



SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

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June 22, 2018

Action Required

Informational

BULLETIN NO. 050-18 CHILD NUTRITION SERVICES

TO: Educational Service District Superintendents
School District Superintendents
School District Business Managers
School District Food Service Supervisors
Administrators of Select Private Schools

FROM: Chris Reykdal, Superintendent of Public Instruction

RE: School Meal Programs Free and Reduced-Price Application Materials and Information for School Year 2018-19

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PURPOSE/BACKGROUND

All Local Education Agencies (LEAs) participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) or School Breakfast Program (SBP) must make free and reduced-price meals available to students. Meal application materials must be made available to all households and are updated each year to reflect changes to income guidelines and program regulation.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) released updated income guidelines (effective July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019). You can find these documents on the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction's (OSPI) Child Nutrition Services (CNS) [Free and Reduced-Price Information webpage](#):

- United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) income guidelines
- Free and Reduced-Price meal applications/materials
- Reference sheets
- Training videos

ELIGIBILITY MANUAL FOR SCHOOL MEALS

The Eligibility Manual for School Meals is the USDA guiding document for determining household eligibility for meals and disclosure of free and reduced-price eligibility information. The manual is available on the [CNS Free and Reduced-Price Information webpage](#).

The most current manual is dated July 2017. USDA will not be releasing an updated manual for SY 2018-19.

LETTER TO HOUSEHOLDS AND APPLICATIONS FOR FREE AND REDUCED-PRICE MEALS

The Letter to Households must be distributed at the beginning of the school year to households of children attending the school. These letters inform families which meal programs are available and notifies households meals may be available for free or at a reduced-price. Letters to Households and Applications for Free and Reduced-Price Meals must be sent before or near the beginning of the school year, but may not be sent before July 1 of each year.

LEAs must use the state prototype Letter to Households and Application for Free and Reduced-Price Meals or the USDA prototype available on USDA's [Applying for Free and Reduced-Price School Meals Information Page](#).

The following Letter to Households and Application for Free & Reduced-Price Meals are available:

2018-19 Application for Free and Reduced-Price Meals

The application allows households to apply for free and reduced-price meal benefits. Information may be shared with other programs to provide students benefits, such as reduced fees *only* if specifically named and agreed upon by households. (See Section 7 of the application or available as a separate form.) Examples of programs that can be listed in Section 6 include sports, band programs, College Bound, reduced fees for PSAT, SAT, and summer school, as well as other programs the LEA may offer.

Letter to Households – Public Schools

This letter is for public school districts, charter schools, and tribal compact schools.

Letter to Households – Private Schools/RCCIs

This letter is for private schools and residential child care institutions (RCCI).

Letter to Households – Non-pricing/Provision

This letter is for Provision 2 programs operating a *base* year and schools that offer meals at no cost, but are not participating in Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) or Provision 2 in a *non-base year*. Provision 2 programs can only send applications for free and reduced-price meals during the base year.

Provision 2 schools during non-base years and CEP schools should use the Family Income Survey, available on the CNS [Community Eligibility Provision \(CEP\) and Provision 2 webpage](#).

TRANSLATIONS AND LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY (LEP)

The application materials and other communications with households concerning eligibility determinations must be in a language parents or guardians can understand. LEAs have the responsibility to be aware of language needs of LEP households in their district.

LEP households must have access to the same information as other households, and it must be in a manner they can easily understand. USDA provides application translations in 34 languages. These materials are located at the USDA website at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/translated-applications>.

SCANNED AND ONLINE MEAL APPLICATION MATERIALS

LEAs using a meal application formatted specifically for scanning software systems or online access that were approved for use in SY 2017-18 do not require approval for SY 2018-19 as USDA has not made changes to prototype application materials. It is the LEAs responsibility to ensure application materials are updated to reflect current regulations. A reference sheet is available on the [School Nutrition Programs Reference Sheets webpage](#).

