



NUTS & BOLTS

OF SCHOOL NUTRITION PROGRAMS



Meal Benefit Application Process


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MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF
ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY
EDUCATION

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- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
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Overview



- General Requirements/Program Authority
- Policy Statements
- Public Outreach Requirements
- The Application Packet
- Determining Eligibility
- Processing Applications

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School Meals Programs



General Requirements

- All schools participating in NSLP or SBP must make free and reduced price meals available to eligible children
- All schools participating in the free milk option of the SMP must make free milk available to eligible children.

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Program Authority



7 CFR Part...

- 210 National School Lunch Program (NSLP)
- 215 Special Milk Program (SMP)
- 220 School Breakfast Program (SBP)
- 225 Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)
- 226 Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)
- 245 Determining Eligibility for Free and Reduced Price Meals and Free Milk in Schools

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Policy Statements



- Permanent Policy for Determining Eligibility for Free & Reduced Price Meals - an assurance that all meals served to children will be done in a manner that ensures all children have equal access to the Child Nutrition Programs
- Free & Reduced Price Policy - annual update

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Permanent Policy



What is the SFA agreeing to?

- ★ **Serve meals FREE or REDUCED to those qualifying**
- ★ No overt identification
- ★ No segregation, discrimination
- ★ Access DC list prior to start of school year
- ★ **Follow eligibility procedures**
- ★ **Provide hearing procedures**
- ★ Comply with verification requirements
- ★ Collection procedures/point of service

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Free & Reduced Price Policy



Annual Update

- Determining, Confirming & Hearing Officials
 - Hearing official **must not** be associated with the approval or verification processes; must be in an administrative position & not work directly in School Nutrition Services
- Effective date of eligibility determinations
- CEP, Universal Breakfast, Provision 2

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Effective Date of Eligibility



Submission or Approval Date

- The LEA may choose to establish the date of application submission, rather than date of approval (SP 11-2014).
 - Date stamp, repayment of meals or debt forgiveness
- Claims are submitted normally and follow State agency procedures for adjusting claims after initial submission.
 - SFAs can not make "Meal Eligibility Change" in the point of sale and alter all previous meal counts.



Public Outreach Requirements



- Public Media Release
 - The LEA must make available the Public Media Release, annually, describing how families may apply for benefits and providing the current IEGs
- Information Letters to Households
 - Must be distributed to households of children attending the school
 - Postal service, e-mail to parent/guardian, or information packet provided to students
- Information Letters for Late Enrollments (pg. 13)
 - This is a common review finding.



Information Letters



- Frequently Asked Questions
 - Reduced income guidelines (packet only)
 - Fill in name of school
 - Meal prices
 - Contact information

- Instructions on How to Apply
 - Include contact, mailing addresses & where to direct questions

- Application for Free and Reduced Price School Meals

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Optional Documents



Application-related materials

- Sharing Information with Medicaid/CHIP

- Sharing Information with Other Programs
 - These are programs specific to your school and programs that are available to ALL students.
 - Athletics, PSATs/SATs, School Transportation
 - The local Kiwanis Club that wants to give Thanksgiving turkeys to F/R children is not a school program. Children would be overtly identified.

- USDA's "I SPEAK Statements"

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Translated Applications



<http://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/translated-applications>

- [Chinese \(Simplified\)](#)
- [Chinese \(Traditional\)](#)
- [Farsi](#)
- [French](#)
- [French Creole](#)
- [Gujarati](#)
- [Haitian Creole](#)
- [Hindi](#)
- [Hmong](#)
- [Ilokano](#)
- [Italian](#)
- [Jamaican Creole](#)
- [Japanese](#)
- [Korean](#)
- [Portuguese](#)
- [Russian](#)
- [Samoan](#)
- [Spanish](#)
- [Tagalog](#)

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Limited English Proficient



What is your responsibility? (SP 37-2016)

- Required to take reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access to school meals for eligible students from LEP households
- Be familiar with how your district tracks LEP- what systems are in place in district
- Simply offering the most common non-English language is not sufficient.

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Household Application



- SFAs must provide household applications to families applying for free and reduced price meals or free milk benefits, unless the household has been directly certified.
- SFAs are not required to provide applications to parents when children are directly certified.
- If the SFA only provides applications to students NOT directly certified, then the SFA must assure these children are not overtly identified through the method used to distribute applications.

