

## National School Lunch Program Fact Sheet

The Ohio Department of Education, Office of Integrated Student Supports, in partnership with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), administers the National School Lunch, School Breakfast, Special Milk, After School Care Snack, and USDA Foods Programs among others.

Nationally, more than 25 million students in approximately 90,000 schools and agencies participate in Child Nutrition Programs, making them one of the country's largest food service operations. Ohio's food service programs serve more than one million meals daily across more than 3,000 sites.

### Goals of Child Nutrition Programs:

- Safeguard the health and well-being of the nation's children;
- Encourage domestic consumption of nutritious agricultural foods; and
- Give children an understanding of the relationship between proper eating habits and good health.

### Who can apply to participate in the lunch program?

- Any school of high school grade or under recognized by the State of Ohio as operating under public or nonprofit private ownership;
- Any public or nonprofit classes of pre-primary grades when conducted in the schools mentioned above;
- Any public or nonprofit, private licensed Residential Child Care Institution (RCCI).

### What qualifies a student to participate?

Any student of high school grade or under who is enrolled in an educational unit of high school grade or under in a participating school or a child age of 21 years or younger who is enrolled in a participating RCCI. Additional benefits may be available to a student after the submission of a free and reduced-price school meals application or the student is deemed eligible through the direct certification process. Based on the household size and income, the student may be eligible for meals free or at a reduced price. Schools may charge no more than \$0.40 for a reduced-price lunch. Schools must meet the Paid Lunch Equity in Pricing rule, which determines the price of lunches served to students who pay the full-paid meal price (not eligible for free or reduced-price meals). Full-paid meal prices must be at least the difference between the free and paid rate of reimbursement. Schools must also operate the National School Lunch Program as non-profit programs.

### What are the meal service requirements for lunch?

To be eligible for reimbursement and USDA Foods, participating schools and agencies must prepare and serve meals that meet federal nutrition requirements. The reimbursable meal must be priced as a unit and available to all students regardless of their ability to pay. Meal service for lunch must be between 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Schools must follow the meal pattern which involves planned menus meeting at least minimum daily quantities of fluid milk, meat or meat alternate, vegetables, fruits and grains.

Schools must also ensure the children are offered a variety of vegetable subgroups weekly, milk must be 1 percent or fat-free flavored or unflavored, and half of the grains offered to students must be whole grain-rich. For more information, visit the USDA Food and Nutrition Service Nutrition Standards for School Meals website at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/nutrition-standards-school-meals>.

### **What reimbursement will the school or agency receive?**

The school or agency is reimbursed for each complete meal served to an eligible student. Reimbursement rates are based on the student's eligibility category paid full-price, reduced-price, or free. The school is responsible for accurately counting the meals served to students daily by eligibility category. In addition, schools are allocated a specific Planned Assistance Level (PAL) for USDA Foods based on lunches served.

### **What records must be kept?**

The following are required records that must be kept for three school years plus the current year:

- Daily menus and production records;
- Daily meal count and cash receipt worksheets (CN-7) free and reduced-price school meals applications and direct certification match results reports;
- Monthly inventories of food, labor and supplies monthly records of program costs;
- Verification records; and
- On-site accountability reviews (if more than one site).

Please contact the Office of Integrated Student Supports at to apply for one of the Child Nutrition Programs or to obtain additional information:

25 South Front Street, Mail Stop 303  
Columbus, OH 43215-4183  
(800) 808-6325 (toll-free)  
(614) 466-2945  
(614) 752-7613 (fax)

Additional information including current reimbursement rates and student income eligibility guidelines is available at [www.education.ohio.gov](http://www.education.ohio.gov) or [www.fns.usda.gov](http://www.fns.usda.gov).

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To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the [USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form](#), (AD-3027) found online at: [How to File a Complaint](#), 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:

- (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).