

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** Friday, Sept. 2, 2016

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### **Education department announces guidelines for 2016-17 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 2016-17 according to guidelines effective July 1, 2016. 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.

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 where any household member receives benefits under TANF or SNAP are eligible for free meals.

If any children were not listed on the notice of eligibility, the household should contact the local educational agency 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 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.

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. Incomplete applications cannot be approved for free and reduced price meals. 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. 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. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may 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 complaint of discrimination, complete the [USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form](#), (AD-3027) found online at: [http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint\\_filing\\_cust.html](http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html), 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) mail: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).
- This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

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 used to determine an 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, 2016 through June 30, 2017)

	Annually	Annually	Monthly	Monthly	Weekly	Weekly
Household Size	Free	Reduced	Free	Reduced	Free	Reduced
1	\$15,444	\$21,978	\$1,278	\$1,832	\$297	\$423
2	\$20,826	\$29,637	\$1,736	\$2,470	\$104	\$570

3	\$26,208	\$37,296	\$2,184	\$3,108	\$504	\$718
4	\$31,590	\$44,955	\$2,633	\$3,747	\$608	\$865
5	\$36,972	\$52,614	\$3,081	\$4,385	\$711	\$1,012
6	\$42,354	\$60,273	\$3,530	\$5,023	\$815	\$1,160
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