

Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer for Children (SEBTC) Program Summary

During the summer, when school is not in session, ensuring children have the nourishment they need can be difficult, especially for rural communities. Rural areas face unique challenges that are not experienced by more developed areas. Multiple barriers constitute a problem to rural program implementation and participation. For example, the 2015 National Commission on Hunger report states that, often rural communities are ineligible to participate in summer food programs due to eligibility requirements, lack of reliable transportation, or inadequate childcare. These areas rely on food assistance programs to help them. Unfortunately, administering assistance to these areas is not always viable. Therefore, in efforts to expand access to food in these communities, the USDA approved an additional approach to providing meals to children in the summer months. The Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer for Children (SEBTC) demonstration was started in 2011 in efforts to reduce summer food insecurity for children. Unlike other summer programs, SEBTC tackles food insecurity by offering an efficient approach to feeding children in the summer. USDA project demonstrations show that with correct implementation EBT integration can reduce hunger among families with children by more than 30%.

It can be put into motion following a SNAP or WIC model approach. In Nevada, it is implemented using the WIC food package model. It provides a \$30 food package to all eligible children. The package includes the same foods authorized under the WIC program and aims to supplement children's diets with key nutrients. The program targets those distinct challenges faced by rural communities.

SEBTC is designed to reach a wide range of communities on a large scale. Families do not have to physically apply to receive food benefits. To qualify, they must have children registered in K-12th grade and be enrolled in free or reduced-price lunch (FRL). Households who qualify and consent to participating in the program receive materials at their residence. They are delivered to each eligible household in two separate mailings. The first mailing will contain updates about the program and an approximate time when the household will receive their card. The second mailing will enclose the SEBTC card, a letter announcing which students qualified for the program, instructions for setting their PIN, FAQ, and a food brochure. The brochure will specify all authorized Nevada WIC vendors and approved foods for redemption. If needed, they can immediately reach staff via phone, text message, or e-mail. WIC contact information and website information is printed in both mailings should participants have any questions, concerns, or wish to opt out.

To fully get involved in the program, beneficiaries must be better informed, and printed material plays a central role. It guarantees program efficacy by providing them with new updates as well as instructions on how to use their benefits. Overall, program education materials present suitable information, fundamental for self-management. Visits to WIC clinics are not necessary to participate in the program, resulting, in a more accessible approach for rural communities.

In addition, SEBTC food benefits are available to all qualified households on June 1, 2018 and expire on August 31, 2018. Nevada will be requesting benefits be rolled-over at the end of each month instead of expiring. Adjusting the system so benefits do not expire will greatly benefit participation. Families can shop at their convenience without having to make multiple trips to remote vendors or feeding sites.

Vendors who can accept Electronic Benefit Transfers (EBT) is paramount to reducing food insecurity. For this reason, Nevada WIC strives to identify and certify as many possible local grocery retailers before summer begins. All vendors are contacted and provided with informative newsletters approximately one month before benefits are issued, they receive contact information and training resources. Vendors benefit from development training and other technical assistance strategies about how to adjust inventory levels, the project goals, and objectives. Educating vendors is essential to achieve proper service throughout the area. This kind of engagement efforts guarantees a seamless project transition.

For the SEBTC demonstration project, the program applies the current Nevada WIC application database and the existing EBT system to manage and deliver benefits. This guarantees SEBTC interoperability with the current WIC system and the same external point-of-sale equipment at WIC stores. Benefits are maintained at the host site and pulled down at time of purchase via the magnetic stripe on the back of the card. They are loaded automatically at the beginning of the program and are discreet like a debit card. Therefore, SEBTC transactions can be managed remotely. This is a major advantage of the SEBTC project and helps sustain vendors in rural counties.

In 2012 Nevada served a total of three counties. 3,500 households participated and were provided with benefits for 5,306 children. In 2017, Nevada expanded to every eligible county, offering benefits to 22,832 children. A total of 13,972 children participated that summer.

Although rural areas located in urban Nevada counties are more likely to have access to a wider range of summer food programs, in 2017 the program acquired the opportunity to expand their services in these rural communities and CEP designated schools. Because there are many resources for the residents of these communities, Nevada WIC is unable to expand any further.

According to the National Commission on Hunger, despite continual efforts to improve access to summer feeding programs participation can be very low. Nevertheless, Nevada SEBTC has had success in benefit utilization within rural communities and underserved rural populations located in urban counties by improving access to food in various ways. From 2012-2017 data analysis showed that most households that were issued SEBTC benefits used them, and the households that used SEBTC benefits at least once used, for the most part, all the benefits issued to them. The program is feasible and the impacts on food security and children's nutrition are positive and substantial.

SEBTC Time Frame/ Participation

- ◆ **2012-** Nevada WIC began its participation in the Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer (SEBTC) Demonstration Project. Three counties, Washoe, Douglas, and Lyon, were selected to be project sites.

- ◆ **Redemption:**

Participating: 5306 children **Households:** 3500

- ◆ **2013** -The program continued with no change in participation criteria or locations served.

- ◆ **Redemption:**

Participating: 4627 children **Households:** 2820

- ◆ **2014-** Unlike previous years Nevada WIC did **NOT** receive funding for the program.

- ◆ **2015-** Nevada WIC was granted the opportunity to increase the number of designated rural counties participating in SEBTC to include: Elko, Humboldt, Lander, Lincoln, Nye, Pershing, and White Pine.

- ◆ **Redemption:**

Participating: 6462 children **Households:** 6499

- ◆ **2016-** Nevada WIC secured the opportunity to serve the remaining eligible rural counties in Nevada: Esmeralda, Churchill and Mineral

- ◆ **Redemption:**

Participating: 13368 children **Households:** 7412

- ◆ **2017-** Nevada continued to serve all rural counties in the state and acquired the opportunity to expand to underserved rural communities and CEP designated schools located within urban counties (Carson, Clark, and Washoe). With this expansion, SEBTC had a presence in all eligible counties within Nevada

- ◆ **Redemption:**

Participating: 13982 children **Households:** 7337

- ◆ **2018-** Due to this success and the prioritization of rural counties and underserved populations, Nevada is not proposing to expand SEBTC in 2018. Key priority is to increase redemption in participating counties.

Year	Number of Children Participating 2012-2017	Number of households that participated
2012	5,306	3500
2013	4,627	2820
2014	No funding	0
2015	6,462	6499
2016	13,368	7412
2017	13,982	7337

