certification**

For the purposes of the Maryland SUN Bucks Program, Direct Certification means that a household is considered to have automatically passed an eligibility test because a household member has already been determined to meet eligibility requirements of a means-tested program.

Direct Certification allows DHS to:

- A. Ensure Processing Efficiency;

## **Maryland SUN Bucks (S-EBT)**

---

- B. Reduce Duplicate Document Requests — Households in need of immediate assistance that have already provided information for other eligibility programs may not need to provide additional documentation; and
- C. Increase Opportunities for Integrated Service Delivery — When combined with integrated outreach and intake systems, implementation of procedures for categorical eligibility can facilitate linkage to a range of other services and supports for low-income households.

Children aged 5 through 18 residing in a household where at least one member of the household concurrently receives SNAP, TCA, or MA benefits will be directly certified for Maryland SUN Bucks.

Children that applied for and have been approved to receive NSLP since July 1 of the current fiscal year, are in Foster Care, are homeless, runaway, or children of migrant workers are directly certified for Maryland SUN Bucks.

Once a household is determined to be eligible through direct certification, additional income eligibility assessment is not needed. Children can qualify for Maryland SUN Bucks based on direct certification or total household income. When allowing direct certification, DHS reduces the administrative burden of the Maryland SUN Bucks staff in that they do not need to repeat or verify the household for purposes of Maryland SUN Bucks eligibility. Direct certification also reduces the burden for the household as they do not have to apply for Maryland SUN Bucks in order to receive the benefit.

### **4.3 Income Documentation**

Income verifications are not needed or required to apply for Maryland SUN Bucks.

Agencies are prohibited from requiring income documentation at the time of application with one exception. Applications may be subject to verification for cause. Verification for cause means verification of questionable applications on a case-by-case basis, such as an instance when the agency is made aware of conflicting or inconsistent information than what was provided on the application.

## **Maryland SUN Bucks (S-EBT)**

---

Beginning in Summer 2025, approved applications for Maryland SUN Bucks are subject to verification sampling to verify eligibility for the program. The sample is randomly selected and must equal three (3) percent of all approved applications received between the start of the instructional year (July 1) through April 1 of the school year immediately preceding the summer operational period.

After April 1, E&E will begin automatically processing applications for Maryland SUN Bucks to determine eligibility for the upcoming summer operational period. Any applications that E&E is not able to process automatically will be routed to a processing jurisdiction for review and processing. Once all Maryland SUN Bucks applications that were received between July 1 and April 1 are processed, E&E will randomly select 3 percent of those that have been approved. Selected households will automatically be sent a request for information for verification of income, due back within ten (10) calendar days of the date on the notice.

Households must provide verification of total gross income for a 30 day period of time since July 1 of the prior calendar year. **This 30 day period is not required to be the most recent 30 days.** Households containing members without income must submit a signed statement declaring that they have no income.

Households that fail to provide all required verification will be closed prior to the issuance of any of any Maryland SUN Bucks for the upcoming summer.

If a household provides the required verification after the Maryland SUN Bucks case has closed, the case may be reopened and processed. If eligible, the grant is not prorated, but rather the household is eligible for the entire summer operational period.

### **4.4 Citizenship**

Children are considered eligible for Maryland SUN Bucks regardless of their citizenship or immigration status. No verification is required. Children's participation in the Maryland SUN Bucks program will not impact their household's immigration status.



### **4.5 Certification Policy**

Each application shall be reviewed for completeness and accuracy prior to the issuance of benefits. This review process is referred to as certification. If an application is determined to be ineligible for Maryland SUN Bucks, the procedures for denied applications should be followed (see [Chapter 4.6.1 Denial Procedures](#)).

#### **4.5.1 Certification Procedures**

All applications are processed using the Eligibility & Enrollment (E&E) System. Certify each application using the following steps:

- A. The case manager reviews the application and supporting documentation for completeness and accuracy.
- B. If the application is incomplete, the case manager must follow-up with the applicant.
- C. If the applicant file is complete and accurate, the case manager shall certify the application through E&E within 15 days of receipt. The system determines if the application is approved or denied.

### **4.6 Denial Policy**

Any applicant who does not meet the eligibility criteria is denied the benefit. Denied applicants receive written notice of the reason for the denial that includes information regarding their right to a fair hearing to appeal the decision.

If the denied applicant wishes to appeal the decision, then he/she should follow the procedures described in [Chapter 5.5 Administrative Hearings](#). All letters notifying the applicant that they did not qualify under the eligibility guidelines must contain a statement of the hearing rights.

#### **4.6.1 Denial Procedures**

Review each application for completeness. If the application is incomplete, or if there is questionable information, generate and send a 1052 Request for

## **Maryland SUN Bucks (S-EBT)**

---

Information form. Denial of applications is accomplished through the E&E system. Applications are denied based upon established criteria identified in [Chapter 4.1.2 Basis for Denial](#).