MEDIA RELEASE FOR FREE AND REDUCED-PRICE MEALS

Regulations require the public be notified school meal programs are available in a school or school district. OSPI provides a public release to the media that meets this regulation. However, LEAs are encouraged to provide a release and a supply of meal application forms to local organizations that provide assistance to low-income families such as food banks; Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) clinics; post offices; and employment security offices. An assurance there will be no discrimination against LEP households must be included.

CONSENT TO SHARE CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION FOR OTHER SCHOOL PROGRAMS

LEAs have two options to allow households to share eligibility information with school officials for reduced fees for other programs. LEAs may use the Other Benefits section (Part 6 on Version 1) on the back of the meal application. Or, use the *Consent to Share Child Nutrition Program Eligibility Information for Other School Programs* form available at <http://www.k12.wa.us/ChildNutrition/Programs/NSLBP/FreeReduced.aspx>.

For students that have been directly certified to receive free meal benefits, the *Consent to Share Child Nutrition Program Eligibility Information for Other School Programs* allows the sharing of eligibility information with school officials for reduced fees for other programs. This form may also be sent home with the letter notifying households they have been directly certified for free meals.

PROCESSING APPLICATIONS

LEAs must process applications within 10 working days. The 2018-19 Income Guidelines are available on the [CNS Free and Reduced-Price Information webpage](#).

The *determining official* is the individual(s) responsible for reviewing and approving free and reduced-price meal applications. The *hearing official* is the individual responsible for reviewing and making a determination regarding an appeal to a benefit determination. **The hearing**

official and determining official cannot be the same person. The Letter to Household should include the name of the hearing official and the individual who can provide alternative means of communication to persons who require program information in other formats.

NOTIFICATION OF ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION

Households must be notified of their eligibility status. Households with children who are approved for free or reduced-price meal benefits may be notified in writing or verbally. Households with children who are denied benefits must be provided with written notification of the denial through mail or e-mail.

LEAs may use the following prototype Notice of Eligibility letters available on the [CNS Free and Reduced-Price Information webpage](#).

Notice of Eligibility for Free or Reduced-Price Meals

This letter may be used to notify households of student(s) who have been approved for free or reduced-price meals.

Notice of Eligibility for Free Meals – Directly Certified

This letter may be used to notify households of student(s) who have been approved for free meals through Direct Certification.

Notice of Eligibility for Free Meals or Reduced-Price Meals – Direct Certification Medicaid

This letter may be used to notify households of student(s) who have been approved for free meals through Direct Certification – Medicaid.

Notice of Denied Eligibility for Free or Reduced-Price Meals

This letter may be used to notify households of student(s) who have been denied free or reduced-price meal benefits. Households with students who are denied must be given written notification of the denial.

LEAs that use their own notification/denial letters must include in the denial letter:

- Reason for denial of benefits;
- Right to appeal;
- Instructions on how to appeal;
- Ability to reapply for benefits at any time during the year if their household circumstances change; and
- USDA Non-discrimination statement.

INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE

For questions regarding this bulletin, please contact your program specialist, or call the main office at 360-725-6200.

This bulletin is also available on OSPI's website at <http://www.k12.wa.us/BulletinsMemos/bulletins2018.aspx>.

Jamila B. Thomas
Chief of Staff

Lisa Dawn-Fisher
Chief Financial Officer

Leanne Eko, RD, SNS
Interim Director, Child Nutrition Services

The LEA/Sponsor hereby agrees that it will comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. § 2000d to 2000d-6) and all requirements imposed by the regulations of the Department of Agriculture (7 CFR Part 15), The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA), Department of Justice (28 CFR Parts 42 & 50), the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987, Enforcement of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (20 U.S.C. § 1681 et. seq.), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Age of Discrimination Act of 1975 (45 CFR Part 91), the Americans with Disabilities Act (28 CFR Part 35, Title II, Subtitle A), and Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) directives or regulations issued pursuant to that act and the regulations to the effect that no person in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability, be excluded from participation in, or be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subject to discrimination under any program or activity for which the applicant received federal financial assistance from the department; and **HEREBY GIVES ASSURANCE THAT** it will immediately take any measures necessary to effectuate this agreement.