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Household Application- Distribution

- LEAs may post the application on school/district websites, provide information in newsletters sent to families, and use other existing notification methods (pg. 8).
 - Print
 - Telephone, Text Message
 - Email
 - Social Media

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Household Application- Distribution

- Whatever method(s) the LEAs choose, the LEA must ensure the method(s) is effective to reach all enrolled student parent/guardian (pg. 9).
 - Limited English Proficiency
 - Disability



Household Application



- Paper
- Electronic
- Scanned
- Computer/Web-based



Household Application



- Use the Massachusetts Application whenever possible.
- LEAs that choose to use a web-based application must submit the Online Application Questionnaire. Please contact your consultant.
 - Any web-based application identified as not meeting the USDA requirements may result in fiscal disallowance.
 - ESE memo was sent June 25, 2019.
- Outdated applications may result in fiscal disallowance.



Application Packet



Download packets/documents
ESE Document & Reference Library

Document and Reference Library

Sort By

NSLP ANNUAL RENEWAL DOCUMENTS

	SY 2020 Free and Reduced Price Policy Statement	Application Packet	06/20/2019
	SY 2020 Local Wellness Addendum	Application Packet	06/17/2019
	SY 2020 Performance Based Funding Annual Attestation	Application Packet	06/17/2019
	SY 2020 Food Storage Information Form	Application Packet	06/21/2019
	SY 2020 After School Snack Addendum	Application Packet	06/18/2019








Application Packet

Document and Reference Library

Sort By

▶ NSLP ANNUAL RENEWAL DOCUMENTS

▼ NSLP MEAL BENEFIT ISSUANCE RESOURCES

	SY 2020 Meal Benefit Application Packet	Application	07/02/2019
	SY 2020 Household Application for NSLP	Application	06/20/2019
	SY 2020 Household Application Instructions	Application	06/20/2019
	SY 2020 Income Eligibility Guidelines	Application	06/20/2019
	SY 2020 Online Application Questionnaire	Application	06/20/2019

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SY 19-20 Massachusetts Application for Free and Reduced Price School Meals



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- If you have received a **Notice of Direct Certification – FREE** from the school district for free meals, **do not** complete this application.
- If you have received a **Notice of Direct Certification – REDUCED PRICE** from the school district for reduced price meals, this application may be submitted.
- **DO** let the school know if any children in the household are not listed on the **Notice of Direct Certification – FREE** letter you received.

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The Application



Households apply based on...

- Income & Household Size
- Assistance Program
 - SNAP, TANF
- Other Source Categorical Eligibility
 - Foster, Homeless, Migrant, Runaway

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Determining Eligibility



Carryover of Previous Year's Eligibility

- LEAs must carryover all student's approved eligibility from the last operating day of the previous school year.
- Approval may be used for up to 30 operating days from the first day of school.
 - **A student's prior year's eligibility remains in effect until a new eligibility determination is made or, if no determination is made, for up to 30 operating days**
- Applies to all categorical eligibility determinations and income based applications.
- Schools must process applications as they are received and promptly notify households of their eligibility status.

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Determining Eligibility



Determining Household Composition

- Application approvals are based on an economic unit.
- Economic unit is defined as a group of related or unrelated individuals who are living as one economic unit, and whose members share housing, significant income, and expenses.



Household Composition



Special Conditions

- An adopted child for whom a household has accepted legal responsibility is considered to be a member of that household.
- A child who is temporarily away at school (college, boarding school) is a household member.
- A child living with a relative (with no welfare agency or court legally responsible) is a household member.



Special Conditions



- Joint custody- if both parents apply for benefits, the greater benefit is issued.
- Emancipated Child- living alone or as a separate economic unit is a household of one.
 - There would be court documents indicating the child is emancipated.
- Foreign exchange student- is considered a member of the household in which the student resides (host).

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Determining Household Income



Reporting Current Income

- Current income is defined as gross income received by the household for the current month, or the amount projected for the month the application is filled out, or for the month prior to application.
- Gross income must be reported.
 - Self-employment can report net income.
 - If an applicant supplies income documentation (paystubs, etc) you are obligated to review the documents.
- Seasonal workers may project an annual rate.

