

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Wednesday, July 29, 2015

CONTACT: Sandra Kangas, Child and Adult Nutrition Services, (605) 773-4746

Education department announces guidelines for 2015-16 free or reduced school meal programs

PIERRE, S.D. -- Child and Adult Nutrition Services in the South Dakota Department of Education announces the policy for free milk or free and reduced price meals. The policy applies to children unable to pay the full price of meals or milk served under the National School Lunch, School Breakfast and/or Special Milk Programs. The administrative office of each school that participates in the Lunch, Breakfast and/or Milk Program has a copy of the policy available for review.

Children from families whose income is at or below the levels shown are eligible for free or reduced price meals. Children from a household whose income is at or below the level shown for free meals may be eligible for free milk if the school participates in a federally funded pricing Special Milk Program.

Families may apply for free or reduced price meals or free milk for their children for school year 2015-16 according to guidelines effective July 1, 2015. Applications will be provided to households by the school. Families that are directly certified as eligible for free meals will receive a notice of eligibility.

The school will use the prior year's eligibility status (free, reduced price or paid) from last year for up to the first 30 days of school or until a new application is approved or direct certification is obtained, whichever comes first. When the carry-over period ends, unless the household is notified that their children are directly certified or the household submits an application that is approved, the children must pay full price for school meals and the school will not send a reminder or a notice of expired eligibility.

When known to the school, households that are currently on Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) will receive letters from the school indicating that their children are eligible for free school meals. These families should not complete an application for free meals. All children in a household with any household member receiving benefits under TANF or SNAP are eligible for free meals. Only one application per household is required.

If any children were not listed on the notice of eligibility, the household should contact the local educational agency (LEA) or school to have free meal benefits extended to them.

Families receiving commodities through the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) can request an Interagency Action Notice that can be brought to the school in place of an application to document free meal eligibility, or they can complete an application and list the FDPIR case number. All children in a household with any household member receiving benefits under FDPIR are eligible for free meals.

If the school knows of children who are homeless, runaway, foster, from a migrant household, or who are enrolled in Head Start, they will send a letter to the household telling them the children are eligible for free meals. Contact the school if there are questions or if the household does not get a letter because these children may be eligible for free meal benefits. The household must notify the school if it chooses to decline benefits.

Foster children that are under the legal responsibility of a foster care agency or court are eligible for free meals. Any foster child in the household is eligible for free meals regardless of income. Households may include foster children on the application, but are not required to include payments received for care of the foster child as income. Including children in foster care as household members may help other children in the household qualify for benefits. If the foster family is not eligible for free or reduced price meal benefits, it does not prevent a foster child from receiving benefits.

To apply for free or reduced price meals, other households should fill out the application and return it to the school. An application must include the names of children for whom benefits are requested, all household members and their monthly income or designation that they do not have any income, and be signed by an adult household member with the last four digits of that person's social security number. An application for free or reduced price benefits cannot be approved unless complete eligibility information is submitted, as indicated on the application and in the instructions.

Households with any member who is currently certified to receive Assistance Program benefits may submit an application for these children with the abbreviated information as indicated on the application and instructions.

Additional copies are available in the school office. The information provided on the application is confidential and will be used for the purpose of determining eligibility status for school meals and Title I programs. The school will provide additional information if it wants to use eligibility status for other purposes.

An eligibility determination is good for the whole school year; however, applications may be submitted at any time during the year. Contact the school if a household member becomes unemployed or if the household size changes. The children from that household may be eligible for free or reduced price meals or free milk during the time of unemployment if the household's income falls within the income eligibility guidelines. Information on any application may be verified at any time during the school year by school or other program officials.

If a parent or guardian is dissatisfied with the ruling on the application for eligibility, she/he may contact the determining official on an informal basis. If the parent or guardian wishes to make a formal appeal, an oral or written request may be made to the school's hearing official for a hearing to appeal the decision.

Some schools may choose to send a special notice about the Children's Health Insurance Program to households with the application. It provides a way for school personnel to know if families will allow them to use students' eligibility status for other program benefits. The decision whether or not a household is eligible for meal benefits or not is not affected by this form.

Non-discrimination Statement: This explains what to do if you believe you have been treated unfairly. The U.S. Department of Agriculture prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the bases of race, color, national origin, age,

disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.)

If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, or at any USDA office, or call (866) 632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter to us by mail at U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, by fax (202) 690-7442 or email at program.intake@usda.gov. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339; or (800) 845-6136 (Spanish).

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

As stated above, all protected bases do not apply to all programs, “the first six protected bases of race, color, national origin, age, disability and sex are the six protected bases for applicants and recipients of the Child Nutrition Programs.”

If a child needs a special diet as prescribed by a doctor, the household should contact the school's food service manager.

The income scales below are to be used to determine applicant's eligibility for free or reduced price meals if the household is at or below the guidelines.

INCOME ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES
(Effective from July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016)

	Annually	Annually	Monthly	Monthly	Weekly	Weekly
Household Size	Free	Reduced	Free	Reduced	Free	Reduced
1	\$15,301	\$21,775	\$1,276	\$1,815	\$295	\$419
2	\$20,709	\$29,471	\$1,726	\$2,456	\$399	\$567
3	\$26,117	\$37,167	\$2,177	\$3,098	\$503	\$715
4	\$31,525	\$44,863	\$2,628	\$3,739	\$607	\$863
5	\$36,933	\$52,559	\$3,078	\$4,380	\$711	\$1,011
6	\$42,341	\$60,255	\$3,529	\$5,022	\$815	\$1,159
7	\$47,749	\$67,951	\$3,980	\$5,663	\$919	\$1,307
8	\$53,157	\$75,647	\$4,430	\$6,304	\$1,023	\$1,455
For each additional family member, add	\$5,408	\$7,696	\$451	\$642	\$104	\$148