### **4.6.2 Denial Letter**

A denial letter is sent that includes every denied applicant household. The denial letter is generated by E&E and includes:

- A. Date
- B. Applicant's full name
- C. Applicant's mailing address
- D. Explanation of the reason for denial
- E. Information for how to request an appeal for a hearing
- F. Name and telephone number of LDSS that processed the application

Denied applicants have the right to reapply at any time (see [Chapter 4.7 Reapplication](#)).

### **4.6.3 Timeliness of Denial**

When it is absolutely clear that the applicant is ineligible the application may be immediately denied. Otherwise, an eligibility determination must be established and a notice sent within 15 days of receipt of the application.

## **4.7 Reapplication**

Denied applicants receive a written notice of the reason for the denial and of the right to a fair and timely review and hearing of the reasons for denial. Applicants may reapply at any time.

# **Chapter 5: Fraud, Repayment, and Administrative Hearing Procedures**

## **Chapter Contents**

- [Background](#)
- [Definition of Activities](#)
- [Responsibilities of Stakeholders](#)
- [Intentional Program Violation \(IPV\)](#)
- [Administrative Hearings](#)

## **5.1 Background**

This chapter details the policies and procedures to be implemented by the Office of Nutrition Assistance Programs (ONAP) and the LDSSs as it pertains to fraud investigation, collection of repayments and the administrative hearing process.

## **5.2 Definition of Activities**

### **A. Intentional Program Violation**

An Intentional Program Violation (IPV) is defined as an intentional false or misleading statement or misrepresentation, concealment or withholding of facts concerning an application to the Department of Human Services. A Maryland SUN Bucks applicant that is determined to have committed an IPV is subject to penalties as described in this Manual. LDSSs may make referrals for a suspected IPV but only an Administrative Law Judge is permitted to declare that an IPV has occurred.

### **B. Overpayment**

An overpayment means the amount by which a Maryland SUN Bucks benefit payment issued exceeds the amount the applicant was eligible to receive. Overpayments for Maryland SUN Bucks will only be processed in the event that the adult household member has been found guilty of an Intentional Program Violation and fraudulently received benefits to which they were not entitled.

### **C. Recoupment**

Recoupment means the process used by DHS to recover an overpayment from a customer that has received a benefit payment in excess of what the applicant was eligible to receive. Recoupment of funds is initiated by LDSSs.

### **D. Administrative Hearing**

An administrative hearing is defined as a hearing by an administrative law judge of the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH) for the State of Maryland. Administrative hearings may serve the purpose of hearing an appeal of a customer related to a determination made by the program (such as a determination of ineligibility or of recoupment of funds) or may serve the purpose of determining if an intentional program violation has occurred (referred to as an Administrative Disqualification Hearing). The administrative disqualification hearing process will be used for any IPV resulting in recoupment of funds less than \$2,500. Any recoupment that would be more than \$2,500 must be referred to the Office of the Inspector General for prosecution within the Maryland Judicial System.

## **5.3 Responsibilities of Stakeholders**

The Maryland SUN Bucks Processing LDSS is responsible for:

### **A. Administrative Hearing Rights and Procedures for Appeals**

- a. Notifying the Maryland SUN Bucks applicant of their appeal rights (this is printed on the Maryland SUN Bucks approval notice).
- b. Assisting the applicant with completing a Request for Fair Hearing form should they require assistance submitting an appeal.
- c. Offering the applicant a Pre-Hearing Conference to seek a resolution to the matter prior to the administrative hearing taking place.
- d. Issuing a Pre-Hearing Packet to the applicant and Office of Administrative Hearings at least six days prior to the hearing.

- e. Attending and participating in the administrative hearing.

Details on the implementation of these steps are outlined in [Section 5.5](#) of this chapter.

### **B. Notification of Referral for IPV and/or Recoupment of Funds**

Upon determination that a household is suspected of IPV, the LDSS is responsible for:

- a. Basic investigation of suspected IPV.
- b. Notifying the applicant of the repayment amount and/or alleged IPV.
- c. Providing the customer evidence of the suspected IPV and/or overpayment.
- d. Referring the case to the Office of Inspector General (OIG) for further investigation if basic investigation by the LDSS is not sufficient.
- e. Referring the case to the Office of Inspector General (OIG) for criminal prosecution in coordination with the local State's Attorney's Office.

### **C. Tracking of overpayment and IPV cases**

The processing LDSS is responsible for monitoring the disposition of open and completed investigations for IPV and overpayments, including cases that:

- a. Are under open investigation by OIG.
- b. Have been forwarded for criminal prosecution.
- c. Have been forwarded for recoupment of funds to the Maryland Central Collections Unit (MCCU).
- d. Have been forwarded for an administrative hearing to determine an IPV.
- e. Are resolved through the administrative hearing, pre-hearing conference and the criminal prosecution process.

- f. Are currently under penalty due to determination of an IPV by an administrative law judge.
- D. Imposition of Penalties for IPVs

Upon determination by an OAH judge that an IPV has occurred, the LDSS will update the E&E system which will impose the applicable penalty period.