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Determining Household Income



Reportable Income

- Wages, salaries, tips, commissions;
- Foster child's income from part-time job(s);
- Child/student income (regardless of age/grade) who is full-time or regular part-time employee;
- Children's income from SSI;
- Strike benefits, unemployment & worker's compensation;
- Military basic pay, cash bonuses & allowances for off-base housing, food, clothing (pg.28);

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Determining Household Income



Reportable Income

- Alimony payments;
- Child support payments;
- Veteran's benefits;
- Pensions and Retirement Social Security;
- Income from trusts or estates; Investment income;
- Net rental income;
- Cash withdrawn from savings;
- Garnished wages- the total gross is to be reported regardless of the amount garnished or used to pay creditors.

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Determining Household Income



Income Exclusions (pg.30)

- Cash income/value from SNAP and some Federal education benefits.
- Payments received from foster care agency or court for the care of foster children.
- Student financial assistance for cost to attend educational institution (grants, scholarships).
- Loans (i.e. bank loans)
- Infrequent earnings received on an irregular basis (baby-sitting, yard work).

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Processing Applications



Determining Complete Applications

- Only complete applications can be processed. Any application missing required information, contains inconsistent information, or is unclear is considered an incomplete application and may not be processed.
- Reasonable efforts should be made to contact the household to obtain or clarify information.
 - If information is taken over the phone, document the information with the date and initial (SSN, income frequency).

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Complete Applications



Income-based Applications

- Names of ALL household members
- Amount, source & frequency of current income for ALL household members
- Signature of an adult household member
- Last four digit of Social Security Number
 - Indication of no SSN

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Indication of 'No Income'



- Applications must still request that applicants write a zero when there is no income to report but will no longer require a separate indication of no income.
- Applications with blank income fields are to be processed by the school district as complete, rather than incomplete as in prior practice.
- If local officials have information that the household has intentionally misrepresented its income, they must verify any such application for cause (SP 34-2016).

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Complete Applications



Other Source Categorical

(Foster, Homeless, Migrant, Runaway)

- Names of all children for whom the application is made.
- Indication of child’s categorical eligibility status.
- Signature of adult completing the application.



Step 1- Children in the household



STEP 1 List ALL Household Members who are infants, children, and students up to and including grade 12 (if more spaces are required for additional names, attach another sheet of paper)

Definition of Household Member: "Anyone who is living with you and shares income and expenses, even if not related." Children in Foster care and children who meet the definition of Homeless, Migrant or Runaway are eligible for free meals. Read How to Apply for Free and Reduced Price School Meals for more information.

Child's First Name	MI	Child's Last Name	School Name	Grade	Student? Circle Yes or No	Foster	Homeless	Migrant	Runaway
					Y N	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
					Y N	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
					Y N	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
					Y N	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
					Y N	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
					Y N	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- ★ List the names of ALL children in household: infant-grade 12.



Foster 7 CFR 245.2



- A child who is formally placed by a court or a State child welfare agency (DCF).
 - The LEA is required to have current school year documentation to support the foster/court order.

- Whether placed by the State child welfare agency or court, in order for a child to be considered categorically eligible for free meals, the State must retain legal custody of the child.
 - In some cases, foster children are placed with relatives (the State has formally placed these children).
 - This definition does not apply to informal arrangements or permanent guardianship placements that may exist outside of State or court-based systems.

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Foster & Non-foster



- A foster family may include their foster child(ren) on the household application for their non-foster children.

- This will streamline the application process and may help the foster family's non-foster children qualify for free or reduced price meals based on household size and income.
 - Under this method, it is possible that foster children are FREE and non-foster children are REDUCED.

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Homeless 7 CFR 245.2



- Homeless families identified by the district liaison should not complete an application.
 - Do you know who your homeless liaison is?
- Districts often realize a family is homeless when they self declare through the application process.
 - If/when this happens, you are obligated to report that family to the homeless liaison for proper LEA documentation and services the children are entitled to under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.
 - The Act declares a student homeless if they lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence or if they are residing in a homeless shelter.
 - Eligible for the duration of the school year and up to 30 days into subsequent school year regardless of a change in their living situation.

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Homeless



Residing With Another Household

- When a household hosting a homeless family applies for benefits for their own children, the host family may include members of the homeless family as household members **IF** the host family provides financial support to the homeless family.
 - Financial support = shelter, utilities, clothing, food
- When applying for benefits, the host family **MUST** include any income the homeless family receives.
 - Under this method, it is possible the homeless children are FREE and the host family's children are REDUCED.

