

**PROTOTYPE**

Letter to Parents for School Meal Programs

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Children need healthy meals to learn and (School Name) offers these meals every school day. Breakfast costs [\$] lunch costs [\$]. Children from households that meet Federal income guidelines (outlined below) are eligible for free meals or reduced price meals. Reduced price meals cost each eligible student \$.25 for lunch and \$.25 for breakfast. To apply for free or reduced price meals, submit a Direct Certification letter from the NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance **OR** complete the enclosed application, sign it, and return it to the school as soon as possible. Please refer to the guidelines contained in this letter when completing the application. **Fill out all required information** as we cannot approve an application that is incomplete.

How to Apply: To get free or reduced price meals for your children you may submit a **Direct Certification letter received from the NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, OR carefully complete the application** and return it to the school. If you now receive food stamps, or Aid to Dependent Children (ADC)/Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) for any children, or participate in the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR), the application must include the children's names, the household food stamp, ADC/TANF or FDPIR number and the signature of an adult household member. All children with the same case number may be listed on the same application. Separate applications are required for children with different case numbers. If you do not list a food stamp/ADC/TANF or FDPIR number for all the children for whom you are applying, the application must include the names of everyone in the household, the amount of income for each household member, and how often this income is received and where it comes from. The application must also include the signature of an adult household member and that adult's social security number, or the word "none" if the adult does not have a social security number. Contact your local Department of Social Services for your food stamp or TANF number or complete the income portion of the application.

Income Chart: The following chart lists income levels according to household size and income levels received either yearly, monthly or weekly. If your total household income is the same or less than the amounts on the Income Chart below, your children can receive reduced price meals, and may be eligible to receive free meals.

**REDUCED PRICE ELIGIBILITY INCOME CHART**  
Effective from July 1, 2002 to June 30, 2003

Household Size	Annual	Month	Week
1.....	\$16,391	\$ 1,366	\$ 316
2.....	22,089	1,841	425
3.....	27,787	2,316	535
4.....	33,485	2,791	644
5.....	39,183	3,266	754
6.....	44,881	3,741	864
7.....	50,579	4,215	973
8.....	56,277	4,690	1,083
For each additional family member add.....	+5,698	+475	+110

Verification: The school may ask you at any time during the school year to verify your eligibility. You will be notified, in writing, if you have been selected for Verification. School officials may ask you to send papers showing that your child should receive free or reduce price meals.

Reporting Changes: If you list income information and your child is approved for meal benefits, you must tell the school when your household income increases by more than \$50 per month, \$600 per year, or when your household size decreases. If you list a food stamp case number, ADC/TANF or FDPIR number, you must tell the school when you no longer receive food stamps or ADC/TANF for your child or you no longer participate in the FDPIR. You may then fill out another application giving income information.

Income Exclusions: The value of any child care provided or arranged, or any amount received as payment for such child care or reimbursement for costs incurred for such care under the Child Care Development (Block Grant) Fund should not be considered as income for this program.

Foster Child: Your foster child may be eligible for meal benefits. An application for a foster child must have the child's name, the child's personal use income and an adult signature. If you have questions, contact the school for help in completing the application.

Nondiscrimination Statement: This statement explains what to do if you believe you have been treated unfairly. In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability. To file a complaint of discrimination, write to *USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington DC 20250-9410* or call 202-720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Fair Hearing: If you do not agree with the school's decision on your application or the result of verification, you have the right to a fair hearing. This can be done by calling or writing the following official:

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**(Name, Address, Telephone Number of Hearing Official)**

Meal Service to Children With Disabilities: Federal regulations require schools and institutions to serve meals at no extra charge to children with a disability which may restrict their diet. A student with a disability is defined in 7CFR Part 15b.3 of Federal regulations, as one who has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities. Major life activities are defined to include functions such as caring for one's self, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, and working. You must request the special meals from the school and provide the school with medical certification from a medical doctor. If you believe your child needs substitutions because of a disability, please get in touch with us for further information, as there is specific information that the medical certification must contain.

Confidentiality: The United States Department of Agriculture has approved the release of students names and eligibility status, without parent/guardian consent, to persons directly connected with the administration or enforcement of federal education programs such as Title I and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), which are United States Department of Education programs used to determine areas such as the allocation of funds to schools, to evaluate socioeconomic status of the school's attendance area, and to assess educational progress. Information may also be released to State health or State education programs administered by the State agency or local education agency, provided the State or local education agency administers the program, and federal State or local nutrition programs similar to the National School Lunch Program. Additionally, *all* information contained in the free and reduced price application may be released to persons directly connected with the administration or enforcement of programs authorized under the National School Lunch Act (NSLA) or Child Nutrition Act (CNA); including the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs, the Special Milk Program, the Child and Adult Care Food Program, Summer Food Service Program and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women Infants and Children (WIC); the Comptroller General of the United States for audit purposes, and federal, State or local law enforcement officials investigating alleged violation of the programs under the NSLA or CNA.

The disclosure of eligibility information not specifically authorized by the NSLA requires a written consent statement from the parent/guardian.

Reapplication: You may apply for benefits any time during the school year. If you are not eligible now, but during the school year become unemployed, experience a decrease in household income, or an increase in family size, you may request and complete an application at that time.

We will let you know when your application is approved or denied. Thank you for your ongoing participation in our School Meal Programs.

Sincerely,