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) is responsible for:

- A. Review and Investigation of Referrals from the Processing LDSS

Upon receipt of referral from the Processing LDSS, the OIG will conduct an investigation to gather facts of the case in question. The OIG may take up to 180 days to complete its investigation. Upon completion of its investigation, OIG will forward its findings to the Processing LDSS for follow-up.

### **5.4 Intentional Program Violation (IPV)**

- A. Suspected IPV

An IPV is defined as an intentionally false or misleading statement or misrepresentation, concealment, or withholding of facts concerning an application to the Department of Human Services.

The LDSS cannot deny the customer benefits unless there is definitive evidence that an IPV has occurred. If definitive evidence is documented that the client is ineligible for Maryland SUN Bucks, the application may be denied. However, if it is only under suspicion of ineligibility and requires further investigation, the application must be processed.

- B. Penalties for IPV

Penalties for an IPV may only be imposed under the following circumstances:

- a. The individual is found to have committed an IPV through an Administrative Disqualification Hearing.

## **Maryland SUN Bucks (S-EBT)**

---

- b. The individual is found guilty of violating a Federal or state law concerning the Maryland SUN Bucks application in a court of appropriate jurisdictions.
- c. The individual signs an Administrative Disqualification Hearing Waiver.
- d. The individual signs a Disqualification Consent Agreement.

Individuals disqualified for an intentional program violation are ineligible to participate in Maryland SUN Bucks for the following periods of time:

- a. One program year for the first violation.
- b. Two program years for the second violation.
- c. Permanently for the third violation.

A program year is defined as the Summer Operational Period, running from June 1 through August 31st. If a customer has already received a benefit in the current program year, the one-year penalty is imposed beginning July 1st and ending June 30th of the ensuing program year, even if the customer is required to repay their current benefit due to the IPV. If the customer has not received a benefit in the current program year, the one-year penalty is imposed in the current program year.

### **C. Notification of Suspected IPV**

The Maryland SUN Bucks Processing LDSS must notify the client in writing that an administrative hearing is being scheduled via the Advance Notice of Administrative Disqualification Hearing form and provide an Administrative Disqualification Hearing Pamphlet. On this form, the LDSS must cite the reason the agency believes an IPV has occurred, the evidence supporting the case, the customer's ability to waive their right to an administrative hearing and the penalty to be imposed if the customer is found to have intentionally violated program rules. Along with this form, the LDSS must also include an Administrative Disqualification Hearing Waiver. If, related to the IPV, the customer has an overpayment amount due as well, the LDSS must additionally send out the Overpayment Letter with the IPV notice,

informing the customer of their repayment requirement. These materials should be sent out in one mailing.

### **D. Administrative Disqualification Hearing Waiver**

A customer that does not wish to go through an administrative hearing may waive their right by signing the Administration Disqualification Hearing Waiver. It is important to inform the customer that the penalty is the same whether the individual chooses to have a hearing and is found guilty, or waives their hearing rights. It is additionally important to be clear that an administrative hearing is not the same as a court proceeding and cannot in and of itself result in criminal conviction.

The signing of the Administrative Disqualification Hearing Waiver terminates the administrative process to establish an intentional program violation and the ensuing imposition of penalties and/or overpayment, as applicable, are put into effect.

### **E. Scheduling of IPV Hearing**

If the customer does not provide a signed Administrative Disqualification Hearing Waiver within twenty (20) days of the notification, the LDSS must refer the individual to the Office of Administrative Hearing (OAH). At this time, the LDSS must transmit all evidence pertaining to the suspected IPV along with the transmittal to OAH. A copy of the package must be sent to the customer at the same time. Included with the evidence should be a one-page summary of the evidence supporting the suspected IPV.

If an IPV involves an overpayment and the customer has appealed the determination of an overpayment, the two separate hearing processes may be merged into a single hearing if the factual issues arise out of the same circumstances. It is at the discretion of the OAH to combine these two hearings, though the LDSS may request the OAH merge the hearings.

If an IPV involves an overpayment and the customer has not appealed the determination of an overpayment, the LDSS may continue to pursue recoupment of funds while the administrative disqualification hearing process ensues.



### F. Notification of IPV Hearing Outcome

Upon issuance of a ruling by an OAH administrative judge, the LDSS will notify the customer in writing of the outcome of the ruling using the Notice of Administrative Disqualification Hearing Decision.

### G. Tracking of IPV Penalties within E&E

Upon receipt of the Notice of Administrative Disqualification Hearing Decision and determination of a guilty verdict by the administrative law judge, the LDSS will log the decision into E&E to impose the penalty.

## **5.5 Administrative Hearings**

### A. Reasons for Appeal

An applicant may request a hearing when the LDSS:

- a. Denies an application for assistance;
- b. Fails to act with reasonable promptness on an application for or a request for adjustment of assistance;
- c. Suspends, reduces, or terminates assistance; or,
- d. Gives notice of its intention to take any of the aforementioned actions.

The LDSS shall notify customers of their fair hearing rights when taking action or providing notice of action relating to any appealable action. This information is included in any closure or denial notice sent to the household. LDSSs must post signage about fair hearing rights visibly in public areas of their office.