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Homelessness Due to Disaster



SP 05-2018 (USDA memo reissued)

- Evacuated from areas subject to major disaster and emergency declarations.
 - Hurricanes
 - Winter storms/flooding
 - Wildfires

- Children determined to be homeless due to disaster are categorically eligible for FREE meals.

- The homeless liaison makes the determination.

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Migrant 7 CFR 245.2



- The Migrant Education Program (MEP) provides services to children who have moved across school district lines, within the last three years, in order to accompany or join a parent/guardian who seeks or obtains temporary or seasonal work in agriculture or fishing.
 - In Massachusetts, the EDCO Collaborative is the sub-grantee that provides migrant student information to LEAs.
 - In turn, the LEA may have a MEP liaison/coordinator to certify the migrant children for free meals.
 - The MEP liaison could also be the McKinney-Vento liaison.

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Runaway 7 CFR 245.2



Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA)

- The Act is established by the Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB).
- Programs provide temporary housing, transitional living, and outreach programs for runaway, homeless and human trafficked youth.
- The FYSB coordinates with school district homeless liaisons to identify the children.

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Step 2 – SNAP, TANF



STEP 2 Do any Household Members (including you) currently participate in one or more of the following assistance programs: SNAP, TANF, or FDPIR?

Write the Agency ID Number, then go to **STEP 4** (Do not complete STEP 3)

EBT number not accepted; SNAP award letter may be requested

Agency ID Number: _____

- Determining officials must ensure that the Assistance Program's case number is consistent with the format used.
 - EBT Numbers are not acceptable
 - SS Numbers are not acceptable
 - MassHealth Number is not acceptable

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Applications- Assistance Programs (SNAP, TANF)



What is my responsibility (since August 2017)? (p.34)

Step 1 Applicable case number must be identified.

Step 2 Child is provided free meals.

Step 3 You will compare the application(s) with a case number to the direct certification list.

Step 4 If a match is found, disregard the application and ensure the child(ren) are matched as DC.

Step 5 If a match is not found, the LEA must contact the household for further clarification OR verify for cause.



Step 3- Reporting Income



STEP 3 Report Income for ALL Household Members [Skip this step if you answered "Yes" to STEP 2]

Review the charts titled "Sources of Income" for more information. The "Sources of Income for Children" chart will help you with the Child Income section. The "Sources of Income for Adults" chart will help you with the All Adult Household Members section

A. Child Income

Sometimes children in the household earn or receive income. Please include the TOTAL income received by all Household Members listed in STEP 1 here:

Child Income	Weekly	Bi-weekly	2x Month	Monthly
\$	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

B. All Adult Household Members (including yourself)

List all Household Members not listed in STEP 1 (including yourself) even if they do not receive income. For each Household Member listed, if they do receive income, report total gross income (before taxes) for each source in whole dollars (no cents) only. If they do not receive income from any source, write '0'. If you enter '0' or leave any fields blank, you are certifying (promising) that there is no income to report.

Name of Adult Household Members (First and Last)	Earnings from Work				Public Assistance/Child Support/Alimony				Pensions / Retirement / All Other Income			
	Weekly	Bi-weekly	2x Month	Monthly	Weekly	Bi-weekly	2x Month	Monthly	Weekly	Bi-weekly	2x Month	Monthly
	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
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	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Total Household Members (Children and Adults)

Last Four Digits of Social Security Number (SSN) of Primary Wage Earner or Other Adult Household Member

XXX-XX- Check if no SSN



Step 4 – Signature



STEP 4 Contact Information and Adult Signature **Mail Completed Form To: INSERT YOUR SCHOOL/DISTRICT MAILING ADDRESS HERE**

"I certify (promise) that all information on this application is true and that all income is reported. I understand that this information is given in connection with the receipt of Federal funds, and that school officials may verify (check) the information. I am aware that if I purposely give false information, my children may lose meal benefits, and I may be prosecuted under applicable State and Federal laws."

