

## **What is the National School Lunch Program?**

The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) is a federally funded meal program which provides both food and cash donations to subsidize the cost of school lunch in participating schools. The NSLP was established by President Harry Truman in 1946 and is presently operating in more than 96,000 public and nonprofit private schools and residential child care centers. The program is managed at the federal level by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service and at the state level by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE).

In order to receive the benefits of the NSLP, participating schools must offer free or reduced-price meals to eligible children. The schools must also comply with nutritional requirements outlined by the federal government. These guidelines follow the Dietary Guidelines for Americans which recommend no more than 30 percent of a person's calories come from fat and less than 10 percent from saturated fat. Lunch menus must also be designed to provide children with 1/3 of the key nutrients they need each day (calories, protein, Vitamins A and C, calcium, and iron). CEL develops menus that are nutritionally balanced and appetizing at a low cost to students and their families.

## **Can my child eat breakfast at school?**

In addition to participating in the National School Lunch Program, CEL also operates a daily breakfast program under the National School Breakfast Program which functions in a very similar manner.

## **How do children qualify to receive free or reduced-price meals?**

Any child at a participating school may purchase a meal through the NSLP. Some children may qualify for free or reduced-price meals based on their household income. Children who do not qualify are required to pay a full price.

## **How to apply for free or reduced-price meals:**

### **Where to apply:**

Applications for free or reduce-price meals will be available at registration, on CEL's website, or may be picked up in the office.

### **Who is eligible:**

- If you or any member of your household (adult or child) now receives SNAP (formerly food stamps) or TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families), all children in the household are eligible for free meal services.
- A foster child may be eligible to receive free price meal services regardless of foster family's household income.

- If your total household income is the same or less than the amounts on the Income Guidelines below, your child(ren) is eligible to receive free or reduced-price meal services.
- Eligibility begins on the date the application is approved and remains in effect for the remainder of the school year.

How to apply:

- If you or any member of the household (adult or child) you are applying for now receive SNAP or TANF, you will need:
  1. The names of all household members including the child(ren) who will receive benefits
  2. A valid SNAP or TANF case number for at least one member of the household (adult or child)
  3. The signature of an adult household member.
- If you are applying for a foster child, the application must include:
  1. The child's name. (Each foster child must have an application.)
  2. Official foster care documentation.
  3. The signature of an adult household member or guardian.
- If you are applying using household income, the application must have:
  1. The child(ren)'s name(s).
  2. The names of all household members.
  3. The amount of income each person received last month and the frequency in which it is received.
  4. The signature and Social Security number of an adult household member.

**Eligibility begins on the date the application is approved and remains in effect for the remainder of the school year.**

*You may apply for free or reduced-price meal services any time during the school year. If you are not eligible now but have a change such as: A decrease in household income, an increase in household size, become unemployed or eligible to receive SNAP or TANF benefits.*

**Verification:**

Your eligibility may be checked by school officials at any time during the school year. School officials may ask you to submit papers showing that your child(ren) should receive free or reduced-price meal services.

**Confidentiality:**

School officials use the information on the application only to decide if your child(ren) should receive free or reduced-price meal services. Parent or legal guardian signature is required on the application to allow school officials to release the application information and Social Security number for purpose of identifying household members for other services.

**Non-Discrimination Statement:**

In accordance with Federal 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, age, disability, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or 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 discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at [How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint](#) and at any 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 the USDA by:

1. Mail:  
USDA  
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410
2. Fax: (202) 690-7442
3. Email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

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