### B. Timeline to Appeal

A request for a hearing is effective if the agency receives the request within 90 days of the end of the summer operational period. In Maryland, the summer operational period ends on August 31, therefore requests for hearings must be received by the agency by November 30.

### C. Request for Appeal

## **Maryland SUN Bucks (S-EBT)**

---

A request for appeal is defined by the customer expressing a desire to appeal. Any employee of the agency may receive a request for appeal. If a customer verbally requests an appeal, the agency must request that they put the request in writing and offer assistance in completing the request. If the customer refuses to put the appeal request in writing, the agency must document the appeal request to the best of its ability. If it is unclear from the verbal request what action is being appealed, the agency may ask the customer to clarify the request. When necessary, the agency shall provide an interpreter to assist the customer in filing an appeal request and assure that the hearing procedure is explained in a manner understood by the customer.

### **D. Submitting the Request for Appeal**

Requests for appeals are documented using the Maryland SUN Bucks Fair Hearing Request Form or Fair Hearing Request Form. Households may submit their request at any LDSS office. The receiving LDSS must immediately scan or upload the request to Case Documents and email it to [SUNBucks.Appeals@maryland.gov](mailto:SUNBucks.Appeals@maryland.gov) within 24 hours of receipt. This email account is monitored by a representative from ONAP or delegated to a supervisor in a processing jurisdiction. That person researches the appealed case to determine which office completed the action being appealed and forwards the request to the designated appeals representative in the appropriate processing jurisdiction. Within five (5) business days of the filing date of appeal request, the processing LDSS is responsible for forwarding the appeal to the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH). OAH will respond with notice of a hearing date and will send that notice to the customer as well.

If a customer submits a request for an appeal, the processing LDSS may attempt to resolve the appeal via an informal, local review prior to forwarding the appeal to the Office of Administrative Hearings. This will allow LDSSs to resolve issues related to missing documentation through collection of the required information that will allow for expedited resolution of the dispute, rather than prolonging the provision of benefits until a formal appeal process is conducted. Should the local agency be unable to resolve the situation via an informal, local process, the agency is required to then forward the completed Fair Hearing request to OAH.

### **E. Pre-Hearing Conference**

Prior to the hearing, the processing LDSS shall reach out to the customer to schedule a pre-hearing conference to clarify all aspects of the issue that the customer is appealing and, if possible, seek resolution of the matter prior to conducting a formal OAH hearing. An agency supervisor is required to attend this conference and the case manager and/or the appeals representative may also attend the conference.

If the LDSS is unable to reach the customer by telephone, the agency should send the customer a letter stating that they must contact the local department within seven (7) days of the letter if he or she wishes to discuss the appeal. If the customer does not respond to the request for a conference, the hearing process goes forward.

When meeting with the applicant, the agency should:

- a. Ask the customer to explain why he or she disagrees with the agency decision.
- b. Be courteous and talk to the customer in language that is easily understood.
- c. Avoid the use of acronyms or business terminology.
- d. NOT discourage the customer from following through on the hearing request. The customer may, after discussing the matter, decide they no longer wish to pursue a hearing but they should in no way be coerced into that decision.

If the customer elects to withdraw the hearing request, they may do so by completing the Withdrawal of Request for Fair Hearing form. The original must be sent to OAH via mail or fax and copies added to the file and provided to the customer for their records.

Regardless of the outcome, a thorough detailing of the pre-hearing conference should be documented in Narration in E&E.

### **F. Hearing Packet**

Should the applicant elect to move forward with an administrative hearing, the processing LDSS is responsible for preparing a hearing packet that must be sent to the customer at least six (6) days in

## **Maryland SUN Bucks (S-EBT)**

---

advance of the hearing, or the customer has the right to have the hearing postponed. If the customer has an attorney or representative and has provided written consent that said person(s) are providing representation, the customer's packet should be mailed to that individual. The packet must include:

- a. A Hearing Summary with a brief overview of the issue and the evidence supporting the local agency determination
- b. The client's Maryland SUN Bucks Fair Hearing Request form
- c. The OAH Notice of Hearing
- d. Every page of the application, including supporting documentation
- e. Pertinent notices issued by the local agency to the customer (e.g. Eligibility Determination Notice, Request for Information, etc.)
- f. Pages of the Operations Manual, Action Transmittals, and any other policy directives or citations that support the local department decision
- g. Any other correspondence or documents that provide context and support for the decision made by the LDSS

### **G. Administrative Disqualification Hearings**

All suspected Intentional Program Violations (IPVs) MUST be forwarded to the OAH for an administrative disqualification hearing. When submitting the referral to OAH, the LDSS must include all supporting documentation evidencing the suspected IPV, with a copy also sent to the accused applicant. Examples of documents to include are:

- a. Intentional Program Violation Notice;
- b. Referral for Investigation form;
- c. Application and supporting documentation;
- d. Results from income verification systems such as The Work Number, BEACON, E&E, SVES, etc;

- e. Correspondences with the applicant and/or related stakeholders; and,
- f. Attestations of documents produced from the applicant or other stakeholders relevant to the matter.