Street Address (if available) Apt # City State Zip Daytime Phone and Email (optional)

Printed name of adult signing the form Signature of adult Today's date Error prone

- ★ An adult household member must sign the application and record date
- ★ **ERROR PRONE:** Note there is a check box for the district to indicate if the application is error prone (for use during verification)

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For School Use Only



For School Use Only
2018-2019 Massachusetts Application for Free and Reduced Price School Meals

Total Income Household Size

Annual Income Conversion:
Weekly x 52
Every 2 Weeks x 26
Twice A Month x 24
Monthly x 12

Eligibility: Free Reduced Denied
Categorical Eligibility

How often?
Weekly Bi-Weekly 2x Month Month Annually

Determining Official's Signature Date Confirming Official's Signature Date Verifying Official's Signature Date

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For School Use Only



This section must be completed by SFA

- Record total income, household size, frequency of income, determined eligibility
- Indicate if categorically eligible
- All applications must be determined, family notified, and benefits implemented within 10 operating days of receipt of application by the determining official.
- All applications must be edit checked, signed, and dated by the determining **and** confirming official

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Income Received



No Income Conversion Required

- Only one source of income
- All sources of income are the same frequency
- Total all income and compare to the IEGs.

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Income Received



Income Conversion Required

- Multiple income sources with more than one frequency
- Must calculate annual income
 - Weekly (x 52)
 - Bi-weekly (x 26)
 - Semi-monthly or twice per month (x 24)
 - Monthly (x 12)

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Reviewing Applications



Application Processing Timeframe

- Applications must be reviewed in a timely manner.
- Within 10 operating days (pg. 50) of receipt of application:
 - An eligibility determination must be made (determined & confirmed)
 - The family must be notified of its status (can be via email but only sent to the adult who signed the application).
 - The status must be implemented.
- The confirming official must edit check all determinations, sign and date
- POS system may be either the determining or confirming (not both)
 - This still required 2 humans to complete
 - Check data entry for accuracy
 - Application can be batch signed & dated

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Approved Applications



Household Notifications

- Use the most current USDA prototype notification.
 - Add most current to default notification settings in point of sale
 - Most current notification located in Application Packet

- Household must be notified.
 - Letter method and or email
 - Maintain templates for review

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Duration of Eligibility



- Eligibility is yearlong.

- Families are not required to submit new application if their income changes.

- Families can reapply at any time throughout the school year that were denied or approved for reduced price meals and have a change in their income that will result in a greater benefit.

- Temporary approval no longer exists.

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Transferring Eligibility



Within the Same LEA

- Transferring from one school to another, the child's eligibility status must be transferred.
- Transferring from Provision 2 school (non-base year) to non Provision 2 school, a new application is required.
- If a child transfers within the same LEA from a school using CEP to a non-CEP school, a new application is required (or DC determination)

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Transferring Eligibility



Transferring to Another LEA

- LEAs and schools are encouraged, but not required to share eligibility data with a new LEA when a child transfers
- The new LEA may accept the eligibility determination from the former LEA.
- If an application is provided, the accepting LEA should review the application for accuracy.
 - If an error is found, the LEA must notify the household that it must file a new application in order to receive benefits.

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Transferring CEP



- When a child in a CEP school transfers to another LEA, the new LEA may accept the eligibility determination from the child's former LEA only if eligibility was based on current direct certification or there is an application on file for other children in the household that do not attend a CEP school.

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Denied Applications



- Applications must be denied if incomplete.
- Must provide household notification.
 - Written, email
- Use the most current USDA prototype.
- Notification must include:
 - Reason for denial of benefits
 - **Right to appeal**
 - **Instructions on how to appeal**
 - Information to re-apply at any time during the school year
- A notice of denial is not required if the households fails to reapply during the carryover period.

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Notice of Adverse Action



- All households for whom benefits are to be reduced or terminated must be given 10 calendar days (pg. 57) written advance notice of the change.
- The first day of the advance notice period is the day the notice is sent.



Appeals & Hearing Procedures



- A household may appeal either the denial of benefits or the level of benefits for which it has been approved.
- If a household appeals during the 10 calendar day advance notice, benefits must continue until a final determination is made.



Households That Have Not Applied



7 CFR 245.6(d)

- Local school officials may complete an application for a child known to be eligible for meal benefits if the household has not applied.
- When exercising this option, the school official must complete the application with household size and income information (pg. 42).
 - Source of information must be noted on application
 - Household notification is required to be sent.
 - Intended for limited use

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Questions



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THANK YOU

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