

Advertisement

NEWS / REGION/STATE

Summer food program for youths begins, with more than 2,500 sites

Listen • 3:25 Automated narration. [Learn more](#)



State Education Commissioner Betty Rosa said the summer food program "helps students return to school in the fall ready to learn, grow, and thrive." Credit: Hans Pennink

By Michael Gormley

michael.gormley@newsday.com [X@GormleyAlbany](https://twitter.com/GormleyAlbany)

July 8, 2025 5:00 am

[SHARE](#)

ALBANY — The state's summer food service program begins this month to provide free meals to 400,000 youths from low-income homes, including 71,500 on Long Island, but officials are concerned that federal funding could shrink as the need rises.

On Monday the state Education Department announced that the summer program will provide nearly 2,500 sites for youths 18 years old and younger to eat or pick up free meals. The sites are at parks, pools, libraries, camps, schools and community centers.

More than 20 million meals are expected to be provided under the federally funded program, which is administered by the [state Education Department](#).

Advertisement

President Donald Trump and the Republican-led Congress have reduced funding for some food programs for the poor and working poor, but Diane Pratt-Heavner of the national School Nutrition Association said in an interview that the cuts don't appear to have an immediate or direct impact on this year's summer meals.

The federal budget cuts several programs that could impact the summer meals indirectly, she said, and the group is still analyzing the new budget.

Sign up for the Breaking News newsletter

Get the latest breaking news as it happens.

 SIGN UP

By clicking Sign up, you agree to our [privacy policy](#).

A state spokesman didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

The Summer Food Service Program extends the free meals programs for students during the school year.

"Our responsibility to New York state's students does not end when the final school bell rings," state Education Commissioner Betty A. Rosa said in a statement. "Providing free, nutritious meals during the summer fuels bodies and minds, and helps students return to school in the fall ready to learn, grow, and thrive."

The program begins as more New York families are experiencing "food insecurity," or a concern over where the next meals will come from, according to the Alliance for a Hunger Free New York.

"We are past of point of hunger being a short-term emergency," said Natasha Pernicka of The Alliance for a Hunger Free New York. "Not having enough nutritious food to eat is crippling people through chronic health conditions."

Advertisement

A lack of food also hurts school performance and forces families to choose between paying for food or medication and household bills, Pernicka said in a written statement.

On Long Island, nearly 71,500 children face anxiety and uncertainty over hunger, according to Long Island Cares, which provides summer meals. The distribution sites can be searched by ZIP code through the [U.S. Department of Agriculture website](#).

"When school ends, so do the free or reduced-price school meals many families rely on," Long Island Cares stated. "Without them, children face a long summer without consistent nutrition — and their parents, many working full-time jobs, are left to stretch already-thin budgets."

The Summer EBT Program, part of the federal Electronic Benefits Transfer card system, provides \$120 worth of food benefits to eligible school children when school is out of session. Most eligible youths will receive Summer EBT benefits automatically, but some families may need to reapply.

Applications are provided on the website of the state's [Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance](https://otda.ny.gov/programs/summer-ebt). <https://otda.ny.gov/programs/summer-ebt>. There will be no overt identification, such as a check on immigration status, for a child to receive a meal, according to the state Education Department.

Advertisement



By **Michael Gormley**

michael.gormley@newsday.com [X@GormleyAlbany](https://twitter.com/GormleyAlbany)

Michael Gormley has worked for Newsday since 2013, covering state government, politics and issues. He has covered Albany since 2001.

Newsday TV SHORTS



Toll evasion still high despite 'ghost vehicle' crackdown

02:15



She was LI's first female world boxing champion

02:04



Lers navigate holiday weekend traffic

01:50