Upon receipt of the request for an administrative disqualification hearing, the OAH will respond with notice of a hearing date to both the local agency and the applicant.

### **H. Administrative Hearing**

A LDSS representative must attend and present its case at the administrative hearing, bringing the entire hearing packet to the hearing. Administrative hearings will take place virtually unless the customer requests otherwise. At the hearing, the LDSS will present its case first. The agency should identify the hearing packet and request that it be entered into evidence. After presenting the facts of the case, the administrative law judge will ask the applicant or his/her representative to cross-examine the local agency if they wish. The local agency will have the right to testify about any matters raised during the cross-examination. When finished testifying, the LDSS may call witnesses or request that additional documents be entered into evidence.

The applicant will then have an opportunity to present their facts of the case. The LDSS will have the opportunity to cross-examine the applicant with additional questions if they so wish. At the end of both the applicant and LDSS's testimony, the administrative law judge will provide an opportunity to make a closing statement.

Upon conclusion of the hearing, the administrative law judge will send a written decision to the local department, the applicant, and the applicant's representative within sixty (60) days of their receipt of the request for hearing.

Upon receipt of the decision, the LDSS must scan a copy into E&E and narrate the decision details.

## **Maryland SUN Bucks (S-EBT)**

---

If the decision is in favor of the customer, the agency must update the case with the required changes and issue any applicable benefits within 10 days of receipt of the decision.

No additional action is required when the decision is in favor of the agency.

## **Chapter 6 Grant Funds and Fiscal Management of Grant Funds**

### Chapter Contents

- [Payment Schedule and Priority](#)
- [Collection Procedures for Overpayment or Other Reasons](#)

### **6.1 Payment Schedule and Priority**

Once approved or directly certified for Maryland SUN Bucks, benefits are paid to EBT cards via monthly payments in June, July, and August. Since there is no proration of Maryland SUN Bucks benefits. Any application that is approved during the summer operational period will be issued any benefit that has already been provided to other eligible households and will receive any future monthly installments at the same time as other already eligible households.

At the end of the summer operational period, data will be shared from MSDE and MHBE for the purpose of identifying children that may have met the requirements for direct certification at some point since the original data file was shared. All Maryland SUN Bucks benefits will be issued by October 31 each year.

### **6.2 Collection Procedures for Overpayment or Other Reasons**

The following procedures must be adhered to when attempting to collect for overpayment resulting from household fraud or agency error:

- A. Three successive letters should be used in the collection process.
  - a. The initial collection letter is sent to all households when overpayment has occurred and the supplier has returned not

enough money to cover the overpayment, or a direct grant payment to the household was made.

- b. The second collection letter is sent to the household 30 days after the date of the initial letter only if the household does not respond to the initial letter within the 15 days specified or does not follow the first letter's request within 15 days of the given date.
- c. The third collection letter is sent to the household if no response to letters 1 and 2 have been received by the LDSS within 30 days or the household did not make full restitution for the overpayment amount.

B. Delinquent cases will be referred to the Central Collections Unit (CCU) within the Department of Budget and Fiscal Planning.

## **Chapter 7: Program Integrity**

### Chapter Contents

- [Program Integrity Policy and Procedure](#)
- [Identifying Applicant Fraud](#)
- [Responding to Suspected Fraud](#)
- [LAA Employee Irregularities on Fraud](#)

### **7.1 Program Integrity Policy and Procedure**

This outlines the DHS, FIA, and ONAP procedures for handling program integrity policy of the program, i.e., fraud.

Fraud may take the form of potential fraud or suspected fraud. Each processing LDSS must implement procedures that minimize potential fraud or misrepresentation by applicants and employees.

The last section of the Maryland SUN Bucks application, Sworn Statements & Signature, is required for a complete application. The consent by applicant signature provides authorization for the LDSS to screen, ask, and obtain information from various sources in order to determine eligibility for Maryland SUN Bucks. Therefore, investigative procedures do not result in a violation of privacy or personal dignity, and/or constitute harassment, or violate constitutional rights.

### **7.2 Identifying Applicant Fraud**

Applicant suspected program fraud could include, but is not limited to the following:

- A. Willfully making a false statement or representation regarding household and/or financial condition;
- B. Willfully failing to disclose all information regarding household and/or financial condition;
- C. Falsifying identification, income statement, or other fraudulent device; or,
- D. Ordering, coercing, persuading, encouraging, or otherwise inducing a person under the age of 18 to commit an intentional Maryland SUN Bucks program violation.

### **7.3 Responding to Suspected Fraud**

- A. The LDSS must be diligent in reviewing all information presented in the application for accuracy and completeness. If information on the application is questionable, the LDSS must request additional information from the applicant with a specific response time (10 days). Narration must be entered into the case in E&E that reflects an explanation of what is questionable and the rationale for requesting documentation.
- B. The LDSS must review and analyze the evidence provided and, where applicable, make contact with sources to verify and/or confirm information presented by the applicant as proof to ensure that all facts have been cross-referenced for accuracy and completeness. All contacts made aside of applicant's information, must be documented with dates, names, and sources used to verify information must be included in the summary.
- C. For complete procedures related to suspected fraud, LDSS should refer to [Chapter 6 Fraud, Repayment, and Administrative Hearing Procedures](#).



