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# SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

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**Randy I. Dorn** Old Capitol Building · PO BOX 47200 · Olympia, WA 98504-7200 · <http://www.k12.wa.us>

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June 19, 2015

( ) Action Required  
(X) Informational

## MEMORANDUM NO. 032-15M CHILD NUTRITION SERVICES

TO: Educational Service District Superintendents  
School District Superintendents  
School District Assistant Superintendents for Business and/or Business Managers  
School District Food Service Supervisors  
Administrators of Select Private Schools

FROM: Randy I. Dorn, State Superintendent of Public Instruction

RE: School Meal Programs Free and Reduced-Price Meal Application  
Materials and Information for School Year 2015–16

CONTACT: Lisa Jekel (Olympia) 360-725-4957 [lisa.jekel@k12.wa.us](mailto:lisa.jekel@k12.wa.us)  
Melissa Hill (Olympia) 360-725-4950 [melissa.hill@k12.wa.us](mailto:melissa.hill@k12.wa.us)  
Debra Calhoun (Spokane) 509-323-2751 [debra.calhoun@k12.wa.us](mailto:debra.calhoun@k12.wa.us)  
Kari Lund (Edmonds) 425-776-2955 [kari.lund@k12.wa.us](mailto:kari.lund@k12.wa.us)  
Linsey LaPlant (Renton) 425-917-7923 [linsey.laplant@k12.wa.us](mailto:linsey.laplant@k12.wa.us)  
Pam Mahre (Yakima) 509-575-2412 [pam.mahre@k12.wa.us](mailto:pam.mahre@k12.wa.us)  
Agency TTY 360-664-3631

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 are updated each year to reflect changes to income guidelines and program regulations. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) income guidelines effective July 1, 2015–June 30, 2016 and free and reduced-price meal applications and materials for school year 2015–16 can be found on the Child Nutrition Free and Reduced-Price Information web page at <http://www.k12.wa.us/ChildNutrition/Programs/NSLBP/FreeReduced.aspx>. The Free and Reduced-Price Application Reference sheet available at this web page provides details regarding processing and determining eligibility.

## **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 at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/cn/EliMan.pdf>. The most current manual is dated August 2014. We anticipate this manual will be updated before the start of school year 2015–16. Please ensure you are using the most current version.

## **Letter to Households and Household Applications**

At the beginning of each school year, informational letters must be distributed to the households of children attending the school. The letter informs families which meal programs are available and notifies households that meals may be available free or at a reduced-price. Applications and informational letters must be sent before or near the beginning of the school year, but may not be sent before July 1<sup>st</sup> of each year.

LEAs must use the state prototype letter and application or the USDA prototype available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/family-friendly-application-translations>.

The following state prototype meal application and letter to households are available:

- **2015–16 Household Application for Free and Reduced-Price Meals**  
This application allows households to apply for free and reduced-price meal benefits and other programs and benefits in the school district (see Section 6 of the application form) that are determined using free and reduced-price meal eligibility. Examples of programs that could be listed in Section 6 for reduced fees include sports, band programs, college bound, and summer school.
- **Letter to Households – Public Schools**  
This letter is for public school (school districts, charter schools, and tribal compact schools) use.
- **Letter to Households – Private Schools/RCCIs**  
This letter is for private school and residential child care institution (RCCI) use.
- **Letter to Households – (Non-Pricing/Provision)**  
This letter is for schools that offer meals at no cost and Provision 2 programs operating a **base** year. Please note that free and reduced-price meal applications can only be sent to households during the base year. The Family

Income Survey, available at <http://www.k12.wa.us/ChildNutrition/Programs/NSLBP/CommunityEligibility.aspx> must be used during non-base years.

### **Meal Application Translations and Limited English Proficiency (LEP)**

The application materials and other communications with households concerning eligibility determinations must be in a language that parents or guardians can understand. LEAs have the responsibility to be aware of language needs of LEP households and ensure these households have access to the same information other households have in a manner they can easily understand. USDA provides family friendly application translations in 34 languages. These materials are located at the USDA website <http://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/family-friendly-application-translations>.

### **Scanned and Online Applications**

LEAs using a meal application formatted specifically for scanning software systems or online access must receive approval each year to use a different form. Requests for approval may be emailed to Wendy Barkley, Supervisor, School Nutrition Programs, at [wendy.barkley@k12.wa.us](mailto:wendy.barkley@k12.wa.us). The request must include a brief description of the changes made to the application and copies of the Letter to Households and the Household Application for Free and Reduced-Price Meals the LEA wishes to use. For online systems, include a link to the online application materials or the demonstration site.

### **Public Media Release for Free and Reduced-Price Meals**

Regulations require the public be notified that 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 public 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.

### **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 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>. If the LEA chooses to use the consent form, the section on the back of the meal application in Part 6 should be deleted.

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 be sent home with the letter notifying households that they have been directly certified for free meals.

### **Processing Applications**

LEAs must process applications within 10 working days. The determining official is the individual(s) responsible for reviewing and approving free and reduced-price meal applications.

A hearing official is the individual responsible for reviewing and making a determination regarding an appeal to a benefit determination. The hearing official cannot be the same individual who is responsible for approving free and reduced-price meal applications. 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 email.

LEAs may use the following prototype Notice of Eligibility Letters available at <http://www.k12.wa.us/ChildNutrition/Programs/NSLBP/FreeReduced.aspx>.

- **Notice of Eligibility for Free or Reduced-Price Meals**  
This letter may be used to notify households that a student(s) has been approved for free or reduced-price meals.
- **Notice of Eligibility for Free Meals – Directly Certified**  
This letter may be used to notify households that a student(s) has been approved for free meals through Direct Certification.
- **Notice of Denied Eligibility for Free or Reduced-Price Meals**  
This letter may be used to notify households that a student(s) has 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:

June 19, 2015

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

Please contact your program specialist with any questions. This information is also available at <http://www.k12.wa.us/BulletinsMemos/bulletins2015.aspx>.

#### EXECUTIVE SERVICES

Ken Kanikeberg  
Chief of Staff

#### FINANCIAL RESOURCES

JoLynn Berge  
Chief Financial Officer

#### CHILD NUTRITION SERVICES

Donna Parsons, MS, RD, SNS  
Director

RD:cjt

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