



SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

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

June 22, 2016

() Action Required
(X) Informational

MEMORANDUM NO. 035-16M 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 2016–17

CONTACT:

Lisa Jekel	(Olympia)	360-725-4957	lisa.jekel@k12.wa.us
Debra Calhoun	(Spokane)	509-323-2751	debra.calhoun@k12.wa.us
Kari Lund	(Edmonds)	425-776-2955	kari.lund@k12.wa.us
Katie Mettler	(Renton)	425-917-7924	katie.mettler@k12.wa.us
Pam Mahre	(Yakima)	509-575-2412	pam.mahre@k12.wa.us
Katy Short	(Vancouver)	360-952-3313	katy.short@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, 2016–June 30, 2017 and free and reduced-price meal applications and materials for school year 2016–17, reference sheets and training videos can be found on the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) Child Nutrition Services (CNS) Free and Reduced-Price Information web page at <http://www.k12.wa.us/ChildNutrition/Programs/NSLBP/FreeReduced.aspx>.

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 the above mentioned CNS web page. The most current manual is dated July 2015. You will be notified if this manual is updated before the start of school year. Please ensure you are using the most current version.

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 that 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 1st of each year.

LEAs must use the state Letter to Households and Application for Free and Reduced-Price Meals or the USDA prototype available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/family-friendly-application-translations>.

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

- **2016–17 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 6 of the application. Examples of programs that could be listed in Section 6 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 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 **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 at <http://www.k12.wa.us/ChildNutrition/Programs/NSLBP/CommunityEligibility.aspx>.

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 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. Requests for approval may be emailed to Wendy Barkley, Supervisor, School Nutrition Programs, at 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. Ensure application materials are updated to reflect current regulations and allow two weeks turnaround time for review of your materials.

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 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 that 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 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 also 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 2016-17 Income Guidelines are located at <http://www.k12.wa.us/ChildNutrition/Programs/NSLBP/FreeReduced.aspx>.

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 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:

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

Please contact your program specialist with any questions. This information is also available at <http://www.k12.wa.us/bulletinsmemos/memoranda2016.aspx>.

EXECUTIVE SERVICES

CHILD NUTRITION SERVICES

Ken Kanikeberg
Chief of Staff

Donna Parsons, MS, RD, SNS
Director

RD:vab

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Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, (AD-3027) found online at: http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for
Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410

fax: (202) 690-7442; or
email: program.intake@usda.gov

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