### **7.3.1 Uncooperative Applicant Fraud**

If a customer does not cooperate with procedures as described above, the LDSS must evaluate the case record and document evidence to ensure that the error was not caused by case manager, incomplete information, and/or employee assisted fraud.

### **7.4 LDSS Employee Irregularities or Fraud**

LDSS managers must be diligent in monitoring irregularities among LDSS employees regarding the administration of Maryland SUN Bucks. Examples of irregularities include, but not limited to the following:

- A. Misrepresentation of information on an application resulting in a payment to the employee or to a third party;
- B. An unauthorized change in a benefit amount that results in personal gain for the employee; or discrepancies in payments that result in personal gain for the employee;
- C. Untrue, incorrect, and incomplete representation by the employee for the purpose of obtaining benefits that otherwise would not have been obtained without the misrepresentation.

LDSS staff must follow the Department's protocol for employee fraud.

To prevent the instances of employee irregularities or fraud, the following procedures must be followed when a person employed in a processing jurisdiction wishes to apply for Maryland SUN Bucks:

- A. The employee must complete an application in the jurisdiction in which they live.
- B. If the employee is applying in his/her own jurisdiction, the application must be submitted to the lead worker or supervisor.
- C. The processing LDSS lead worker or supervisor shall data enter and process the application for eligibility.

In the event that the applicant is the lead worker, then the application must be submitted to the local Supervisor, who can determine the staff person most appropriate to handle the application.

Under no circumstances should an employee data enter or process his/her own application, as this shall be grounds for termination.

## **Chapter 8: Application Management**

### **Chapter Contents**

- [General Policy – Application Management, Record Keeping, Reporting](#)
- [Policy – Application Management Requirements](#)
- [Application Management – Background](#)
- [Productivity \(Processing\) Standards for Applications](#)
- [Review of Productivity](#)

### **8.1 General Policy - Application Management, Record Keeping, Reporting**

LDSSs are required to manage the processing of applications so that all applications received are treated fairly, timely and within productivity standards established through this operations manual. This chapter outlines record-keeping requirements and procedures for applications and reporting ensuring compliance with Federal and State laws and regulations.

### **8.2 Policy - Application Management Requirements**

Application management begins with the manner of handling applications as they are received and by their assignment to workers in the Maryland SUN Bucks unit. Quick data-entry and immediate worker assignment represent two keystone elements of a Maryland SUN Bucks supervisor's responsibility to manage the processing of applications in conformance with the productivity standards noted in this chapter. LDSSs have varying management needs depending upon the volume of mail-in applications and number of staff.

### **8.3 Application Management - Background**

A. Applications for Maryland SUN Bucks can be taken at any time.

- B. Some of the questions to ask in preparation for the receipt of mail-in applications include:
- a. What is the process of receiving and opening mailed applications?
  - b. How are large volumes of applications filed to enable quick searching and the avoidance of loss?
  - c. What is the order of processing?
  - d. Are requests for additional information issued in a timely manner?

The supervisor must monitor everything from data-entry to printing and mailing of benefit notices.

### **8.4 Productivity (Processing) Standards for Applications**

In order to ensure that applications are processed within program expectations, the following standards and practices are to be implemented by each LDSS.

#### **A. Data Entry**

Applications are to be entered into the Consumer Portal within five (5) calendar days of receipt of the application. This recognizes the fact that application transactions can be more easily tracked and monitored once in the database.

#### **B. Pending Applications**

It is the policy of DHS that applications requiring additional information before the application can be completed must request that information from the applicant prior to approving the application. Requests for additional information must be sent within five (5) days of receipt of the application.

#### **C. Certification**

Certification for eligibility is to be completed within fifteen (15) working days from the time the application is submitted.

### **D. Denial Action**

A denial letter must be sent to each denied applicant household.

## **8.5 Review of Productivity**

DHS reviews statistical data from the workload report and other reports to assess local production activities and to assess where resources need to be assigned to achieve efficient customer service and timely service standards.

The standards are monitored each week through reports and during scheduled monitoring visits by ONAP. When variances to the policy above are identified or local productivity in comparison to statewide averages for applications to be entered, pending applications, and certification date are substantial, the LDSS will be contacted directly to assess the problem. A follow-up letter requesting comment and/or corrective action plans may be necessary. Responses from the LDSS will be reviewed and filed.

When an LDSS identifies a productivity problem, the LDSS is encouraged to ask ONAP for technical assistance.

### Exhibit A

#### Agency Goals and Objectives

##### Application Intake

- Data entry will be accurate and complete based on the documentation collected from the Applicant.

##### Benefit Access

- Agencies will strive to ensure customers receive the benefits they are eligible for in a timely manner.

