



Policy No. 6820

Free And Reduced-Price Meals

SUBJECT TO STATE AND NATIONAL LAWS AND SUCH POLICIES, RULES AND REGULATIONS AS THE BOARD MAY ADOPT, FREE OR REDUCED-PRICE MEALS SHALL BE PROVIDED TO STUDENTS FROM HOUSEHOLDS WHO QUALIFY ECONOMICALLY.

I. RESPONSIBILITY FOR IDENTIFICATION

1. It shall be the responsibility of the Food and Nutrition Service Department to identify those students eligible to receive free and reduced-price meals. This identification shall be made within a period of ten days following the receipt of a properly completed application, in accordance with established criteria and must apply to free or reduced-price meals.

II. STANDARDS OF ELIGIBILITY

- A. The Florida Income Guidelines for free and reduced-price meals are available annually. The Income Guidelines shall be adjusted to conform with Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services approved guidelines. The guidelines are used by schools, institutions, and facilities participating in the National School Lunch Program (“NSLP”) (and Commodity School Program), School Breakfast Program, Special Milk Program for Children, Child and Adult Care Food Program and Summer Food Service Program. The annual adjustments are required by section 9 of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act. The guidelines are intended to direct benefits to those children most in need and are revised annually to account for changes in the Consumer Price Index.
- B. The specific criteria to be used in identifying those students eligible to receive free or reduced-price meals shall be:
 1. Total household income
 2. The number of individuals in the household
 3. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (“SNAP”), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (“TANF”)
 4. Homeless, Migrant, Runaway, Foster Child, Head Start Program

III. PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT

- A. At the beginning of each school year, a public announcement shall be made concerning free and reduced-price meals. This announcement shall be made by means of the mass media and shall include a statement setting forth eligibility criteria and how application may be completed.
- B. Any subsequent changes in eligibility standards or procedures during the school year shall be publicly announced in the same manner as the original standards.
- C. At the beginning of each school year, the Food and Nutrition Service Department shall send an information letter to all the parents and guardians of students. This information letter shall include:
 - 1. A statement as to the purpose of free and reduced-price meals.
 - 2. The criteria which establish eligibility for free and reduced-price meals.
 - 3. An explanation as to how a family may complete an application.
 - 4. The online application website www.myschoolapps.com. Paper applications are available at parent's request.
 - 5. The manner in which a family may appeal a decision.
- D. In certain cases, foster children are eligible for these benefits. Applications shall include a place to check such a request.
- E. Students enrolling in a school after the beginning of the school year shall also be provided with a copy of this information letter.

IV. APPLICATION PROCEDURES

- A. Any family wishing to complete an application for free or reduced-price meals may do so by completing the application online. This application must be signed by an adult member of the family and shall be accepted at any time during the school year.
- B. The last four digits of the social security numbers must be provided or check the box indicating, "I do not have a social security number" for the adult signing the application before the application can be processed.
- C. If a household is approved for meal benefits, they are not required to report any increase in income and decrease in household size. However, any decrease in income and increase in household size may

be reported by completing a new application.

- D. When the information furnished by a family in its application indicates that the family meets the eligibility standards for free or reduced-price meals, the children from such a family shall be provided with free meals or reduced-price meals.
- E. The family involved shall receive notification of the action taken on its application for free or reduced-price meals.
- F. If a child transfers from one school to another in Broward County, his/her eligibility for free or reduced-price meals shall be automatically transferred to the new school upon enrollment. No new application needs to be completed if Food and Nutrition Service Department is the sponsor of the NSLP.

V OPERATIONAL PROCEDURE FOR NONDISCRIMINATION

- A. The Food and Nutrition Service Department shall take every measure feasible to eliminate the possibility of any other student knowing who receives free or reduced-price meals. Names of students receiving free or reduced-price meals shall not be published, posted, or announced in any way. Students eligible to receive free or reduced-price meals must:
 - 1. Use the same dining room as those who pay.
 - 2. Enter the dining room through the same entrance and serving lines as those who pay.
 - 3. Eat at the same time as those who pay.
 - 4. Use the same type of Identification Badge, Keypad Number or Roster as those who pay.
 - 5. Be served the same meal as those who pay.
 - 6. Receive their meal without having to work for it.
 - 7. In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture ("USDA") civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

VI APPEAL PROVISION

- A. If a family is not satisfied with the decision made with respect to their application for free or reduced-price meals, they may request a hearing to appeal the decision. This request may be made orally or in writing to:

The Hearing Official of Food and Nutrition Service
The School Board of Broward County, Florida
7720 West Oakland Park Blvd, Suite 204
Sunrise, Florida 33351

- B. Listed below are the provisions for the hearing procedure:
1. The family may be accompanied by an attorney or some other person to assist or represent them in their appeal;
 2. The documents and records to be presented in support of the decision under appeal must be made available to the family or their representative for examination prior to and during the hearing;
 3. Adequate notice shall be given to the family as to the time and place of the hearing;
 4. The hearing shall be held with reasonable promptness and at a time and place convenient to the family and Hearing Official or his/her designated representative;
 5. The family shall be provided with an opportunity to present oral or documentary evidence and arguments supporting its position without undue interference;
 6. The family may question or refute any testimony or evidence and confront and cross-examine any adverse witnesses;
 7. The hearing shall be conducted, and the decision shall be made by the Hearing Official or his/her designated representative;
 8. The decision of the Hearing Official or his/her designated representative shall be based on the oral and documentary evidence presented at the hearing and shall be made a part of the hearing record;
 9. The family and its designated representative, if any, shall be notified in writing of the decision of the Hearing Official or his/her designated representative;
 10. A written record shall be prepared with respect to each hearing. The record shall include the decision under appeal, any documentary

evidence and a summary of any oral testimony presented at the hearing, the decision of the Hearing Official including the reasons therefor, and a copy of the notification to the family of the decision of the hearing official; and

11. The written record of each hearing shall be preserved for a period of five (5) years and shall be available for examination by the family or its representative at a reasonable time and place during that period.

- C. During the pendency of such challenge, the child shall continue to receive the free or reduced-price meal to which he/she was originally determined to be eligible.

VII VERIFICATION OF INCOME

- A. The Food and Nutrition Service Department will verify the income information on three percent of all applications approved for free or reduced-priced meal or 3,000 error prone applications approved as of October 1st of each school year. If October 1st falls on a weekend, the Food and Nutrition Services Department will use the next operating day to establish the sample pool. Error prone are applications within \$100 per month of the income eligibility guidelines. The Financial Manager of Food and Nutrition Service Department is named as their verification official. Applications will be randomly selected district-wide, and the verification process will be completed by November 15th.
- B. The household will be given ten (10) days to supply requested documentation. If no income information is supplied, or if the documentation does not support the benefits for which the household has been approved, the Food and Nutrition Service Department will reduce or terminate benefits as appropriate. Households will be given ten (10) days' advance notice of a change in benefits as a result of the verification process.
- C. Households may appeal a decision made by the Food and Nutrition Service Department. If the household appeals the decision during the ten (10) day advance notice period, the Food and Nutrition Service Department will continue to provide benefits throughout the appeal and decision process.
- D. The Director of Food and Nutrition Service Department will serve as the appeal hearing official. The same hearing procedure for free and reduced-price applications will serve for verification appeals.
- E. Records will be maintained on how applications were selected for verification, how each was verified, the dates notices were sent, notes on contacts made, the results, the reason for any changes in eligibility, and signature of the official.

VIII COLLECTING PAYMENTS

- A. Free and Reduced-Price Student Meal Benefits Eligibilities are coded on the Point of Sales Screen. In order to insure the anonymity of students receiving Free or Reduced-Price Meals, the following Meal Accountability procedures are implemented.
1. Accountability
 - a) Students enter their randomly generated Meal Number or scan their Student Identification Badge for identification. The Student's Meal Number and Identification Badge does not contain or display eligibility information.
 - b) One (1) reimbursable meal may be claimed per student per meal type. A student's second meal is not reimbursable- it is recorded as an at-cost meal and costs the Adult Price.
 - c) Cashiers follow the same rules for all students during meal service. If a student purchases an additional food item, payment can be made from prepaid funds in the student's account or with cash at the point of sale.
 2. Out of Cafeteria Meals: Alternate method to be used in place of point-of-sale system located in cafeteria.

IX CIVIL RIGHT REQUIREMENTS

- A. In all forms of communication and printed program information that are disseminated such as free and reduced-price notification letters, application forms, and public releases, the following will be included:
- 1) The statement that program benefits and services are available to all children without regard to race, color, sex, handicap, age, or national origin, and
 - 2) The procedure for filing a complaint.
- B. The nondiscrimination poster developed by the United States Department of Agriculture and provided by the Florida Department of Education will be displayed in a prominent place.

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