##### Timeliness

- Applications will be reviewed for completeness within 10 days of receiving the application.

##### Application Documentation Scanning

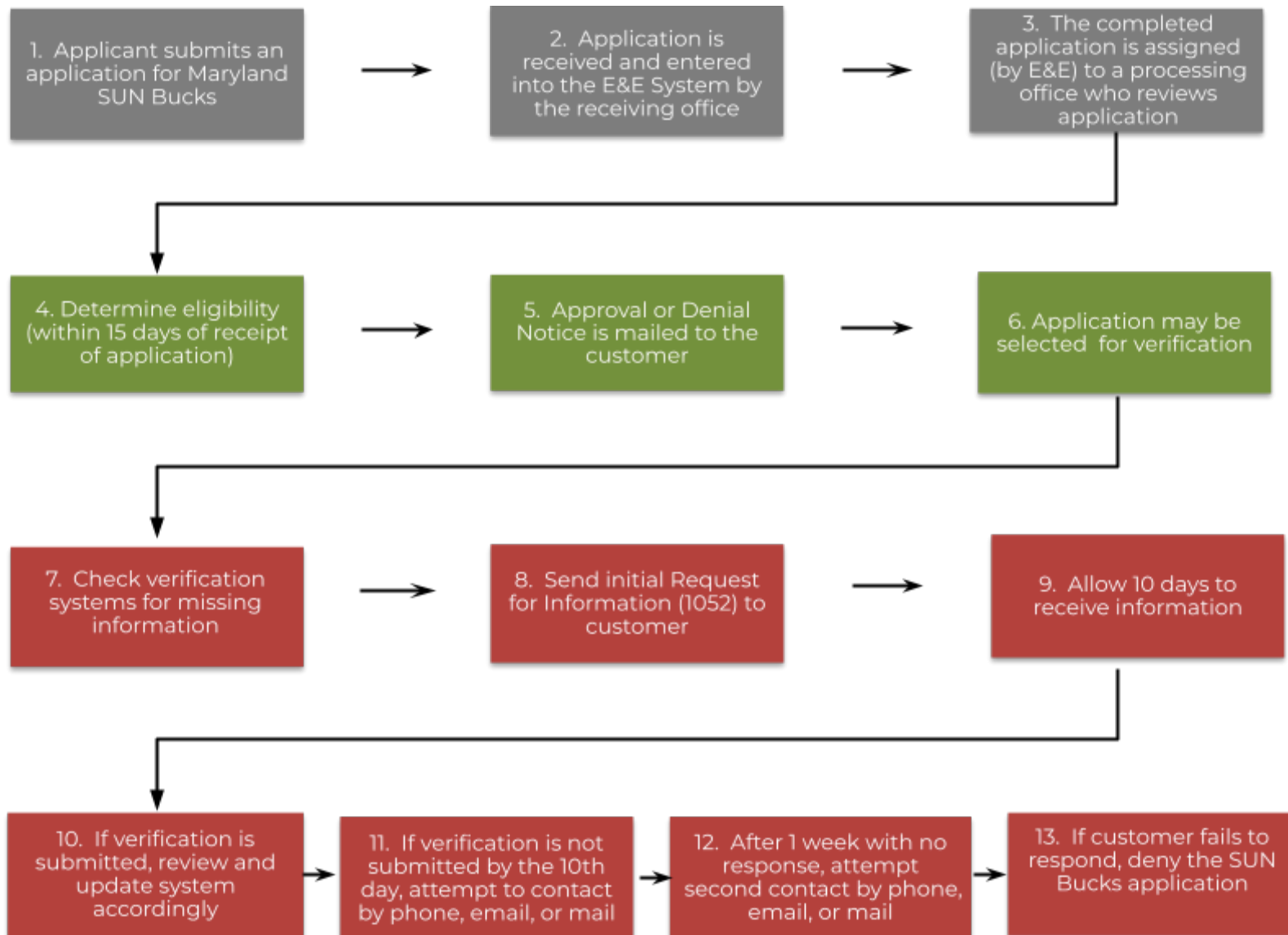
- All applications and supporting documentation will be scanned into Case Documents upon receipt.

##### Eligibility Determination (Timeliness)

- Applicants will be certified or denied no later than 15 days after receipt of the application

## Maryland SUN Bucks (S-EBT)

### Exhibit B: Maryland SUN Bucks (S-EBT) Application Workflow



### Exhibit C: Tips for Timely and Complete Application Processing

The following are best practices to process applications most effectively.

#### **Prioritize Applications**

- Process applications in the order in which they are received
- Determine if there is Categorical Eligibility and whether the child(ren) on the application have already been directly certified

#### **Designate Staff for Specific Tasks**

- Scan applications and all documentation into E&E
- Data Entry, including entering paper applications into the Consumer Portal
- Review application for missing or questionable information
- Check Consumer Portal, mail, email, and fax -- match application with documentation received
- Complete data entry and processing for certification
- Certify application for benefits
- Customer Service for those that have questions or request assistance

#### **Utilize Tools in the Eligibility and Enrollment data system (E&E)**

- Utilize reports built into the E&E system to manage applications
- Review and update Narration
  - Only include information pertinent to the application or benefit payment
  - Do not use abbreviations, unless they are commonly used in FIA
  - Do not include personal perceptions; only state the facts
  - Do not include HIPAA information

### Tips for Certifying Applications

#### **Overview (For full Certification policy refer to 4.18)**

- Certification is a critical check on the accuracy of the information provided by the customer, the data entry work, the eligibility work, and benefit determination.
- Take your time and be thoughtful about certifying each and every application.

#### **Data Entry Checks**

- Verify all household members on the application are in the system and vice versa. Discrepancies must be explained and documented.

## Maryland SUN Bucks (S-EBT)

---

### Reports Guide

Report	Description	Menu	Frequency
<b>Application List</b>	A comprehensive list of all applications received YTD. The list may be filtered by program and application status.	Management	As often as needed
<b>Assigned Worker Detail</b>	Allows applications to be tracked by a specific worker. This report only works when a worker is assigned to each application. Local agencies may choose to run this report by the status of the application to see which cases are in pending status under a particular worker.	Management	As often as needed
<b>Denied Applications Summary</b>	Shows the number of applications that have been denied by the denial reason.	Management	As often as needed
<b>E&amp;E SUN Bucks (Summer EBT) Report</b>	Provides detailed information on all Summer EBT (SUN Bucks) cases, applications, issuance appeals, and recovery and data points.	Management	Daily/ Weekly



## Maryland SUN Bucks (S-EBT)

### Exhibit D: Income Overview

The following table provides an overview of the types of income counted and those that are excluded when determining eligibility for Maryland SUN Bucks. It is important to note that verifications are not required for Maryland SUN Bucks applications. Requiring income documentation at the time of application is prohibited unless the information is questionable. See [Chapter 4.2 Income Eligibility](#) and [Chapter 4.3 Income Documentation](#) for complete policy guidance.

<b>Countable Income/Resources</b>
Gross wages, tips and commissions
Self-employment income
Severance pay
Monetary gifts and loans (excluding student loans).
Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
Pensions, veteran's compensations; workmen's compensations
Unemployment benefits
Interest or dividends received from the redemption of bonds
Disbursements from annuities, individual retirement accounts (IRAs) or other retirement accounts
Dividends
Estate or trust income
Rental income
Royalties
Inheritance and lottery
Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) and Temporary Disability Assistance Program (TDAP) grants
Child or Alimony/spousal support
Strike funds where there is no employee contribution
Monetary settlements
Armed Forces Dependents' Allowance and Support Payment
Criminal Injuries Compensation Board Payments
Mine Workers Benefits and Railroad Retirement Benefits
Stipends for fellowships (educational or research) for living expenses excluding that portion that covers tuition and required fees

## Maryland SUN Bucks (S-EBT)

---

### Exhibit E: Program Snapshot

<b>Frequency of Grant</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Monthly grant of \$40 per eligible child from June through August, for a total of \$120 per eligible child</li></ul>
<b>Grant Requirement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Applicant households must meet income guidelines of NSLP</li><li>• Applicant must be enrolled in a school that participates in NSLP</li></ul>
<b>How Benefit is Applied</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Benefits for children that received SNAP or TCA benefits from an existing Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card at any point since July of the previous year will be issued on the existing EBT card</li><li>• Children who have never received benefits on existing EBT cards will receive a white “Maryland SUN Bucks” card in their name</li></ul>
<b>Funding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Maryland SUN Bucks grants are federally funded by the United States Department of Agriculture</li><li>• Maryland SUN Bucks administrative costs are shared between the United States Department of Agriculture and the Maryland Department of Human Services</li></ul>
<b>How Benefits are Determined</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Children determined eligible for Maryland SUN Bucks will receive the full \$120 for June-August, regardless of income level or application date</li></ul>

## Maryland SUN Bucks (S-EBT)

### Exhibit F: Abbreviations

BEACON	Maryland Unemployment System
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
COMAR	Code of Maryland Annotated Regulations
DHS	Department of Human Services
E & E	Eligibility & Enrollment System
EBT	Electronic Benefit Transfer
EPPIC	Electronic Payment Processing and Information Control
FARMS	Free and Reduced-Price Meals (also known as NSLP)
FIA	Family Investment Administration
FNS	Food and Nutrition Services
FY	Fiscal Year
LEA	Local Education Agency
MHBE	Maryland Health Benefits Exchange
MMIS	Maryland Medicaid Information System
MSDE	Maryland State Department of Education
NSLP	National School Lunch Program
OIG	Office of the Inspector General
MA	Medical Assistance/Medicaid
MDH	Maryland Department of Health
myMDTHINK	Online application/portal for benefits
S-EBT	Benefit code for Maryland SUN Bucks in E&E
SNAP	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
SOIQi	State Online Query
SOP	Summer Operational Period
SVES	State Verification Exchange System
TCA	Temporary Cash Assistance
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture