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## A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO IMPROVE SCHOOL MEALS APPLICATIONS

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### Overview

The school meals programs can play a critical role in supporting the healthy development of children and helping to ensure that low-income school-aged children have access to adequate nutrition. The process of enrolling for free or reduced-price meals and the application form itself are the gateway to these benefits. Typically school districts send home school meals applications and parents complete them at home without assistance.<sup>1</sup> In contrast to many other income-tested programs, there are no caseworkers dedicated to helping parents navigate the application process. Thus, it is particularly important that these applications be easy to use, provide clear directions, and avoid steps that might deter eligible families from applying.

As a result of changes in recent legislation reauthorizing the federal school meals programs, every school district in the country will have to revise its school meals application for the 2011-2012 school year.<sup>2</sup> While only three specific changes will be necessary, the fact that all applications will be revised and reprinted offers a unique opportunity to go beyond the required changes to improve the content and design of the application and related materials that are sent to households.

### KEY STEPS TO IMPROVE PROGRAM ACCESS

By improving school meals applications in the following ways, states and school districts can help families struggling against hunger get healthy meals for their children.

- Provide materials in a [language](#) and at a [level](#) parents can understand.
- Ask only for [necessary information](#).
- Reduce opportunities for [math errors](#).
- Encourage eligible families to [apply](#).

This paper provides specific suggestions for revisions to school meals applications to help achieve these goals.

<sup>1</sup> Any adult in the household may complete an application on behalf of a child in the household. There is no requirement that the adult be a parent or legal guardian of the child. For the sake of brevity, this paper refers to the adult completing the application as the parent.

<sup>2</sup> See P.L. 111-296, the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-111s3307enr/pdf/BILLS-111s3307enr.pdf>.

This paper is intended as a resource for states and school districts as they revise their materials for households related to the school meals programs.<sup>3</sup> It is not a comprehensive guide to developing these materials; rather, it highlights some best practices in school meals applications from around the country and points out areas where current materials often fall short. Fortunately, eligibility for the school meals programs is relatively straightforward, making a user-friendly application an achievable goal for states and school districts.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture makes available a prototype application and related materials to assist states and school districts as they design household materials.<sup>4</sup> USDA recently published prototype materials that reflect the changes in the reauthorization legislation and will soon provide translations of those materials.<sup>5</sup>

This paper includes four sections. The first section explains the new requirements that necessitate changes to household materials. The second section describes our review of applications and related materials. The third section highlights opportunities to improve program access by making changes to applications (and related materials) and summarizes the findings of our review of these materials. The fourth section undertakes a similar discussion of verification materials (the notice school districts send to a small sample of households that have to provide documentation to confirm their eligibility). Appendices A and B provide more information about the materials we reviewed. Appendices C and D summarize all of the legally required elements of application and verification materials, respectively, including requirements adopted as part of the reauthorization legislation. Appendix E includes a link to each state's school meals program homepage and school meals forms (where available). Alternatively, readers can access state school meals program web sites by clicking on a state name in the list or map below. Appendix F includes links to the school meals web site for the 100 largest school districts.

<a href="#">Alabama</a>	<a href="#">Kentucky</a>	<a href="#">North Dakota</a>
<a href="#">Alaska</a>	<a href="#">Louisiana</a>	<a href="#">Ohio</a>
<a href="#">Arizona</a>	<a href="#">Maine</a>	<a href="#">Oklahoma</a>
<a href="#">Arkansas</a>	<a href="#">Maryland</a>	<a href="#">Oregon</a>
<a href="#">California</a>	<a href="#">Massachusetts</a>	<a href="#">Pennsylvania</a>
<a href="#">Colorado</a>	<a href="#">Michigan</a>	<a href="#">Rhode Island</a>
<a href="#">Connecticut</a>	<a href="#">Minnesota</a>	<a href="#">South Carolina</a>
<a href="#">Delaware</a>	<a href="#">Mississippi</a>	<a href="#">South Dakota</a>
<a href="#">District of Columbia</a>	<a href="#">Missouri</a>	<a href="#">Tennessee</a>
<a href="#">Florida</a>	<a href="#">Montana</a>	<a href="#">Texas</a>
<a href="#">Georgia</a>	<a href="#">Nebraska</a>	<a href="#">Utah</a>
<a href="#">Hawaii</a>	<a href="#">Nevada</a>	<a href="#">Vermont</a>
<a href="#">Idaho</a>	<a href="#">New Hampshire</a>	<a href="#">Virginia</a>
<a href="#">Illinois</a>	<a href="#">New Jersey</a>	<a href="#">Washington</a>
<a href="#">Indiana</a>	<a href="#">New Mexico</a>	<a href="#">West Virginia</a>
<a href="#">Iowa</a>	<a href="#">New York</a>	<a href="#">Wisconsin</a>
<a href="#">Kansas</a>	<a href="#">North Carolina</a>	<a href="#">Wyoming</a>

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<sup>3</sup> The legal responsibility for developing applications and other household materials falls on local educational agencies, although many states provide model materials or approve local forms. This paper uses the term “school districts” to refer to local educational agencies.

<sup>4</sup> USDA's prototype materials for school year 2011-2012 are available in English at [http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/frp/2011\\_application.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/frp/2011_application.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> See <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/frp/frp.process.htm>. Translations are currently available in Arabic, Cambodian, Chinese (Mandarin), Farsi, French, Greek, Haitian Creole, Hindi, Hmong, Japanese, Korean, Kurdish, Laotian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Samoan, Serbo-Croatian, Somali, Spanish, Sudanese, Tagalog, Thai, Urdu, and Vietnamese.

## Key Policy Changes That Affect Application Materials

As a result of several provisions of the recently enacted child nutrition reauthorization legislation, three specific changes will need to be made to household materials.<sup>6</sup>

- Applications may no longer ask for information about the personal income of foster children to determine their eligibility and households may no longer be required to complete a separate application for foster children. Foster children are now categorically eligible for free meals regardless of personal income or the household income of their foster family. Foster children may be certified without an application based on notification from an appropriate agency indicating that the child's care and placement are the responsibility of the state or that the foster child has been placed with a caretaker household by a court. Regardless of whether a foster child has already been certified for free meals, the foster child may be included on the same application as other children in the household. The foster child will be eligible regardless of whether he or she is included on an application with other children or identified on a separate application. A foster parent's indication on a signed application that the child is a foster child is sufficient basis for certification for free meals. But including a foster child on an application with other children increases the household's size and may help the foster family's non-foster children qualify for free or reduced-price meals.<sup>7</sup>
- The application may now ask only for the last four digits of the Social Security number of the adult signing the application or an indication that he or she does not have one.<sup>8</sup> As was previously the case, information about the Social Security number or lack of one is required only for households that must provide income information on the application. Households that list a Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly the Food Stamp Program), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families cash assistance program (TANF), or Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) case number, or contain only foster children, do not have to complete income information and do not have to provide any information about a Social Security number.
- Social Security numbers may not be collected for any household member as part of the verification process.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> These changes are reflected in USDA's prototype materials for school year 2011-2012, which are available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/frp/frp.process.htm>.

<sup>7</sup> See P.L. 111-296 § 102 amending 42 U.S.C. § 1758(b) and (d) and Food and Nutrition Service memorandum, *Child Nutrition Reauthorization 2010: Categorical Eligibility of Foster Children*, USDA, Revised March 16, 2011, [http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/Policy-Memos/2011/SP17\\_CACFP08\\_SFSP05-2011\\_osr.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/Policy-Memos/2011/SP17_CACFP08_SFSP05-2011_osr.pdf). Note that if a foster child is included on an application with other children in the household, any personal income of the foster child must be included, but will not affect the eligibility of the foster child. As in the past, the foster care maintenance payment received by the family to help cover the costs of caring for the child is not to be included as income to the family. In addition, if a foster child is included on an application with non-foster children, the school district can determine the eligibility of the non-foster children by including the foster child as a household member and not including the foster child as a household member and give the higher benefit level to the non-foster children. See text box on page 12 for more information about applications that include foster children.

<sup>8</sup> See P.L. 111-296 § 301 amending 42 U.S.C. § 1758(d)(1) and Food and Nutrition Service memorandum, *Child Nutrition Reauthorization 2010: Privacy Protection and the Use of Social Security Numbers in Child Nutrition Programs*, USDA, February 15, 2011, [http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/Policy-Memos/2011/SP19\\_CACFP09\\_SFSP06-2011\\_os.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/Policy-Memos/2011/SP19_CACFP09_SFSP06-2011_os.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

An additional policy change that was implemented by USDA in August 2009 — referred to as extended categorical eligibility — also required changes to application materials.<sup>10</sup> Under the revised policy, all children in a household are eligible for free school meals if anyone in the household is receiving SNAP, TANF, or FDPIR benefits.<sup>11</sup> This policy change is important because up to 2 million children who are categorically eligible based on receipt of these public benefits are missed in the automatic enrollment process — known as direct certification — and the new policy facilitates their enrollment, either through a data-matching process or a paper application.<sup>12</sup> Direct certification systems may now be set up to identify all children in a household.<sup>13</sup> For children who are nonetheless missed in the direct certification process, two specific changes to household materials can streamline the application process and help ensure that these children do not miss out on the free meals for which they are eligible.

- Application materials may now indicate that only one SNAP, TANF, or FDPIR case number must be provided in order to qualify all of the children in the household for free school meals and explain that the case number may be for any member of the household, including an adult.
- The notice to parents informing them that a child has been directly certified is now required to include directions for making other children in the household known to the school district.

## STEPS TO IMPLEMENT NEW POLICIES FOR THIS SCHOOL YEAR

These new policies were effective upon enactment of the reauthorization legislation on December 13, 2010 and must be implemented immediately, but state agencies and school districts are unlikely to print new materials for the remainder of the 2010-2011 school year. Instead, states and school districts could develop alternative mechanisms for implementing the new policies, such as:

- Adding a notice of the policy change to the web site where applications are posted or completed so that households who seek out applications will be aware of the policy changes.
- Placing a sticker on the household packet explaining the changes.
- Manually deleting the requests for personal income of foster children and the first five digits of Social Security numbers on applications.
- In the rare instances in which household verification is conducted (when verification for cause is warranted), manually delete the request for information about Social Security numbers.

<sup>10</sup> See Food and Nutrition Service memorandum, *Extending Categorical Eligibility to Additional Children in a Household*, USDA, August 27, 2009, [http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/Policy-Memos/2009/SP\\_38-2009\\_os.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/Policy-Memos/2009/SP_38-2009_os.pdf) and Food and Nutrition Service memorandum, *Questions and Answers on Extending Categorical Eligibility to Additional Children in a Household*, USDA, May 3, 2010, [http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/governance/Policy-Memos/2010/SP\\_25\\_CACFP\\_11\\_SFSP\\_10-2010\\_os.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/governance/Policy-Memos/2010/SP_25_CACFP_11_SFSP_10-2010_os.pdf).

<sup>11</sup> Extended categorical eligibility does not apply to homeless, runaway, migrant, or foster children. They are individually categorically eligible.

<sup>12</sup> See Food and Nutrition Service, *Direct Certification in the National School Lunch Program: State Implementation Progress 2009-2010, Report to Congress*, USDA, October 2010, Table 3, <http://www.fns.usda.gov/ora/MENU/Published/CNP/FILES/DirectCert2010.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> For a more detailed discussion of this policy change and how it can allow more eligible children to be automatically enrolled, see Zoë Neuberger and Tina Fritz Namian, *Enrolling All Children in a Household for Free School Meals*, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, June 2010, <http://www.cbpp.org/files/6-16-10fa.pdf>.

## Summary of Review of Current Materials

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities reviewed school year 2010-2011 applications and other household materials that are available online for each state and the 100 largest school districts.<sup>14</sup> We were able to find on the web and review 83 sets of printable applications and related materials (37 from states and 46 from large school districts).<sup>15</sup> In addition, we reviewed 31 state and school district applications that may be completed and submitted electronically.<sup>16</sup> Appendices A and B provide more detail about which states and how many districts offer household materials, the specific materials that are available (such as a parent letter, instructions, application, etc.), and the form in which they are provided (printable or online).<sup>17</sup>

Our review focused on features of applications and related materials that could facilitate access to free or reduced-price meals for low-income families. The review allowed us to identify best practices and areas for improvement where program rules are not being met or where materials are not as clear as they could be.

This paper discusses the key features we encourage state and local program administrators to consider as they redesign applications and related materials. The results of our review are summarized in a table at the end of each section. While no single set of household materials includes all the best practices we recommend, we point to specific state or local examples of the features that make materials easier to use and understand. To ensure that the application is understandable to the people who will actually complete it, it will also be important to test a draft of the revised materials with potential applicants.<sup>18</sup>

## Key Improvements to Application Materials

The packet of school meals materials provided to parents at the start of the school year typically includes a letter explaining the school meals programs, instructions on how to complete an application for free or reduced-price meals, and an application form. (Appendix C summarizes all the required elements of application materials.) Since parents typically complete the application on their own, it is especially important for the materials to be clear, easy to use, and encouraging. If

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<sup>14</sup> The review was conducted between November 2010 and March 2011.

<sup>15</sup> This paper refers to applications that must be printed and completed manually for submission as “printable” applications.

<sup>16</sup> This paper refers to applications that may be submitted electronically as “online” applications.

<sup>17</sup> Any state or district materials that are available online but are missing from our review reflect an error by the authors.

<sup>18</sup> USDA has published a guide to improving applications for SNAP benefits, which program administrators may wish to consult as an additional resource. The guide covers some important overarching aspects of developing clear applications that elicit accurate information and discusses how to test draft materials with potential applicants. See Food and Nutrition Service, *Guide to Assessing Food Stamp Application Forms*, USDA, July 2003, <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/government/pdf/assessment-guide.pdf>.

parents do not complete and return the application form, their children may miss meals, jeopardizing their healthy development and learning.<sup>19</sup>

Our review of materials in use by states and large school districts for the 2010-2011 school year revealed that in some instances required elements of household materials are missing and that even when all requirements are met, household materials are not always as simple and clear as they could be. USDA's prototype application and related materials offer a sound starting point for school districts and state agencies that are looking for a model from which to work.<sup>20</sup> This section highlights four areas where improvements to applications and related materials could streamline the application process and substantially enhance program access for eligible children.<sup>21</sup>

### **Provide Materials in a Language and at a Level That Parents Can Understand**

Under the rules for the school lunch and breakfast programs, "Any communication with households for eligibility determination purposes must be in an understandable and uniform format and to the maximum extent practicable, in a language that parents and guardians can understand."<sup>22</sup> USDA has not clarified for states and school districts the kinds of measures that are necessary to comply with this provision. But our review of state and local materials revealed that substantial numbers of states and districts do not take even the most basic steps to ensure that families can understand materials about the school meals programs. Food insecurity is more prevalent among young children with immigrant parents than those with native-born parents; among young children with immigrant parents, food insecurity is even more likely in families in which parents are learning English or have less education. Thus, school meals can be a critical resource for children whose parents are learning English.<sup>23</sup> If parents cannot understand the application, they may not apply for the meals for which their children qualify. Parents might, for example, incorrectly believe that receiving free or reduced-price school meals could negatively impact an application for citizenship.

#### *Materials for English Language Learners*

At a minimum, school districts can improve communications with parents who are learning English by explaining how to obtain materials or assistance in other languages and placing a link on the school district's web site to USDA's web site with translations in 25 languages or providing printed copies of USDA's materials. In addition, state agencies or school districts may choose to

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<sup>19</sup> This is not true for households that are automatically enrolled for free meals as a result of direct certification. In addition, school officials are permitted to complete an application on behalf of a child if they have information indicating that the household is eligible. See 7 C.F.R. § 245.6(d) and Food and Nutrition Service, *Eligibility Manual for School Meals*, USDA, January 2008, pp.22-23, [http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/guidance/eligibility\\_guidance.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/guidance/eligibility_guidance.pdf).

<sup>20</sup> USDA's prototype materials are available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/frp/frp.process.htm>.

<sup>21</sup> Our review of state household materials included an assessment of each required element of household materials as well as best practices. The discussion in this paper focuses on areas that are central to program access and/or where materials tend to fall short of requirements or best practices. Additional information on the more detailed review may be provided upon request.

<sup>22</sup> 7 C.F.R. § 245.6(a)(2) using language almost identical to the statutory provision at 42 U.S.C. § 9(b)(8).

<sup>23</sup> See Randy Capps, Allison Horowitz, Karina Fortuny, Jacinta Bronte-Tinkew, and Martha Zaslow, *Young Children in Immigrant Families Face Higher Risk of Food Insecurity*, February 2009, [http://www.childtrends.org/Files/Child\\_Trends-2009\\_02\\_20\\_RB\\_ImmigrantFood.pdf](http://www.childtrends.org/Files/Child_Trends-2009_02_20_RB_ImmigrantFood.pdf).

develop written translations of their own materials in the languages that are most prevalent locally.<sup>24</sup> Eleven of the 37 states with printable materials on their web sites provide information only in English. School districts generally provided more materials in other languages; three of the 50 large districts for which a web site or printable materials were available did not provide any information about obtaining materials or assistance in another language.

Providing a translated application is an important starting point, but the goal is to make sure all parents understand all relevant information about the school meals programs. Therefore, all communications with families about the school meals programs need to be in a language parents can understand. This is crucial to ensuring that parents understand and comply with program rules. For parents who speak languages for which USDA translations are not available, or who have limited literacy, states and school districts would benefit from identifying oral interpretation services for communications with households about school meal benefits.<sup>25</sup>

As school food administrators endeavor to communicate more effectively with parents, existing school district resources may facilitate their efforts. Most schools have a system in place to identify parents' primary language for communications regarding the child's education. State agencies and school districts can rely on this system to ensure that communications with households regarding the school meals programs are in an appropriate language. For example, many districts use a Home Language Survey, which is conducted as part of the enrollment process, to determine the dominant language in the home. Alternatively, USDA's "I speak" survey could be attached to the household materials to identify the appropriate language for communications regarding school meals.<sup>26</sup> Oregon makes use of its online application system to allow households to designate one of four languages in which further written materials will be provided.<sup>27</sup> The New York City Department of Education's web site includes a translated list of the 15 languages in which applications are available and an image of the translated application appears when a language is selected.<sup>28</sup> Other states and districts may wish to add similar features to their web sites.

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<sup>24</sup> States and school districts that choose to translate their own application materials may wish to consult Center for Health Literacy, *Translation — A Must-Have Guide*, Maximus, July 2010, available at <http://www.maximus.com/services/health/health-literacy/translation-services>.

<sup>25</sup> For example, a school district could contract for a telephone translation service such as Language Line (see <http://www.language-line.com/page/industry-government/>).

<sup>26</sup> USDA's "I speak" survey is available at [http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/Translations/I\\_speak.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/Translations/I_speak.pdf).

<sup>27</sup> The languages that may be selected are: Chinese, Russian, Spanish, and Vietnamese. The feature could be improved by placing it at on the school meals web site or at the beginning of the application, so that families would not have to complete an English application in order to indicate that materials in another language would be preferred.

<sup>28</sup> This feature may be viewed at [http://www.opt-osfns.org/osfns/Mealsapp/forms\\_reduced.aspx](http://www.opt-osfns.org/osfns/Mealsapp/forms_reduced.aspx). The feature could be improved by allowing parents to print a translated application. Currently applications, including English applications, must be obtained from a school or by calling a central help desk.

Table 1: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS ON PROVIDING MATERIALS IN A LANGUAGE THAT PARENTS CAN UNDERSTAND	
Provide Spanish application <i>or</i> a link to USDA's translations into additional languages	26 of 37 states for which applications were available provide a Spanish translation or a link to USDA's translations <sup>29</sup>
	47 of 50 large districts for which a web site or printable materials were available provide a Spanish translation or a link to USDA's translations
Provide Spanish application <i>and</i> a link to USDA's translations into additional languages	5 of 37 states for which applications were available provide both a Spanish translation and a link to USDA's translations
	5 of 50 large districts for which a web site or printable materials were available provide both a Spanish translation and a link to USDA's translations
Provide Spanish application but <i>no</i> link to USDA's translations into additional languages	10 of 37 states for which applications were available provide a Spanish translation but no link to USDA's translations
	42 of 50 large districts for which a web site or printable materials were available provide a Spanish translation but no link to USDA's translations
Provide a link to USDA's translated materials but <i>no</i> other translated applications	11 of 37 states for which applications were available provide a link to USDA's translations but no other translated applications <sup>30</sup>
	0 of 50 large districts for which a web site or printable materials were available provide a link to USDA's translations but no other translations
Provide translations of the application into a language other than Spanish	2 of 37 states for which applications were available provide translations into a language other than Spanish <sup>31</sup>
	13 of 50 large districts for which a web site or printable materials were available provide translations into a language other than Spanish <sup>32</sup>

<sup>29</sup> New Jersey does not provide any translated applications or a link to USDA's translations into additional languages, but does provide certain notices in Spanish (incomplete application, eligibility determination, verification results, and sharing information with other programs).

<sup>30</sup> Maine does not provide any translated applications, but does provide a parent letter and application instructions in French as well as a link to USDA's Somali application.

<sup>31</sup> Minnesota provides an application in Arabic, Hmong, Khmer-Cambodian, Laotian, Russian, Somali, Spanish, and Vietnamese. Oregon provides an application in Chinese, Russian, Spanish, and Vietnamese.

<sup>32</sup> Anchorage (AK) provides translations in Spanish, Hmong, Korean, Samoan, and Tagalog. Garden Grove Unified (CA) provides translations in Spanish, Vietnamese, and Korean. Long Beach Unified (CA) provides translations in Spanish and Khmer. Los Angeles Unified (CA) provides translations in Spanish, Armenian, Russian, Vietnamese, Korean, and Chinese. Jefferson County School District No. R-1 (CO) provides translations in Russian and Vietnamese.

## *Materials for Parents with Limited Literacy*

It is also important for states and school districts to ensure that English speakers with limited literacy can understand household materials. Both Congress and the Administration have recently emphasized the importance of using clear and simple language when communicating with the public about federal benefit programs. Last October, the Plain Writing Act of 2010 was enacted with the purpose of improving “the effectiveness and accountability of Federal agencies to the public by promoting clear Government communication that the public can understand and use.”<sup>33</sup> Under the statute, applications for federal benefits must comply with its plain language requirements by October 13, 2011. The Office of Management and Budget’s memorandum implementing the new law explained why clear communications are so important:

Plain writing should be seen as an essential part of open government. . . . Transparency, public participation, and collaboration cannot easily occur without plain writing. Clear and simple communication can eliminate significant barriers to public participation in important programs for benefits and services. Avoiding ambiguity and unnecessary complexity can increase compliance simply because people understand better what they are supposed to do. Plain writing is no mere formal requirement; it can be essential to the successful achievement of legislative or administrative goals, and it promotes the rule of law.

Unfortunately, applications for public benefits often are not written simply enough for many adults to understand. For example, a recent review of online applications for Medicaid or the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) found that on average English applications were written at a 12<sup>th</sup> grade or higher reading level, which is far more advanced than the 6<sup>th</sup> grade reading level that is typically recommended for those with low literacy.<sup>34</sup>

School meals applications are required to be “clear and simple in design.”<sup>35</sup> Iowa’s application offers an example of a design that is relatively easy to read and that includes clear instructions on the application itself regarding who needs to complete each section.

Because low-income parents often have less education and may have more limited reading skills than the general public, it will be especially important for program administrators to focus on readability as they revise school meals applications. There are widely available resources available to

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Broward County School District (FL) has applications available at schools in Spanish, Creole, and Portuguese. Palm Beach County School District (FL) has applications available at schools in Spanish and Creole. Boston Public Schools (MA) provides translations in Cape Verdean Creole, Chinese, Haitian Creole, Portuguese, Somali, Spanish, and Vietnamese. Baltimore County Public Schools (MD) provides translations in Spanish and Chinese. Montgomery County Public Schools (MD) provides translations in Spanish, French, Korean, Chinese, Portuguese, and Amharic. The New York City Department of Education (NY) provides translations in Spanish, Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, French, Greek, Haitian-Creole, Hebrew, Italian, Korean, Russian, Hindi, Polish, and Urdu. Arlington Independent School District (TX) provides translations in Spanish and Vietnamese. Fairfax County Schools (VA) provides translations in Farsi, Korean, Spanish, Urdu, and Vietnamese.

<sup>33</sup> P.L. 111-274, available at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-111publ274/pdf/PLAW-111publ274.pdf>.

<sup>34</sup> Lorraine S. Wallace, Jennifer E. DeVoe, and Julie S. Hansen, *Assessment of Children's Public Health Insurance Program Enrollment Applications — A Health Literacy Perspective*, *Journal of Pediatric Health Care*, February 2011, [http://www.medscape.com/index/list\\_4827\\_0](http://www.medscape.com/index/list_4827_0).

<sup>35</sup> See 7 C.F.R. § 245.6(a)(1).

assist administrators in developing simple materials and assessing readability. The federal government has a web site devoted to plain writing, which includes detailed guidelines for writing readable documents.<sup>36</sup> USDA has published a guide to help states make applications for SNAP benefits more user-friendly; the guide includes suggestions on how to convey a helpful and professional tone and how to make forms easier to understand.<sup>37</sup> Tools are also available to assess the grade level of text.<sup>38</sup>

States and districts may wish to field test applications with parents who have limited literacy to make sure the materials are comprehensible and elicit accurate information. Such tests need not be elaborate or expensive; for example, at a parent event a few volunteers could be solicited to complete a draft application and they could be interviewed about the materials.<sup>39</sup>

School districts also may wish to develop a system for providing assistance to parents who have limited literacy or do not read at all. While such parents may seek out a friend or relative to read them forms, districts could designate a staff member to read forms to parents who are unable to read and seek help with the school meals application process (they may need help with the school enrollment process as well).

### **Ask Only for Necessary Information**

Asking families to provide information that is not needed to make an eligibility determination creates an unnecessary burden for the household and program administrators and may dissuade some families from applying for free or reduced-price school meals. Under program regulations, the information requested on the application “shall be limited to that required to demonstrate that the household does, or does not, meet the eligibility criteria for free or reduced price meals.”<sup>40</sup>

Children in households that receive SNAP, TANF, or FDPIR benefits are categorically eligible for free school meals. Categorically eligible children can be enrolled for free school meals based on a school meals application that includes a SNAP, TANF, or FDPIR case number or through direct certification. Ideally all children in these households would be directly certified so that families do not have to complete a duplicative application and school districts don’t have to waste resources processing unnecessary paper applications. Nonetheless, in many households that receive SNAP, TANF, or FDPIR benefits, some or all children are missed in the direct certification process. To reach children in households in which at least one child is directly certified based on receipt of SNAP, TANF, or FDPIR benefits, the notice to parents informing them that a child has been

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<sup>36</sup> See <http://www.plainlanguage.gov> and <http://www.plainlanguage.gov/howto/guidelines/bigdoc/TOC.cfm>.

<sup>37</sup> See Food and Nutrition Service, *Guide to Assessing Food Stamp Application Forms*, USDA, July 2003, pp. 22-23 and 45-62, <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/government/pdf/assessment-guide.pdf>.

<sup>38</sup> Examples of such tools are the Simple Measure of Gobbledygook (SMOG) Readability Index (<http://execsec.od.nih.gov/plainlang/guidelines/evaluating.html#smog>) and the Lexile Analyzer (<http://www.lexile.com/analyzer/>). Word processing programs also have tools that assess the reading level of a document or assist in counting words or sentences and finding the average length of sentences and paragraphs.

<sup>39</sup> For a more detailed discussion about how to test draft materials with potential applicants, see Food and Nutrition Service, *Guide to Assessing Food Stamp Application Forms*, USDA, July 2003, pp. 77-83, <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/government/pdf/assessment-guide.pdf>.

<sup>40</sup> 7 C.F.R. § 245.6(a).

directly certified is now required to include directions for making other children in the household known to the school district. While the majority of states that make their direct certification notice available online have incorporated this change, not all do. USDA's prototype household materials offer an example of how to incorporate these instructions.<sup>41</sup>

For categorically eligible children, the information required on a paper application is simplified. These households must provide a case number for the program that confers eligibility, but they do not have to provide income information or any information about a Social Security number. Asking for this information once a family has provided a case number violates program rules. Too often, however, the design of applications — both paper applications and those submitted electronically — is unclear or appears to require the family to complete all sections of the application.

Applications that are completed and submitted online are well suited to ask only for the required information. If a household provides a case number, that household should not be asked for income information or information about a Social Security number. Most online applications, however, do not take advantage of the opportunity to tailor the information that is requested. Instead, they ask for unnecessary and redundant information, which could deter eligible low-income households from completing the application. We reviewed 31 online applications used by states and school districts.<sup>42</sup> If a case number is provided, the income section appears on six of these and the request for information about a Social Security number appears on 16.<sup>43</sup> In some instances, the application can be submitted without the income information and/or Social Security number information, but families are not notified that they may omit the information or are encouraged to provide it anyway.<sup>44</sup>

For paper applications, a few revisions would make it much clearer that these categorically eligible households need to provide only names, a single case number (for an adult or child), and a signature.

- State clearly, before the income section of the application, that the household does not need to provide income information if it has provided a SNAP, TANF, or FDPIR case number. Assembling income information is redundant because the household has already provided that information to another public benefit program. Households that are exempt from providing income information should be made aware of that fact. School districts would benefit as well, since they would be relieved of the burden of receiving unnecessary income information, which creates opportunities for administrative error.

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<sup>41</sup> USDA's prototype materials are available at [http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/frp/2011\\_application.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/frp/2011_application.pdf).

<sup>42</sup> See Appendix A for a list of which states had online applications that we were able to review. See Appendix E for links to school district online applications.

<sup>43</sup> We were unable to determine whether the income section appears for all applicants on the Pennsylvania online application because a valid case number must be entered to proceed with the application.

<sup>44</sup> For example, in two of the school districts in which the income and Social Security number sections appear even if a case number is provided, an applicant is allowed to check a box to skip providing income, but the instructions imply that all applications with case numbers will be verified, which is a violation of program regulations, and that if the case number is not verified the application will be "rejected as incomplete" in the absence of income or Social Security number information.

While most states' instruction pages explain which types of households should fill out which sections of the application, many households are likely to read only the instructions embedded in the application. The USDA prototype application for school year 2011-2012 states (above the space for a case number) that if the family has filled in a case number, it should skip the income-reporting section.<sup>45</sup> Many state and school district applications follow this format. The application could be even clearer by stating again at the start of the income section that households that provided a case number do not need to complete it. Minnesota's application offers an example of this format.

## ENROLLING OTHER VULNERABLE GROUPS OF CHILDREN

**Homeless, runaway, and migrant children:** Children who are homeless, runaway, or migrant are categorically eligible for free school meals. These children can be enrolled based on a school meals application or a list provided by a relevant third party, such as a school district's homeless liaison or a homeless shelter director. Once they are enrolled, these children remain eligible for the full school year and start of the next school year even if their status as homeless, runaway, or migrant changes. Children must meet certain statutory conditions to be considered homeless, runaway, or migrant for purposes of school meal eligibility. Therefore, staff familiar with the statutory requirements must make the determination and children may not be enrolled based on an application that indicates that a child falls into one of these categories. To be enrolled based on an application, the application must include household income information and the last four digits of a Social Security number or an indication that the signing adult does not have one. Almost every application we reviewed, including online applications, was unclear about how a family should proceed if the person completing the application believed that a child was homeless, runaway, or migrant. Often on the application, including on USDA's prototype for school year 2010-2011, the parent is asked to check a box if a child is homeless, runaway, or migrant and to call a designated contact at the school. But such applications do not indicate if the parent is supposed to complete the application or if the school contact will take the next step. It is important for applications to explain clearly what steps to take if a child is homeless, runaway, or migrant. As states and school districts revise their household materials, they have the opportunity to clarify the enrollment process for these children. Clarification is especially important right now when the number of homeless children has grown significantly as a result of the recession. Between the 2006-2007 school year and the 2008-2009 school year, the number of homeless children who qualify for free school lunches increased by more than 40 percent (see The National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth and First Focus, *A Critical Moment: Child & Youth Homelessness in Our Nation's Schools*, July 2010, [http://www.naehcy.org/dl/crit\\_mom.pdf](http://www.naehcy.org/dl/crit_mom.pdf), which also includes state-by-state data).

**Foster children:** Foster children whose care and placement are the responsibility of the state or who have been placed with a caretaker household by a court are now categorically eligible for free meals regardless of personal income or the household income of their foster family. Once they are enrolled, foster children remain eligible for the full school year even if they leave foster care. Foster children may be enrolled for free school meals based on a school meals application or a list provided by a relevant third party. For example, a local foster care placement agency may provide a list of foster children to the school district that covers the neighborhoods it serves, or the foster care caseworker who notifies the school of a child's foster care status could also notify the school food program (oral notification would likely suffice if the school food program noted the name of the person making the notification and the date). If a foster family indicates on an application that all the children are foster children, the family does not have to provide any income information or information about a Social Security number. If, however, an application includes both foster children and other children (which is advantageous to the family because the non-foster children might qualify more easily for free or reduced-price meals), the adult completing the application will have to provide income information (for all household members, including foster children) and the last four digits of the adult's Social Security number or an indication that he or she does not have one. As states and school districts revise their household materials, they will need to make changes to reflect the policy change regarding foster children and they have an opportunity to clarify the application process for foster families.

<sup>45</sup> USDA's prototype materials for school year 2011-2012 are available in English at [http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/frp/2011\\_application.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/frp/2011_application.pdf).

- *Place the request for the signing adult's Social Security number in the income-information section.* Most states and school districts ask for the Social Security number (or indication that the adult does not have one) with the adult's signature at the bottom of the application, which suggests that all applications must provide information about a Social Security number. To the contrary, households receiving SNAP, TANF, or FDPIR benefits do not have to provide information about a Social Security number. Sometimes there is an explanation in the instructions or in tiny font on the application that households that provide a case number do not have to provide information about a Social Security number, but such explanations are easy to miss. Parents in households receiving SNAP, TANF, or FDPIR benefits may abandon the application process if they have concerns about providing information about a Social Security number.

States can easily avoid this potential barrier by including the Social Security number request as part of the household income-reporting section. The same households that are exempt from providing income information are exempt from providing information about a Social Security number. Placing the request for information about a Social Security number in the income section makes it clear that only households completing the income section need to provide that information. Iowa's application offers an example of this format.

- *State prominently on the application that the signing adult is not required to have a Social Security number.* A parent's lack of a Social Security number is not grounds for a child's ineligibility. It is important for adults who lack a Social Security number to understand that they may apply for free or reduced-price meals for the children in their household. Even with the change from requesting a full Social Security number to just the last four digits, any suggestion that a Social Security number is required for a child to receive free or reduced-price meals could pose a barrier to applying for some families.

Applications based on income require either the last four digits of the Social Security number of the adult household member who signs the application or an indication that this adult does not possess a Social Security number. It is best to explain these alternatives on the application itself rather than only in the instructions. There are several ways to address this issue on the application. The USDA prototype application provides a check-box labeled "I do not have a Social Security Number" next to the space for the Social Security number. Groups that work with immigrants report that some families are reluctant to draw attention to their lack of a Social Security number by checking the box. California and several other states include directions to write "none" in the space asking for the Social Security number. State officials may wish to consult with organizations representing various immigrant communities on which approach best suits immigrants in their state.

Our review of state and local materials showed that applications almost universally explained that a parent may apply even if he or she does not have a Social Security number, which suggests that state and local program administrators understand the importance of this policy. When applications are revised, it will be important to retain this feature.

- *Request a single case number.* As noted above, if a household provides a SNAP, TANF, or FDPIR case number for any member of the household, all children in the household are categorically eligible for free meals. This policy has only been in place for a couple of school years. Eight of the 38 state applications and 16 of the 36 school district applications we reviewed did not

explain that only one case number needs to be provided and that it can be for an adult or a child. In addition, applications that have only one space for a case number, rather than having a space next to the name of each household member, convey more clearly that one number will suffice. Nebraska’s application offers an example of clear formatting and instructions on this point.

When writing the case number request, it is important for school meal program administrators to confer with SNAP, TANF, or FDPIR administrators to determine the best way to describe the case number. Many states use their own names for these programs. Moreover, in some states the term “case number” is not used, or participants are issued multiple identification numbers. In such instances, it is important to use vocabulary that matches that used by the SNAP, TANF, or FDPIR program and to include an explanation of which number to include. For example, the Memphis City Schools (Tennessee) application states on the application itself, “If you have a SNAP or FAMILIES FIRST case number, list the case number (NOT EBT card number).”

Table 2: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS ON ASKING ONLY FOR NECESSARY INFORMATION	
The application explains clearly that households that provide a case number do not have to provide income information	30 of 37 states for which printable materials were available adopt this practice <sup>46</sup>
	24 of 36 large districts for which printable materials were available adopt this practice
The request for information about a Social Security number is placed in the income-information section on the application	2 of 37 states for which printable materials were available adopt this practice
	0 of 36 large districts for which printable materials were available adopt this practice
The application states prominently that a Social Security number is not required to apply and that an indication that the signing adult does not have one will suffice	36 of 37 states for which printable materials were available adopt this practice
	36 of 36 large districts for which printable materials were available adopt this practice
The application explains that one SNAP/TANF/FDPIR case number for any child or adult in the household is sufficient	29 of 37 state applications include this explanation
	20 of 36 school district applications include this explanation
The direct certification notice provides instructions to parents about how to make other children in the household known to the school district	19 of 26 state direct certification notices include these instructions (school districts generally do not make these notices available on the web)

<sup>46</sup> Four of the seven states that do not adopt this practice instruct applicants to skip the income section if they provide a case number *for each child*. Since case numbers no longer need to be provided for each child, we do not consider this approach consistent with asking only for information necessary to determine eligibility.

## Reduce Math Errors

Households often have multiple sources of income that arrive at different frequencies — weekly or bi-weekly wages combined with monthly Social Security benefits, for example. Asking families to convert all of these sources into a single measure of income can be confusing. For example, many individuals may not understand that being paid every two weeks and twice a month require different conversions to calculate monthly income. Requiring households to calculate monthly income creates opportunities for error.

School districts can improve program access and accuracy by doing the conversion calculations themselves rather than asking households to do them.<sup>47</sup> The USDA prototype application for school year 2010-2011 provides spaces for households to fill in the income amount and how often the income was received, a technique adopted by many states and districts. There are several alternative ways states can gather the necessary information.

- Provide a space for the amount of different types of income and then ask the household to fill in a code indicating the frequency.
- Provide a space for the amount of different types of income and then ask the household to check a box indicating the frequency.
- Provide a space for the amount of different types of income and then ask the household to circle the word that corresponds to the frequency.
- Provide a separate column for each type of pay period and ask the household to fill in the income received in the appropriate pay-period column.

Applications from New York City, Indiana, Michigan, and North Dakota offer examples of each of these approaches. All of these methods avoid requiring the family to convert all forms of income into a single frequency and therefore reduce the opportunity for calculation errors by parents.

<b>Table 3:</b>	
<b>SUMMARY OF FINDINGS ON REDUCING MATH ERRORS</b>	
The application provides options to note different frequencies of income without doing calculations	34 of 37 states for which printable materials were available adopt this practice
	30 of 36 large districts for which printable materials were available adopt this practice

<sup>47</sup> For an explanation of the appropriate methodology for making conversion calculations, see Food and Nutrition Service, *Eligibility Manual for School Meals*, USDA, January 2008, pp.18-19, [http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/guidance/eligibility\\_guidance.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/guidance/eligibility_guidance.pdf) and Food and Nutrition Service memorandum, *Statutory Changes in the Free and Reduced Price Eligibility Determination Process and Revised Prototype Application Implementation Memo*, USDA March 7, 2005, <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Application/2005-03-07.pdf>.

## Encourage Eligible Families to Apply

USDA, states, and school districts share the goal of certifying all eligible low-income children for free or reduced price meals. Application materials are an important means of expressing that goal to potentially eligible families. In the context of the SNAP program, USDA has explained the importance of the tone of application materials:

Many people who use social services have an image of an uncaring, bureaucratic system filled with impediments and unnecessary delays. When applicants get a form that is filled with a tone that matches that image, they may be intimidated and may even decide that it's not worth the effort to complete the form.<sup>48</sup>

To encourage eligible families to apply, states and school districts can create materials that welcome applications. The following statements offer examples of inviting language.

- “Help us get the word out! We want everyone to participate in our free and reduced meal program.”<sup>49</sup>
- “Are you a busy parent? Do you want your child to have productive days at school? Are you looking for assurance that your child is eating healthy meals at school without the burden of packing a lunch?”<sup>50</sup>
- “Do you want to make sure your children get nutritious & delicious school meals everyday? Sign up for Free or Reduced-Price School Meals! You may find an application in your student’s school registration packet OR at your school’s main office OR you can come to the Nutrition Services Center to fill out your application ... we will be happy to assist you! Let’s work together to provide healthy meals for our students!”<sup>51</sup>

School districts may also wish to consider posting videos or other outreach and informational materials on their web site to encourage eligible families to apply or assist them in completing an application. For example, the District of Columbia Public Schools’ web site has a one minute video emphasizing the school district’s commitment to providing healthy meals and encouraging parents to complete an application to help “ensure that next year DCPS has the resources we need to provide healthy and appetizing meals and that students in need will receive meals at little or no

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<sup>48</sup> Food and Nutrition Service, *Guide to Assessing Food Stamp Application Forms*, USDA, July 2003, p. 22, <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/government/pdf/assessment-guide.pdf>.

<sup>49</sup> See the banner on the Aldine Independent School District (Texas) web site at <http://www.aldinecafe.com/FreeReduced/tabid/1160/Default.aspx>.

<sup>50</sup> See the parent letter on the Atlanta Public Schools (Georgia) web site at [http://www.atlantapublicschoolsnutrition.us/schools/aps\\_0707092223267041/mealapps/Letter\\_to\\_Household.pdf](http://www.atlantapublicschoolsnutrition.us/schools/aps_0707092223267041/mealapps/Letter_to_Household.pdf).

<sup>51</sup> See the Washoe County School District (Nevada) web site at <http://www.washoecountyschools.org/parents/nutrition-services/nslp>.

cost.”<sup>52</sup> The Los Angeles Unified school district’s web site includes an instructional video in English and Spanish explaining how to complete a school meals application.<sup>53</sup>

There are several other concrete steps states and school districts can take to encourage eligible families to complete an application.

- *Encourage applications throughout the school year.* While the program rules allow families to apply for free or reduced-price meals at any point during the school year, the emphasis on applications at the start of the school year gives some parents the impression that they may not apply later. School districts can take steps to encourage applications throughout the year: the application could include a prominent notice explaining that applications are accepted at any time during the year; household materials could be made available at school events throughout the school year; and reminders could be included in meal calendars or parent newsletters. Once certified for free or reduced-price meals, a child remains eligible for the remainder of the year and for up to 30 operating days into the following school year regardless of changes in household circumstances.<sup>54</sup>
- *Reach out to parents who become unemployed.* Understanding that they may apply at any time is especially important for parents who become unemployed during the school year after household materials have been sent home. Program regulations require that the letter or notice sent to parents at the start of the school year with information about the school meals programs must include “A statement to the effect that children having parents or guardians who become unemployed are eligible for free or reduced price meals or for free milk during the period of unemployment, *Provided*, that the loss of income causes the household income during the period of unemployment to be within the eligibility criteria.”<sup>55</sup> Many states and school districts do not include such a statement in their household materials.

Providing the required statement is an important starting point, but outreach to parents who may become unemployed or otherwise face a decline in income during the school year is important, especially now, with the unemployment rate close to 9 percent. Any web site where information about school meals is posted could include a prominent notice explaining that applications are accepted at any time during the year and if a parent has become unemployed or if household income has declined for other reasons, the children may be eligible for free or reduced-price meals. In addition, states or school districts could work with workforce agency administrators to notify applicants for unemployment compensation about the availability of free and reduced-price meals. USDA has made a model letter available.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> The video may be viewed at <http://dcps.dc.gov/DCPS/Beyond+the+Classroom/Food+Services/Family+Application+for+School+Lunch+and+Breakfast>.

<sup>53</sup> The video may be viewed at [http://cafe-la.lausd.net/Meal\\_Programs/Meal\\_Applications](http://cafe-la.lausd.net/Meal_Programs/Meal_Applications).

<sup>54</sup> See 7 C.F.R. § 245.6(c).

<sup>55</sup> 7 C.F.R. § 245.5(a)(1).

<sup>56</sup> The letter is available at [http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/frp/UI\\_frp.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/frp/UI_frp.pdf).

- *Avoid multiple, unnecessary applications.* School districts are required to accept a single application for all children in the household attending schools in the same district.<sup>57</sup> While all the state materials we reviewed reflected this policy, a substantial number of district materials did not. Completing separate applications for children in the same household places an unnecessary burden on parents and could create confusion for school district staff. It is important for every application to clearly explain that every child in the household who attends school in that district can be included.
- *Reassure non-citizens.* Neither children nor their household members must be U.S. citizens to apply for free or reduced-price school meals. Explaining this rule in the parent letter could alleviate the concerns of low-income parents in households in which not all members are citizens. Although this rule is explained in USDA's prototype parent letter for the 2011-2012 school year, some states and school districts do not include it in the parent letters. It would also be helpful to explain that receiving free or reduced-price school meals does not interfere in any way with an application for citizenship.
- *Assure families they will be treated fairly.* The parent letter is also required to include a non-discrimination statement with an explanation of how to file a discrimination complaint.<sup>58</sup> The non-discrimination statement on USDA's prototype application for the 2011-2012 school year states:

Non-discrimination Statement: This 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 USDA, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 or call toll free (866) 632-9992 (Voice). Individuals who are hearing impaired 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."<sup>59</sup>

A surprising number of parent letters do not include a non-discrimination statement. It is extremely important that families know that they will be treated fairly if they apply for free or reduced-price meals. To comply with federal rules, states and school districts that do not currently include a non-discrimination statement must add one when they revise their application materials.

- *Highlight reduced-price eligibility limit.* The parent letter is required to include the eligibility criteria for reduced-price school meals with an explanation that household with incomes less than or equal to the reduced-price limit would be eligible for either free or reduced-price meals.<sup>60</sup> This

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<sup>57</sup> See 7 C.F.R. § 245.6(a)(1).

<sup>58</sup> Food and Nutrition Service, *Eligibility Manual for School Meals*, USDA, January 2008, p. 9, [http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/guidance/eligibility\\_guidance.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/guidance/eligibility_guidance.pdf).

<sup>59</sup> USDA's prototype materials for school year 2011-2012, p. 8, [http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/frp/2011\\_application.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/frp/2011_application.pdf).

<sup>60</sup> See 42 U.S.C. § 1758(b)(2)(B)(i) and 7 C.F.R. § 245.5(a)(1). This requirement was waived for the 2010-2011 school year because Congress delayed the release of the poverty guidelines upon which the income eligibility limits are based.

information is important so that parents who may not realize they are eligible but are struggling to feed their families will consider completing an application.

<b>Table 4:</b>	
<b>SUMMARY OF FINDINGS ON ENCOURAGING ELIGIBLE FAMILIES TO APPLY</b>	
The parent letter clearly states that a household may apply for benefits at any time during the school year	36 of 36 states for which a parent letter was available adopt this practice
	40 of 46 large districts for which a parent letter was available adopt this practice
The parent letter clearly states that children of parents who become unemployed may become eligible for free or reduced-price meals	18 of 36 states for which a parent letter was available adopt this practice
	31 of 46 large districts for which a parent letter was available adopt this practice
The application clearly explains that a single application will be accepted for all children in the household attending schools in the same district	37 of 37 states for which the application was available adopt this practice
	22 of 36 large districts for which the application was available adopt this practice
The parent letter indicates that household members do not have to be U.S. citizens for children to qualify for free or reduced-price meals	32 of 36 states for which a parent letter was available adopt this practice
	37 of 46 large districts for which a parent letter was available adopt this practice
The application or parent letter include the required non-discrimination statement	32 of 37 states for which the application or parent letter were available adopt this practice
	30 of 36 large districts for which the application or parent letter were available adopt this practice

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See Food and Nutrition Service memorandum, *Waiver on Providing Income Limits on Applications*, USDA, May 5, 2010, [http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/governance/Policy-Memos/2010/SP\\_26\\_CACFP\\_12\\_SFSP\\_11-2010\\_os.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/governance/Policy-Memos/2010/SP_26_CACFP_12_SFSP_11-2010_os.pdf).

## FINANCIAL AID FOR COLLEGE

Receiving a free or reduced-price lunch can make it easier for students and their families to apply for financial aid for college. Students who recently received free or reduced-price lunches (or other federal means-tested benefits) may qualify for a simplified calculation of their family contribution for college financial aid that does not require the families to report assets. In addition, if the household income is under \$31,000, the federal formula for financial aid will not expect the family to pay anything up front for college. The student can receive a Pell Grant, which may be worth up to \$5,550 for the 2011-12 school year, and subsidized student loans.

These benefits also apply to other members of the student's household – including parents and older siblings. Early information about the availability of financial aid may encourage low-income students and their parents to consider college as an option, rather than assuming that they will not be able to pay. School districts have an opportunity to promote higher education by including in household school meals materials information about the link between free or reduced-price school meals and financial aid.

Approval letters and direct certification notices could include a statement such as:

Money for college: If any member of your household is attending college this year or next, he or she may be eligible for financial aid to help pay the costs of college. If any member of the household receives free or reduced-price school lunches and the family income is under certain limits, the process of applying for student aid is simplified and you may qualify for the maximum amount of federal student aid. Be sure to check the box on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) that asks if you or a household member received free or reduced-price lunches. You can find the application at [www.fafsa.com](http://www.fafsa.com) or at the college nearest you.

The Q and A in the parent letter could include a question and answer such as:

*Is there any other benefit to filling out this application?* If a student receives free or reduced-price school lunches, the student and other household members may have easier access to federal student aid for college. By checking the free or reduced price lunch box on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), the student can more easily access financial aid. If family income is under \$31,000, the federal formula for financial aid will not expect the family to pay anything up front for college. The student should be able to receive the maximum Pell Grant, which may be worth up to \$5,550 for the 2011-12 school year, and subsidized student loans.

Information from the U.S. Department of Education about financial aid, which includes an explanation of the simplifications and additional aid for students with a family member receiving free or reduced-price lunches, is available at: <http://www.ifap.ed.gov/efcformulaguide/attachments/101310EFCFormulaGuide1112.pdf>.

### Verification Materials

Once applications for school meals have been processed and eligible students have been certified for free or reduced-price meals, school districts select a small sample of applications for eligibility verification. These applicants are sent a notice requesting more robust documentation of their eligibility. (Appendix D summarizes the required elements of the verification notice.) There are two reasons why it is critical that these verification notices be understandable.

- The verification process is designed to strengthen program integrity by identifying students who are ineligible for the benefits they are receiving and by encouraging all families to provide accurate information on their application. Parents must understand what is being asked of them in order to provide accurate information during the verification process.

- When parents do not respond to the verification notice, their children stop receiving free or reduced-price meals. In school year 2008-2009, 32 percent of households selected for verification did not respond.<sup>61</sup> Research shows that substantial portions of the children who lose benefits as a result of non-response are eligible for free or reduced-price meals.<sup>62</sup>

The recent reauthorization legislation eliminated the requirement that households provide a Social Security number for each adult (or an indication that the adult does not have one) as part of documenting eligibility during the verification process. This policy change should remove a significant barrier to responding for families that have privacy concerns or are reluctant to reveal that an adult does not have a Social Security number.<sup>63</sup>

The requirement to communicate with parents in a language they can understand applies to communications regarding the verification process as well as the application process.<sup>64</sup> Families that do not understand what is being asked of them, or fear that providing the required information will have negative consequences, may not respond to the verification notice, which results in the loss of meal benefits. Providing written or oral translations of the verification requirements is especially important in this context so that eligible children won't lose out on free or reduced-price meals. USDA's packet of materials translated into 25 languages includes verification materials, which states or school districts could send to parents if they have identified the home language.<sup>65</sup>

We were able to locate verification materials (an initial verification notice and notice to the household of the results of the verification process) on the internet for 26 states. These are generally model forms for use by school districts. Nineteen of those 26 states used the USDA prototype form with few or no changes. The school district web sites we reviewed did not include verification materials. Based on our review of these materials, there are a few key changes that would make verification materials more likely to elicit an accurate response.

- *Include a no-charge phone number for assistance and specify that it is cost-free to families.* Since 2005 school districts have been required to include in the verification notice a no-charge phone number that parents can call for help with the verification process.<sup>66</sup> It is helpful for the notice to explain

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<sup>61</sup> Food and Nutrition Service, *Analysis of Verification Summary Data School Year 2008-2009*, USDA, March 2011, Figure 5, <http://www.fns.usda.gov/ora/MENU/Published/CNP/FILES/VerificationSummaryReport.pdf>.

<sup>62</sup> See Zoë Neuberger and Robert Greenstein, *What Have We Learned From FNS' New Research Findings About Overcertification in the School Meals Programs?* Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, November 13, 2003, <http://www.cbpp.org/archiveSite/11-11-03fa.pdf>.

<sup>63</sup> See P.L. 111-296 § 301 amending 42 U.S.C. § 1758(d)(1) and Food and Nutrition Service memorandum, *Child Nutrition Reauthorization 2010: Privacy Protection and the Use of Social Security Numbers in Child Nutrition Programs*, USDA, February 15, 2011, [http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/Policy-Memos/2011/SP19\\_CACFP09\\_SFSP06-2011\\_os.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/Policy-Memos/2011/SP19_CACFP09_SFSP06-2011_os.pdf).

<sup>64</sup> For a more detailed discussion of this requirement and how to obtain translated materials, please see pages 6-10.

<sup>65</sup> It is important to note that in the context of verification, simply providing a link to USDA's materials is likely to be insufficient because parents may not have access to the web or would not think to check the school meals web site when they receive an English letter.

<sup>66</sup> See 7 C.F.R. § 245.6a, NT, (f)(5) and Food and Nutrition Service memorandum, *Verification Activities – Reauthorization 2004 Implementation Memo SP-13*, USDA, March 10, 2005, [http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/governance/Reauthorization\\_Policy\\_04/Reauthorization\\_04/2005-03-10.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/governance/Reauthorization_Policy_04/Reauthorization_04/2005-03-10.pdf).

that the family will not be charged for the call. All of the 26 state verification notices we reviewed included a phone number to call for assistance, but six of the notices did not explain that the call would be cost-free to families.

- *Explain the timeframe for which information may be provided.* Households may provide documentation of their income for any period between the month prior to application and the time at which the household is required to provide documentation (generally July or August through October or November).<sup>67</sup> It is especially important for households whose income has changed since the time they applied to understand this timeframe.

The USDA prototype verification notice addresses this issue in two places. First, the notice explains what kind of information to submit if the household was receiving SNAP, TANF, or FDPIR benefits “when you applied for free or reduced price meals, or at any time since then. . . .” Second, when describing the kinds of documents that can be submitted to verify income, the notice states, “Timeframe of Acceptable Income Documentation: Please submit proof of one month’s income; you could use the month prior to application, the month you applied, or any month after that.”

Of the 26 state verification notices we reviewed, only one did not provide any information about the timeframe for acceptable documentation. But seven additional states did not explain that the documentation could be from the month *prior to* application as well as from the month of application or subsequent months.

- *Explain how families with homeless, runaway, or migrant children may verify eligibility.* Homeless, runaway, and migrant children are categorically eligible for free meals and may be directly certified based on documentation provided by a relevant third party, such as a school district’s homeless liaison or migrant education coordinator, without having to complete an application. Children who are directly certified are not subject to verification.

Unfortunately, some of these children are missed in the direct certification process and are required to complete an application; children in this group may be selected for verification. These families do not have to provide documentation of income or receipt of benefits to verify eligibility. Such families can be spared a substantial burden, or loss of benefits, if the district’s homeless liaison or migrant coordinator verifies the child’s status to school meal administrators.

Ideally, districts would first attempt to directly verify homeless, runaway, and migrant children without involving the household, by asking the homeless liaison and migrant coordinator whether any of the children selected for verification are homeless, runaway, or migrant. For children who are not directly verified, it is important that the verification notice explain to parents how to proceed if their child is homeless, runaway, or migrant. USDA’s model verification notice states, “If you get this letter for a homeless, migrant, or runaway child, please contact [school, homeless liaison, or migrant coordinator] for help.” Of the 26 state verification notices we reviewed, seven did not include any instructions regarding homeless, runaway, or migrant children. Without such instructions, families would have no way of

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<sup>67</sup> See 7 C.F.R. § 245.6a, NT, (f)(2) and Food and Nutrition Service Memorandum, *Verification of Income Eligibility – Reauthorization 2004 Implementation Memo SP-5*, USDA, August 25, 2004, [http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/governance/Reauthorization\\_Policy\\_04/Reauthorization\\_04/2004-08-25.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/governance/Reauthorization_Policy_04/Reauthorization_04/2004-08-25.pdf).

knowing that they have an alternative to providing documentation of income or benefit receipt.

- *Explain how households with no income can verify their eligibility.* There are many situations in which a family can manage on a temporary basis without any of the forms of income that are requested on the school meal applications. The family might be living with relatives, behind on rent or doubled up, getting food provisions at a food pantry, eating meals at a soup kitchen, and/or relying on temporary loans from friends or family. When an adult in the household loses a job, the household may live off their savings and postpone expenses for several months before applying for public benefits. Having periods without any income is not very unusual for poor households. Census data show that in March 2010, approximately 600,000 school-age children lived in households that reported no household cash income for the previous calendar year.<sup>68</sup> In a typical month, 18 percent of households receiving SNAP benefits have zero gross income. We estimate that in November 2010, that would have represented about 3.6 million households.<sup>69</sup>

Unfortunately, USDA's regulations suggest that households that report no income may be subject to "verification for cause," which means that these vulnerable families may be more likely to be verified than other families.<sup>70</sup> To help prevent poor families with no income from losing free school meals, it is important for the verification notice to explain how to document their lack of income. It would be extremely unfortunate for school meals programs to take away food from the poorest children because their parents have no documentation of the income they do not receive. USDA's prototype verification notice for school year 2010-2011 explains that families with no income may provide "a brief note explaining how you provide food, clothing and housing for your household, and when you expect an income." Two of the 26 state verification notices we reviewed omitted similar instructions for families with no income, which leaves extraordinarily vulnerable families in the dark about how to verify their eligibility for free school meals.

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<sup>68</sup> Center on Budget and Policy Priorities analysis of the March 2010 Current Population Survey. Some of these households are likely misreporting income but research suggests that a larger number of households are not. Moreover, the figures leave out households that reported some income over the course of the entire year but had stretches with no income.

<sup>69</sup> Center on Budget and Policy Priorities analysis of SNAP Quality Control (QC) data for fiscal year 2009. The fiscal year 2009 share of households with zero gross income in the QC data was applied to the SNAP caseload for November 2010.

<sup>70</sup> See 7 C.F.R. § 245.6a, NT, (c)(7).

Table 5: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS ON ENCOURAGING ELIGIBLE FAMILIES SELECTED FOR VERIFICATION TO RESPOND	
A toll-free number for assistance and an explanation that families will not be charged	26 of the 26 state verification notices included a phone number, but 6 notices did not explain that the call would be cost-free to families
Clarification that documentation may be provided for any point in time between the month prior to application and the time of verification	25 of the 26 state verification notices provided information about the timeframe for acceptable documentation, but 7 notices did not explain that the documentation could be from the month <i>prior</i> to application as well as from the month of application or subsequent months
Instructions about how households with homeless, runaway, or migrant children can verify their eligibility	19 of the 26 state verification notices included instructions regarding homeless, runaway, or migrant children
Instructions about how households with no income can verify their eligibility	24 of the 26 state verification notices included instructions for households with no income

## Conclusion

Over the next few months every school district will have to revise the materials it provides to households regarding the federal school meals programs to implement the changes resulting from reauthorization legislation. These revisions offer an important opportunity to conduct a more comprehensive review of the materials to assess whether they encourage eligible families to apply, are understandable to all parents (including those with limited literacy or English skills), are simple to complete, do not request unnecessary information, and meet all program requirements. This paper provides a guide to selected features that could facilitate the application process for eligible low-income families. Below is a checklist of key features for states and school districts to consult when revising their household materials, including both printable and online applications. In addition, many states now post their household materials on the web (see Appendices E and F for links), which will make it easier for states and school districts to find models of features to incorporate into their own materials.

## A Checklist of Key Features of School Meals Application Materials to Improve Program Access

As a result of changes in recent legislation reauthorizing the federal school meals programs, every school district in the country will have to revise its school meals application for the 2011-2012 school year. The following changes will have to be made to applications and related materials:

- The application may not ask for income information to determine the eligibility of foster children and foster children may be included on applications with other children in the household.
- The application may ask only for the *last four* digits of the Social Security number of the signing adult or an indication that he or she does not have one.
- The verification notice may not ask for Social Security numbers for any household member.

While making these changes, state and school districts have a unique opportunity to do a comprehensive review of their applications and related materials and revise them to make it easier for eligible low-income parents to enroll their children for free or reduced-price school meals.

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities reviewed both printable and online applications available on the web for each state and the 100 largest school districts. Based on that review, program administrators may wish to consider the following features when revising their applications and related materials.

### Provide materials in a language and at a level that parents can understand by

- Explaining how to obtain materials or assistance in languages other than English
- Providing a link to USDA's translated materials
- Providing a link to translations of local materials
- Using language that parents with limited literacy can understand

### Ask only for information necessary to determine eligibility by

- Explaining clearly on printable applications that households that provide a case number do not have to provide income information or information about a Social Security number
- Placing the request for information about a Social Security number in the income-information section on printable applications so parents who provided a SNAP/TANF/FDPIR case number will not mistakenly think they have to provide this information

- Omitting from online applications the request for income information or information about a Social Security number if the household has provided a SNAP/TANF/FDPIR case number
- Prominently stating on the application that a Social Security number is not required to apply and that an indication that the signing adult does not have one will suffice
- Clarifying on the application that one SNAP/TANF/FDPIR case number for any child or adult in the household is sufficient
- Providing in the direct certification notice instructions to parents about how to make other children in the household known to the school district

### Reduce math errors by

- Providing options on the application to note different frequencies of income without doing calculations

### Encourage families that may be eligible to apply by stating clearly on the web site and application

- That a household may apply for benefits at any time during the school year
- That children of parents who become unemployed may become eligible for free or reduced-price meals
- That a single application will be accepted for all children in the household attending schools in the same district
- That household members do not have to be U.S. citizens for children to qualify for free or reduced-price meals
- The required non-discrimination statement
- The income eligibility limit for reduced-price meals

### Encourage eligible families selected for verification to respond by including in the verification notice

- A toll-free number for assistance and an explanation that families will not be charged
- Clarification that documentation may be provided for any point in time between the month prior to application and the time of verification
- Instructions about how households with homeless, runaway, or migrant children can verify their eligibility
- Instructions about how households with no income can verify their eligibility

## APPENDICES

Appendix A: [State Materials Reviewed](#)

Appendix B: [School District Materials Reviewed](#)

Appendix C: [Required Elements of Application Materials](#)

Appendix D: [Required Elements of Verification Materials](#)

Appendix E: [State School Meals Program Web Sites](#)

Appendix F: [School District School Meals Program Web Sites](#)

## Appendix A

### STATE MATERIALS REVIEWED

Feature	States	Total Number of States
School meals web site	AL, AK, AZ, AR, CA, CO, CT, DE, FL, GA, HI, ID, IL, IN, IA, KS, KY, LA, ME, MD, MA, MI, MN, MS, MO, MT, NE, NV, NH, NJ, NM, NY, NC, ND, OH, OK, OR, PA, RI, SC, SD, TN, TX, UT, VT, VA, WA, WV, WI, WY	50
Online application	OR, PA	2
Printable Materials:		
Application	AL, AK, AZ, AR, CA, CO, CT, DE, FL, GA, HI, ID, IL, IN, IA, KS, ME, MA, MI, MN, MS, MO, MT, NE, NH, NM, NC, ND, OH, OK, OR, SD, TX, UT, VT, WV, WI	37
Household materials (parent letter, FAQ, instructions)	AL, AK, AZ, AR, CA, CO, CT, FL, GA, HI, ID, IL, IN, IA, KS, ME, MA, MI, MN, MS, MO, MT, NE, NH, NM, NC, ND, OH, OK, OR, SD, TX, UT, VT, WV, WI	36
Verification materials	AL, AK, AZ, AR, CA, FL, GA, HI, IL, IA, KY, ME, MA, MS, MO, MT, NH, NM, NC, ND, OH, OK, OR, UT, VT, WI	26
Direct certification materials	AL, AK, AR, CA, CO, CT, FL, GA, IL, IN, KS, MA, MS, MO, MT, NE, NJ, NM, NC, ND, OH, OK, TX, UT, VT, WI	26
Printable materials available in translations	AZ, AR, CA, DE, GA, ID, IL, IN, IA, KS, ME, MN, NE, NJ, OR, TX, WI	17
Printable materials available in languages other than Spanish	ME, MN, OR	3
Link to USDA translations	CO, CT, IL, IN, ME, MA, MN, MS, MO, NE, NM, NC, OH, UT, VT, WI	16

## Appendix B

### SCHOOL DISTRICT MATERIALS REVIEWED

Feature	Number of Large School Districts
School meals web site	100
Online application only	26*
Printable application only	28
Both online and printable application	8
Household materials and printable application	36
Printable household materials (parent letter, FAQ, instructions) only	10
Printable materials available in translations	47
Link to USDA translations	5

\*The San Francisco Unified School District (California) and the Austin Independent School District (Texas) posted online applications after we completed our review; they are not included in this count.

## Appendix C

### REQUIRED ELEMENTS OF APPLICATION MATERIALS<sup>71</sup>

#### Information to be Contained in a Letter or Notice to Households Distributed at the Beginning of the School Year (7 C.F.R. § 245.5(a)(1))

- In schools participating in a meal service program, the eligibility criteria for *reduced-price* benefits with an explanation that households with incomes less than or equal to the reduced-price criteria would be eligible for either free or reduced-price meals.
- How a household may make application for free or reduced-price meals or for free milk for its children (free milk may be offered by schools that do not operate a federal lunch program).
- An explanation that an application for free or reduced-price benefits on the basis of income and household size cannot be approved unless it contains:
  - names of all household members;
  - income received by each household member, identified by the source of the income;
  - the signature of an adult household member; and
  - the Social Security number of the adult household member who signs the application or an indication that he/she does not possess a Social Security number (as a result of the reauthorization legislation only the last 4 digits of the Social Security number may be requested).
- An explanation that households with children who are members of households currently certified to receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families cash assistance (TANF), or Food Distribution on Indian Reservations Program (FDPIR) benefits may submit applications for these children with abbreviated information:
  - the child's name and appropriate SNAP, TANF, or FDPIR case number or other identifier and
  - signature of an adult household member.
- An explanation that the information on the application may be verified at any time during the school year.
- How a household may apply for benefits at any time during the school year as circumstances change.
- A statement to the effect that children having parents or guardians who become unemployed are eligible for free or reduced-price meals or for free milk during the period of unemployment, provided that the loss of income causes the household's income during the period of unemployment to be within the eligibility criteria.
- The statement: "In the operation of child feeding programs, no child will be discriminated against because of race, sex, color, national origin, age or disability."
- How a household may appeal the decision of the school district with respect to the application under the hearing procedure set forth in 7 C.F.R. § 245.7.
- The letter or notice shall be accompanied by a copy of the application form required under 7 C.F.R. § 245.6.
- A statement to the effect that Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) participants may be eligible for free or reduced-price meals.

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<sup>71</sup> Provisions related to foster children that were made obsolete by the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (P.L. 111-296) are not included. Where other provisions were altered by P.L. 111-296, a note is included.

### **Specifications Regarding Free and Reduced-Price School Meal Applications (7 C.F.R. § 245.6(a))**

- The state agency or local education agency must provide a form that permits a household to apply for all children in that household who attend schools in the same local education agency.
- The application shall be clear and simple in design.
- The information requested on the application shall be limited to that required to demonstrate whether the family meets the eligibility criteria for free or reduced-price meals.
- Any communication with households for eligibility determination purposes must be in an understandable and uniform format and to the maximum extent practicable, in a language that parents and guardians can understand.
- The local educational agency may establish a system for executing household applications electronically and using electronic signatures.
- When a student transfers to another school district, the new local education agency may accept the eligibility determination from the student's former local educational agency without incurring liability for the accuracy of the initial determination.

### **Information That Must Be Requested on Free and Reduced-Price School Meal Applications (7 C.F.R. § 245.6(a))**

- Names of all household members.
- Income received by each member (identified by the household member who received the income).
- Source of income.
- Social Security number of the adult household member who signs the application or an indication that the adult does not have a Social Security number.
- SNAP, FDPIR, or TANF case number in lieu of names of all household members, household income information, and Social Security number or indication that the adult has none.
- Signature of the adult household member.

### **Free and Reduced-Price School Meal Application Materials Must also Include Substantially the Following Statements (7 C.F.R. § 245.6(a))**

- “The Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act requires the information on this application. You do not have to give the information, but if you do not, we cannot approve your child for free or reduced price meals. You must include the social security number of the adult household member who signs the application. The social security number is not required when you apply on behalf of a foster child or you list a Food Stamp, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program, or Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) case number for your child or other FDPIR identifier or when you indicate that the adult household member signing the application does not have a social security number. We will use your information to determine if your child is eligible for free or reduced price meals and for administration and enforcement of the lunch and breakfast programs.” (This statement is often referred to as the “Privacy Act Statement.”)
- When the state agency or local educational agency, as appropriate, plans to use or disclose children's eligibility information for non-program purposes, additional information must be added to the above section to the effect of, “We may share your eligibility information with education, health, and nutrition programs to help them evaluate, fund, or determine benefits

for their programs; auditors for program reviews, and law enforcement officials to help them look into violation of program rules.” (See 7 C.F.R. § 245.6(h))

- The application shall also include a statement, immediately above the space for signature, that the person signing the application certifies that all information furnished in the application is true and correct, that the application is being made in connection with the receipt of Federal funds, that school officials may verify the information on the application, and that deliberate misrepresentation of the information may subject the applicant to prosecution under applicable state and federal criminal statutes.

### **Changes Needed to Application Materials Resulting from Recent Policy Changes**

As a result of new provisions included in the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (P.L. 111-296), certain changes have to be made to application materials. USDA has implemented these provisions through guidance, which is cited below, but has not yet issued regulations.

- Foster children are now categorically eligible for free meals regardless of personal income or the household income of their foster family and a separate application will no longer be required for foster children. Foster children may be certified without an application based on documentation from an appropriate agency indicating that the child’s care and placement are the responsibility of the state or that the foster child has been placed with a caretaker household by a court. Regardless of whether a foster child has already been certified for free meals, the foster child may be included on the same application as other children in the household and the larger household size may help the foster family’s non-foster children qualify for free or reduced-price meals. See P.L. 111-296 § 102 amending 42 U.S.C. § 1758(b) and (d) and Food and Nutrition Service memorandum, *Child Nutrition Reauthorization 2010: Categorical Eligibility of Foster Children*, USDA, revised March 16, 2011, [http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/PolicyMemos/2011/SP17\\_CACFP08\\_SFSP05-2011\\_os.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/PolicyMemos/2011/SP17_CACFP08_SFSP05-2011_os.pdf).
- The application may ask only for the last four digits of the Social Security number of the adult signing the application or an indication that he or she does not have one. As was previously the case, information about the Social Security number or lack of one is required only for households that are required to provide income information on the application. Households that list a case number or contain only foster children do not have to complete income information and do not have to provide any information about a Social Security number. See P.L. 111-296 § 301 amending 42 U.S.C. § 1758(d)(1) and Food and Nutrition Service memorandum, *Child Nutrition Reauthorization 2010: Privacy Protection and the Use of Social Security Numbers in Child Nutrition Programs*, USDA, February 15, 2011, [http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/PolicyMemos/2011/SP19\\_CACFP09\\_SFSP06-2011\\_os.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/PolicyMemos/2011/SP19_CACFP09_SFSP06-2011_os.pdf).

An additional policy change that was implemented by USDA in August 2009 — referred to as extended categorical eligibility — also required changes to household materials. Under the revised policy, all children in a household are eligible for free school meals if anyone in the household is receiving SNAP, TANF, or FDPIR benefits. The notice to parents informing them that a child has been directly certified is now required to include directions for making other children in the household known to the school district. In addition, application materials may now indicate that

only one SNAP, FDPIR, or TANF case number must be provided in order to qualify all of the children in the household for free school meals and explain that the case number may be for any member of the household, including an adult. See Food and Nutrition Service memorandum, *Extending Categorical Eligibility to Additional Children in a Household*, USDA, August 27, 2009, [http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/Policy-Memos/2009/SP\\_38-2009\\_os.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/Policy-Memos/2009/SP_38-2009_os.pdf) and Food and Nutrition Service memorandum, *Questions and Answers on Extending Categorical Eligibility to Additional Children in a Household*, USDA, May 3, 2010, [http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/governance/Policy-Memos/2010/SP\\_25\\_CACFP\\_11\\_SFSP\\_10-2010\\_os.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/governance/Policy-Memos/2010/SP_25_CACFP_11_SFSP_10-2010_os.pdf).<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> For a more detailed discussion of this policy change and how it can allow more eligible children to be automatically enrolled see Zoë Neuberger and Tina Fritz Namian, *Enrolling All Children in a Household for Free School Meals*, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, June 2010, <http://www.cbpp.org/files/6-16-10fa.pdf>.

## Appendix D

### REQUIRED ELEMENTS OF VERIFICATION MATERIALS<sup>73</sup>

#### Specifications Regarding Free and Reduced-Price School Meal Applications Under Program

##### Regulations (7 C.F.R. § 245.6a(f)(1) and 7 C.F.R. § 245.6a(f)(2))

- Any communications with households concerning verification must be in an understandable and uniform format and, to the maximum extent practicable, in a language that parents and guardians can understand.
- Households notified of their selection for verification must provide documentation of income (indicating source, amount, and frequency) from any point in time between the month prior to the application for school meal benefits and the time the household is requested to provide income documentation.

#### Information Required to Be Provided to Households Selected for Verification Under Program Regulations (7 C.F.R. § 245.6a(f)(1))

- Written notice that their application has been selected for verification and that the household is required to provide the requested verification information by a specified date.
- A telephone number for assistance that is free of charge. This information must be prominently displayed on the letter to households selected for verification. (See 7 C.F.R. § 245.6a(f)(5) for more information.)
- An explanation of the types of information and/or documents that are required to confirm eligibility for free or reduced-price meals.
- The name and no-charge phone number of a school official who can assist in the verification effort.
- An explanation that:
  - In lieu of any information that would otherwise be required, the household can submit proof of current SNAP, FDPIR, or TANF certification to verify the eligibility of a child who is a member of a SNAP, FDPIR, or TANF household;
  - In lieu of any information that would otherwise be required, they may request that the local educational agency contact the appropriate officials to confirm that their children are homeless, as defined under section 725(2) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. § 5701 *et seq.*); or are migratory as defined in section 1309 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. § 6399).
- An explanation that verification efforts may be carried out through program reviews, audits, and investigations and may include contacting a SNAP, FDPIR, or TANF office to determine current certification for receipt of these benefits, contacting employers to determine income, contacting the state employment security office to determine the amount of benefits received, and checking documentation produced by household members to prove the amount of income received.
- An explanation that not cooperating with the verification efforts will result in termination of benefits.

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<sup>73</sup> Provisions related to the collection of information about Social Security numbers that were made obsolete by the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (P.L. 111-296) are not included.

## **Changes Needed to Verification Materials Resulting from Reauthorization**

As a result of a new provision included in the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (P.L. 111-296), information about Social Security numbers may not be collected for any household member as part of the verification process. See P.L. 111-296 § 301 amending 42 U.S.C. § 1758(d)(1) and Food and Nutrition Service memorandum, *Child Nutrition Reauthorization 2010: Privacy Protection and the Use of Social Security Numbers in Child Nutrition Programs*, USDA, February 15, 2011, [http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/PolicyMemos/2011/SP19\\_CACFP09\\_SFSP06-2011\\_os.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/PolicyMemos/2011/SP19_CACFP09_SFSP06-2011_os.pdf).

## Appendix E

### STATE SCHOOL MEALS PROGRAM WEB SITES

#### *USDA Model Application*

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/>

Forms: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/FRP/frp.process.htm>

- For school year 2011
- Application, parent letter, instructions, disclosure forms, verification notices, notice of direct certification

Translations: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/FRP/frp.process.htm> (out-of-date applications)

- Only English and Spanish applications are updated from 2006 (but the Spanish application does not yet reflect the changes necessitated by reauthorization)
- English, Arabic, Cambodian, Chinese (Mandarin), Farsi, French, Greek, Haitian Creole, Hindi, Hmong, Japanese, Korean, Kurdish, Laotian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Samoan, Serbo-Croatian, Somali, Spanish, Sudanese, Tagalog, Thai, Urdu, Vietnamese
- Only English and Spanish applications are updated from 2006

Reauthorization Policy Memoranda:

[http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/Legislation/CNR\\_2010.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/Legislation/CNR_2010.htm)

#### *State School Meals Information*

### **Alabama**

School Meals Homepage:

[http://www.alsde.edu/html/sections/section\\_detail.asp?section=53&footer=sections](http://www.alsde.edu/html/sections/section_detail.asp?section=53&footer=sections)

Forms:

<http://www.alsde.edu/html/sections/documents.asp?section=53&sort=44&footer=sections>

- For school year 2010-11
- USDA model application, parent letter, instructions, disclosure forms, verification notices, notification of approval/denial, notice of direct certification
- Sample public release 2009-10
- Online application

### **TOP OF SECTION**

### **Alaska**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.eed.state.ak.us/tls/cns/NSLP.html>

Forms: <http://www.eed.state.ak.us/tls/cns/NSLP2.html>

- For school year 2010-2011
- Application, parent letter, instructions, disclosure forms, verification notices, notice of direct certification, notice of expiration of temporary benefits
- Sample public release
- FNS January 2008 \“Eligibility Guidance for School Meals” Policy Manual, <http://www.eed.state.ak.us/tls/cns/pdf/EligibilityManualforSchoolMeals.pdf>

### **TOP OF SECTION**

#### **Arizona**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.ade.state.az.us/health-safety/cnp/nslp/>

Forms: <http://www.ade.state.az.us/health-safety/cnp/nslp/parentforms/2010-2011/default.asp>

- For school year 2010-2011
- Application, parent letter, instructions, disclosure forms, verification notices, notice of expiration of temporary benefits
- English and Spanish
- Sample public release

Policy Memorandum: <http://www.ade.state.az.us/health-safety/cnp/nslp/Memos/>

- List of memos by year and topic
- Newsletters
- Includes link to policy guidance manual: <https://www.ade.az.gov/health-safety/cnp/nslp/GuidanceManual/>

### **TOP OF SECTION**

#### **Arkansas**

School Meals Homepage: <http://cnn.k12.ar.us/>

Forms: <http://cnn.k12.ar.us/documents/forms.aspx>

- Application, parent letter, instructions, verification notices, notice of direct certification
- English and Spanish

### **TOP OF SECTION**

#### **California**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/nu/sn/>

Forms: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/nu/sn/eligmaterias.asp>

- Flexible school year
- Application, parent letter, notice of expiration of temporary benefits, notification of approval/denial, notification of direct certification, notice of expiration of temporary benefits, verification notices
- Sample Public Release

- English and Spanish

### [TOP OF SECTION](#)

#### **Colorado**

School Meals Homepage: [http://www.cde.state.co.us/index\\_nutrition.htm](http://www.cde.state.co.us/index_nutrition.htm),  
<http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdenutritran/nutriprograms.htm>

Forms: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdenutritran/nutriformsbook.htm>

- For school year 2010-2011
- Application, instructions, parent letter, income eligibility guidelines, notification of approval/denial, direct certification instructions, disclosure form
- Sample public release
- English and Spanish (scroll to end of packet), information that USDA has translations in other languages

Policy Memorandum: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdenutritran/nutripdfdocs.htm>

### [TOP OF SECTION](#)

#### **Connecticut**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2626&q=320676>

Forms: <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2626&q=320680>

- For school year 2010-11
- Application, instructions, parent letter (meals and milk), disclosure letter, notification of approval/denial, health insurance form, notification of direct certification, information on SNAP
- English, with link to USDA applications in 26 languages
- Sample public release

### [TOP OF SECTION](#)

#### **Delaware**

School Meals Homepage: [http://www.doe.k12.de.us/infosuites/students\\_family/nutrition/](http://www.doe.k12.de.us/infosuites/students_family/nutrition/)

Forms: [http://www.doe.k12.de.us/infosuites/students\\_family/nutrition/](http://www.doe.k12.de.us/infosuites/students_family/nutrition/)

- For school year 2010-11
- Application
- English and Spanish

### [TOP OF SECTION](#)

## District of Columbia

School Meals Homepage: <http://osse.dc.gov/seo/cwp/view,a,1224,q,536434.asp>

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## Florida

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.fldoe.org/FNM/natlschoollunch/>

Forms:

<http://fnmcpwebprd.fldoe.org/floridaprd/FormDownload/FormDownloadMngr.asp?Mode=NSFD>

- For school year 2010-2011
- Application, instructions, parent letter, notification of direct certification, notification of approval/denial, verification notice, disclosure form
- Sample public release

**[TOP OF SECTION](#)**

## Georgia

School Meals Homepage: [http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/fbo\\_nutrition.aspx](http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/fbo_nutrition.aspx)

Forms:

[http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/fbo\\_nutrition.aspx?PageReq=FBOPricePolicy](http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/fbo_nutrition.aspx?PageReq=FBOPricePolicy)

- For school year 2010-2011
- Application, instructions, parent letter, notification of direct certification, notification of approval/denial, verification notice, disclosure form
- Sample public release
- Relevant policy documents
- English and Spanish

**[TOP OF SECTION](#)**

## Hawaii

National School Lunch Program Homepage: <http://ohcnp.k12.hi.us/programs/lunch.html>

School Breakfast Homepage: <http://ohcnp.k12.hi.us/programs/breakfast.html>

Forms: <http://ohcnp.k12.hi.us/programs/lunch.html> (under “Forms”)

- School year 2008-2009
- USDA model application, parent letter, instructions, disclosure forms, verification notices

**[TOP OF SECTION](#)**

## Idaho

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.sde.idaho.gov/site/cnp/nslp/>

Forms: <http://www.sde.idaho.gov/site/cnp/nslp/freeReducedApp.htm>

- For school year 2010-2011
- Application, instructions, parent letter, notification of approval/denial, modified application and instructions
- English and Spanish
- Verification and direct certification information for sponsors

### [TOP OF SECTION](#)

## Illinois

School Meals Homepage: [http://www.isbe.state.il.us/nutrition/htmls/national\\_school\\_lunch.htm](http://www.isbe.state.il.us/nutrition/htmls/national_school_lunch.htm)

Forms: [http://www.isbe.state.il.us/nutrition/htmls/forms\\_sbn.htm](http://www.isbe.state.il.us/nutrition/htmls/forms_sbn.htm) (under “Household Eligibility Information” click “Household Eligibility Applications and Documents”)

- For school year 2010-11
- Application, instructions, parent letter, notification of approval/denial, disclosure form, notice of direct certification, notice of expiration of temporary benefits, health insurance flyer, verification notices, notification of the ending of the carryover period
- Sample public release
- English and Spanish, with link to USDA applications in 26 languages

Policy Memorandum: [http://www.isbe.state.il.us/nutrition/pdf/sp38\\_2009.pdf](http://www.isbe.state.il.us/nutrition/pdf/sp38_2009.pdf), “Extending Categorical Eligibility to Additional Children in a Household”

### [TOP OF SECTION](#)

## Indiana

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.doe.state.in.us/food/schoolnutrition/welcome.html>

Forms: <http://www.doe.state.in.us/food/schoolnutrition/cnpbenefitforms.html>

- For school year 2010-11
- Application, parent letter, instructions, notification of approval/denial, notification of direct certification, notification of temporary approval, disclosure form
- Free milk application materials
- English and Spanish, with link to USDA applications in 26 languages

Policy Memorandum: [http://scnweb.doe.state.in.us/Nutrition/external\\_forms/SPFandRInfo.doc](http://scnweb.doe.state.in.us/Nutrition/external_forms/SPFandRInfo.doc), “Free and Reduced Price Notes”

### [TOP OF SECTION](#)

## **Iowa**

School Meals Homepage:

[http://www.iowa.gov/educate/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=369&Itemid=1326](http://www.iowa.gov/educate/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=369&Itemid=1326)

Forms: under link above, “Resources for Administrators”

- For school year 2010-11
- Application, instructions, parent letter, Medicaid information form, notification of approval/denial, waiver of confidentiality, verification notice
- Sample public release
- English and Spanish

Policy Memos: <http://www.doe.in.gov/food/schoolnutrition/programinstruct.html>

### **TOP OF SECTION**

## **Kansas**

School Meals Homepage: [http://www.kn-eat.org/SNP/SNP\\_Menus/SNP\\_Home.htm#top](http://www.kn-eat.org/SNP/SNP_Menus/SNP_Home.htm#top)

Forms: [http://www.kn-eat.org/SNP/SNP\\_Menus/SNP\\_Admin\\_Program\\_Renewal.htm](http://www.kn-eat.org/SNP/SNP_Menus/SNP_Admin_Program_Renewal.htm)

- For school year 2010-11
- Application, instructions, parent letter, notification of approval/denial, waiver of confidentiality, direct certification notice
- English and Spanish (available at: [http://www.kn-eat.org/SNP/SNP\\_Menus/SNP\\_Admin\\_Foreign\\_Language\\_Translations.htm](http://www.kn-eat.org/SNP/SNP_Menus/SNP_Admin_Foreign_Language_Translations.htm))

### **TOP OF SECTION**

## **Kentucky**

National School Lunch Program Homepage: <http://scn.ky.gov/nslp.htm>

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## **Louisiana**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.doe.state.la.us/offices/nutritionsupport/nslp.html>

### **TOP OF SECTION**

## **Maine**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.maine.gov/education/sfs/>

Forms: <http://www.maine.gov/education/forms/childnutrition/agreappl/agreapplforms.htm>

- For school year 2010-2011

- Application, instructions, parent letter, notification of approval/denial, disclosure form, verification form packet
- English and French and link to USDA applications in 26 languages (Somali packet links to USDA web site)
- Policy statement for free and reduced-price benefits

**TOP OF SECTION**

**Maryland**

School Meals Homepage:

[http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/programs/schoolnutrition/school\\_lunch.htm](http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/programs/schoolnutrition/school_lunch.htm)

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**Massachusetts**

School Lunch Program Homepage: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/cnp/nprograms/nslp.html>

School Breakfast Homepage: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/cnp/nprograms/sbp/>

Forms: [http://www.doe.mass.edu/cnp/free\\_red/](http://www.doe.mass.edu/cnp/free_red/)

- For school year 2010 – 2011
- USDA model application, parent letter, instructions, disclosure forms, verification notices, notification of approval/denial, notice of direct certification
- Hearing procedure form
- Healthcare flyer
- Link to USDA applications in 26 languages

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**Michigan**

Nutrition Homepage: [http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-6530\\_6569\\_29919---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-6530_6569_29919---,00.html)

Forms:

[http://www.michigan.gov/documents/Family\\_App\\_Instructionsandform4458c023\\_32766\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/Family_App_Instructionsandform4458c023_32766_7.pdf)

- For school year 2008-09
- Application, instructions, parent letter, approval/denial form, disclosure form, income eligibility guidelines
- Sample public release
- School meals flyer:  
[http://www.michigan.gov/documents/school\\_meals\\_fact\\_sheet\\_final\\_51835\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/school_meals_fact_sheet_final_51835_7.pdf)

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**Minnesota**

School Meals Homepage:

[http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/Learning\\_Support/FNS/SNP/index.html](http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/Learning_Support/FNS/SNP/index.html)

Forms:

[http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/Learning\\_Support/FNS/SNP/Applications\\_Materials\\_and\\_Forms/index.html](http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/Learning_Support/FNS/SNP/Applications_Materials_and_Forms/index.html)

- For school year 2010-11
- Application, instructions, parent letter, notice of approval/denial, procedures for school nutrition programs meal benefits
- English, Arabic, Hmong, Khmer-Cambodian, Laotian, Russian, Somali, Spanish, Vietnamese, with link to USDA web site for other translations
- Sample media release
- Various policy statements

### **TOP OF SECTION**

## **Mississippi**

National School Lunch Homepage: [http://www.healthyschoolsms.org/nutrition\\_services/nslp.htm](http://www.healthyschoolsms.org/nutrition_services/nslp.htm)

School Breakfast Homepage: [http://www.healthyschoolsms.org/nutrition\\_services/nsbp.htm](http://www.healthyschoolsms.org/nutrition_services/nsbp.htm)

Forms: [http://www.healthyschoolsms.org/nutrition\\_services/MealApplications.htm](http://www.healthyschoolsms.org/nutrition_services/MealApplications.htm)

- For school year 2010-2011
- Application, instructions, parent letter, disclosure forms, verification forms, notice of approval/denial, notice of direct certification
- Link to USDA applications in 26 languages

### **TOP OF SECTION**

## **Missouri**

National School Lunch Homepage: [http://dese.mo.gov/divadm/food/Lunch\\_Program.html](http://dese.mo.gov/divadm/food/Lunch_Program.html)

School Breakfast Homepage: [http://dese.mo.gov/divadm/food/Breakfast\\_Program.html](http://dese.mo.gov/divadm/food/Breakfast_Program.html)

Forms: [http://dese.mo.gov/divadm/food/PDF/direct\\_cert05\\_06.pdf](http://dese.mo.gov/divadm/food/PDF/direct_cert05_06.pdf)

- For school year 2005-06
- Application, instructions, parent letter, direct certification eligibility letter, notification of approval/denial, disclosure form, health insurance form
- Link to USDA applications in 26 languages
- Sample public release
- Verification materials are from 2010 school year  
(<http://dese.mo.gov/divadm/food/VerificationInfoIndex.html> under “verification letter”)

### **TOP OF SECTION**

## **Montana**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.opi.mt.gov/schoolfood/index.html>

Forms:

[http://www.opi.mt.gov/Programs/SchoolPrograms/School\\_Nutrition/index.html#gpm1\\_6](http://www.opi.mt.gov/Programs/SchoolPrograms/School_Nutrition/index.html#gpm1_6) (under “Free and Reduced School Meals”)

- For school year 2010-11
- Application, instructions, parent letter, notification of change in eligibility letter, notification of direct certification, notification of results of verification eligibility letter, verification notice
- Sample public release

School Nutrition Flyer: <http://www.opi.mt.gov/pdf/SchoolFood/10SNPBrochure.pdf>

### **TOP OF SECTION**

## **Nebraska**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.education.ne.gov/ns/nslp/overview.htm>

Forms: <http://www.education.ne.gov/ns/forms/nslpforms/index.htm>

- For school year 2010-2011
- Application, instruction, parent letter, approval/denial letter, disclosure form, verification notice, notice of change in benefit, verification results letter
- USDA model packet in Spanish for flexible year and link to USDA application in 26 languages.

### **TOP OF SECTION**

## **Nevada**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.doe.nv.gov/CNSH.htm>, <http://www.doe.nv.gov/NSLP.htm>

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## **New Hampshire**

School Meals Homepage:

[http://www.education.nh.gov/program/nutrition/school\\_lunch.htm](http://www.education.nh.gov/program/nutrition/school_lunch.htm)

Forms: [http://www.education.nh.gov/program/nutrition/nslp\\_application.htm](http://www.education.nh.gov/program/nutrition/nslp_application.htm),

<http://www.education.nh.gov/program/nutrition/verification.htm>

- For school year 2010-2011
- Application, parent letter, instructions, notification of approval/denial, disclosure forms

### **TOP OF SECTION**

## **New Jersey**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.nj.gov/agriculture/divisions/fn/childadult/school.html>

School Lunch Homepage:

[http://www.nj.gov/agriculture/divisions/fn/childadult/school\\_lunch.html](http://www.nj.gov/agriculture/divisions/fn/childadult/school_lunch.html)

School Breakfast Homepage:

[http://www.nj.gov/agriculture/divisions/fn/childadult/school\\_breakfast.html](http://www.nj.gov/agriculture/divisions/fn/childadult/school_breakfast.html)

Forms:

<http://www.nj.gov/agriculture/applic/forms/> (click on “Food and Nutrition,” scroll down to “Free/Reduced Price Application Determination Forms”)

- For school year 2010-2011
- Letter of approval/denial, letter of direct certification, disclosure form
- English and Spanish

### **TOP OF SECTION**

## **New Mexico**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.ped.state.nm.us/nutrition/index.html>

Forms: (Materials have been removed from the internet since reviewed.)

- For school year 2010-2011
- USDA model application, parent letter, instructions, disclosure form, notification of approval/denial, verification notice, direct certification forms (household materials begin on page 9 of Word document)
- Sample public release
- English, with link to USDA web site with application in 26 languages

Policy memos and program statistics: <http://www.ped.state.nm.us/nutrition/index.html> (follow links on left hand side for documents)

### **TOP OF SECTION**

## **New York**

Child Nutrition Homepage:

[http://portal.nysed.gov/portal/page?\\_pageid=74,1&\\_dad=pref&\\_schema=PORTAL30](http://portal.nysed.gov/portal/page?_pageid=74,1&_dad=pref&_schema=PORTAL30)

### **TOP OF SECTION**

## **North Carolina**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/childnutrition/programs/>

Forms: <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/childnutrition/application/>

- For school year 2010-11
- Application, instructions, parent letter, disclosure forms, verification notice, notification of approval/denial, notification of direct certification
- Link to USDA web site with application in 26 languages

## [TOP OF SECTION](#)

### **North Dakota**

National School Lunch Homepage: <http://www.dpi.state.nd.us/child/snp/nslp/index.shtm>

School Breakfast Homepage: <http://www.dpi.state.nd.us/child/snp/sbp/index.shtm>

Forms: <http://www.dpi.state.nd.us/child/snp/tools/index.shtm>

- For School Year 2010-2011
- Application, parent letter, notification of approval/denial, notification of change in benefits, verification notice

## [TOP OF SECTION](#)

### **Ohio**

School Meals Homepage:

<http://www.ode.state.oh.us/GD/Templates/Pages/ODE/ODEPrimary.aspx?Page=2&TopicID=485&TopicRelationID=828>

Forms:

<http://www.ode.state.oh.us/GD/Templates/Pages/ODE/ODEDetail.aspx?page=3&TopicRelationID=828&ContentID=1113&Content=90678>

- For school year 2010-11
- USDA model application, parent letter, instructions, notification of approval/denial, verification package, notification of predetermined eligibility, disclosure forms, direct certification packet
- Link to USDA applications in 26 languages
- Health program flyer
- Sample public release

## [TOP OF SECTION](#)

### **Oklahoma**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.sde.state.ok.us/Schools/ChildNut/default.html>

School Lunch Homepage: <http://www.sde.state.ok.us/Schools/ChildNut/lunch.html>

School Breakfast Homepage: <http://www.sde.state.ok.us/Schools/ChildNut/breakfast.html>

Forms: <http://www.sde.state.ok.us/Schools/ChildNut/documents.html> (under “Policy Statement/Attachments”)

- Flexible school year
- Application, instructions, parent letter, notice of approval/denial, verification notice, direct certification notice

- Sample public release

### [TOP OF SECTION](#)

#### **Oregon**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/results/?id=207>

Forms: <http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?id=1997>,  
<https://district.ode.state.or.us/apps/frlapp/> (online application)

- For school year 2010-11
- Application, instructions, parent letter, verification materials, disclosure forms
- English, Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Vietnamese
- Online application

### [TOP OF SECTION](#)

#### **Pennsylvania**

School Meals Homepage:

[http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/pa\\_food\\_and\\_nutrition\\_programs/18762](http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/pa_food_and_nutrition_programs/18762)

School Lunch Homepage:

[http://www.education.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/national\\_school\\_lunch/7487](http://www.education.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/national_school_lunch/7487)

School Breakfast Homepage:

[http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/pa\\_food\\_and\\_nutrition\\_programs/18762/pa\\_food\\_and\\_nutrition\\_school\\_breakfast\\_program/646216](http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/pa_food_and_nutrition_programs/18762/pa_food_and_nutrition_school_breakfast_program/646216)

Forms: <https://www.humanservices.state.pa.us/COMPASS.Web/CMHOM.aspx> (online application)

- Click “Apply for Benefits” on the left hand side and select Free and Reduced Price Meal Applications once in the system

### [TOP OF SECTION](#)

#### **Rhode Island**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.ride.ri.gov/Finance/Nutrition/>

School Lunch Homepage: <http://www.ride.ri.gov/Finance/Nutrition/national.aspx>

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## **South Carolina**

School Lunch Homepage: <http://ed.sc.gov/agency/Innovation-and-Support/Food-Services-And-Nutrition/old/sfsn/pages/nslp.html>

School Breakfast Homepage: <http://ed.sc.gov/agency/Innovation-and-Support/Food-Services-And-Nutrition/old/sfsn/pages/sbp.html>

### **TOP OF SECTION**

## **South Dakota**

School Meals Homepage: <http://doe.sd.gov/cans/nslp.asp>

Forms: <http://doe.sd.gov/cans/nslp.asp> (click on “Program Attachments” under “2010-11 Renewal Agencies”)

- For school year 2010-2011
- Application, instructions, parent letter, notification of approval/denial
- Sample public release

### **TOP OF SECTION**

## **Tennessee**

School Meals Homepage: <http://snp.state.tn.us/tndoe/> (*select “Tennessee SNP” on top menu*)

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## **Texas**

School Meals Homepage:

[http://www.squaremeals.org/fn/render/parent/channel/0,1253,2348\\_2362\\_0\\_0,00.html](http://www.squaremeals.org/fn/render/parent/channel/0,1253,2348_2362_0_0,00.html)

School Lunch Homepage:

[http://www.squaremeals.org/fn/render/channel/items/0,1249,2348\\_2363\\_0\\_0,00.html](http://www.squaremeals.org/fn/render/channel/items/0,1249,2348_2363_0_0,00.html)

School Breakfast Homepage:

[http://www.squaremeals.org/fn/render/channel/items/0,1249,2348\\_2364\\_0\\_0,00.html](http://www.squaremeals.org/fn/render/channel/items/0,1249,2348_2364_0_0,00.html)

Forms: [http://www.squaremeals.org/fn/render/channel/items/0,1249,2348\\_2439\\_0\\_0,00.html](http://www.squaremeals.org/fn/render/channel/items/0,1249,2348_2439_0_0,00.html)

- For school year 2010-2011
- Application, instructions, parent letter, notification of predetermined eligibility (migrant, Head Start, and direct certification), verification notice (Spanish only)
- Sample public release
- English and Spanish

### **TOP OF SECTION**

## Utah

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.schools.utah.gov/cnp/>

School Lunch Homepage: <http://www.schools.utah.gov/cnp/National-School-Lunch-Program.aspx>

School Breakfast Homepage: <http://www.schools.utah.gov/cnp/National-School-Breakfast-Program.aspx>

Forms: <http://www.schools.utah.gov/cnp/National-School-Lunch-Program/applications.aspx>

- We reviewed the following forms for the 2010-2011 school year: application, instructions, parent letter, disclosure forms, verification notice, direct certification forms, fair hearing form
- School Year 2011-2012 application now available in English and Spanish as well as instructions, parent letter, disclosure forms, verification notice, direct certification forms, fair hearing form
- Link to USDA web site with application in 26 languages

### [TOP OF SECTION](#)

## Vermont

School Meals Homepage:

[http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/pgm\\_nutrition/school\\_nutrition.html](http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/pgm_nutrition/school_nutrition.html)

Forms:

[http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/pgm\\_nutrition/school\\_nutrition/program\\_info.html](http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/pgm_nutrition/school_nutrition/program_info.html)

- For school year 2010-2011
- Application, instructions, parent letter, notification approval/denial, notification of pre-approval (SNAP), notification of previous year's enrollment expiration, direct certification notice, verification notice, certification and benefits issuance letters
- Link to USDA web site with application in 26 languages

### [TOP OF SECTION](#)

## Virginia

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/nutrition/programs/index.shtml>

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## Washington

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.k12.wa.us/ChildNutrition/Programs/NSLBP/default.aspx>

- Application materials coming soon.
- Policy memos: <http://www.k12.wa.us/ChildNutrition/Programs/NSLBP/Bulletins.aspx>
- Training materials on NSLP:  
<http://www.k12.wa.us/ChildNutrition/Programs/NSLBP/TrainingMaterials.aspx>

## **TOP OF SECTION**

### **West Virginia**

School Meals Homepage: <http://wvde.state.wv.us/nutrition/snp.html>

Forms: <http://wvde.state.wv.us/ocn-download/Forms/NSLP/2010/FreeRed/>

- For school year 2010-11
- Application, parent letter, instructions, notification of approval/denial, income eligibility guidelines

## **TOP OF SECTION**

### **Wisconsin**

School Meals Homepage: <http://dpi.wi.gov/fns/>

School Lunch Homepage: <http://dpi.wi.gov/fns/nslp1.html>

School Breakfast Program: <http://dpi.wi.gov/fns/sbp1.html>

Forms: <http://dpi.wi.gov/fns/fincou1.html>

- For school year 2010-11
- USDA model application, instructions, parent letter, notification of approval/denial, notification of direct certification, verification materials, disclosure forms
- Sample public release
- English and Spanish, with link to USDA site for application in 26 languages

## **TOP OF SECTION**

### **Wyoming**

School Nutrition Homepage: <http://edu.wyoming.gov/Programs/nutrition.aspx>

School Lunch and Breakfast Homepage:  
[http://edu.wyoming.gov/Programs/nutrition/national\\_school\\_lunch\\_program.aspx](http://edu.wyoming.gov/Programs/nutrition/national_school_lunch_program.aspx)

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## Appendix F

### SCHOOL DISTRICT SCHOOL MEALS PROGRAM WEB SITES

*Alphabetically by State for the 100 Largest Districts*

#### Mobile County Schools, AL

School Meals Homepage:

<http://www.mcpss.com/Default.asp?DivisionID=2139&DepartmentID=2307&SubDepartmentID=0&keyword=lunch>

Forms:

<http://www.mcpss.com/Default.asp?PN=DocumentUploads&L=2&DivisionID=2139&DepartmentID=2307&LMID=90512&ToggleSideNav=ShowAll> (click on “CNP Student Information”)

- Child Nutrition Handbook includes general policy information for free and reduced-price lunch program

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#### Anchorage School District, AK

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.asdk12.org/menus/>

Forms: <http://www.asdk12.org/menus/frp.asp>

- For school year 2010-11
- Application, instructions, parent letter, FAQ
- English, Spanish, Hmong, Korean, Samoan, Tagalog

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#### Mesa Unified, AZ

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.mpsaz.org/food/>

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#### Tucson Unified, AZ

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.tusd.k12.az.us/contents/depart/food/index.asp>

Forms: <http://www.tusd.k12.az.us/contents/depart/food/lunch.asp>,  
<http://www.tusd.k12.az.us/contents/depart/food/freereduced.asp>

- For school year 2010-11
- Kindergarten student letter, tips for completing the application
- English and Spanish

**TOP OF SECTION**

**Capistrano Unified, CA**

School Meals Homepage: [http://nutrition-capousd-ca.schoolloop.com/cms/page\\_view?d=x&piid=&vpid=1273920107733](http://nutrition-capousd-ca.schoolloop.com/cms/page_view?d=x&piid=&vpid=1273920107733)

Forms: [http://nutrition-capousd-ca.schoolloop.com/cms/page\\_view?d=x&piid=&vpid=1274164544873](http://nutrition-capousd-ca.schoolloop.com/cms/page_view?d=x&piid=&vpid=1274164544873)

- For school year 2010-11
- Application, parent letter
- English and Spanish

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**Corona-Norco Unified, CA**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.cnusd.k12.ca.us/1984108129266640/blank/browse.asp?a=383&BMDRN=2000&BCOB=0&c=55381&1984108129266640Nav=|113|&NodeID=113>

Forms: <http://www.cnusd.k12.ca.us/1984108129266640/blank/browse.asp?a=383&BMDRN=2000&BCOB=0&c=55382&1984108129266640Nav=|113|&NodeID=114>

- Link to eligibility requirements

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**Elk Grove Unified, CA**

School Meals Homepage: [http://www.egusd.net/students\\_parents/menus.cfm](http://www.egusd.net/students_parents/menus.cfm)

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**Fresno Unified, CA**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.fresnounified.org/dept/operations/food/Menu/Forms/AllItems.aspx>

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**Garden Grove Unified, CA**

School Meals Homepage: [http://www.ggusd.k12.ca.us/departments/food\\_services/index.htm](http://www.ggusd.k12.ca.us/departments/food_services/index.htm)

Forms: [http://www.ggusd.k12.ca.us/departments/food\\_services/price.htm](http://www.ggusd.k12.ca.us/departments/food_services/price.htm)

- For school year 2010-11
- Application, parent letter

- English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Korean

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**Long Beach Unified, CA**

School Meals Homepage:

[http://www.lbusd.k12.ca.us/Main\\_Offices/Business\\_Services/Nutrition\\_Services/](http://www.lbusd.k12.ca.us/Main_Offices/Business_Services/Nutrition_Services/)

Forms:

[http://www.lbusd.k12.ca.us/Main\\_Offices/Business\\_Services/Nutrition\\_Services/meal\\_app.cfm](http://www.lbusd.k12.ca.us/Main_Offices/Business_Services/Nutrition_Services/meal_app.cfm)

- For school year 2010-11
- Parent letter, instructions, application checklist, press release, income eligibility guidelines, meal application help center flyer, FAQ online
- English, Spanish, Khmer

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**Los Angeles Unified, CA**

School Meals Homepage: <http://cafe-la.lausd.k12.ca.us/>

Forms: [http://cafe-la.lausd.net/Meal\\_Programs/Meal\\_Applications](http://cafe-la.lausd.net/Meal_Programs/Meal_Applications)

- For school year 2010-11
- Application
- Meal brochure in English and Spanish
- “How to Fill Out a Meal Application” instructional video for parents in English and Spanish
- Application in English, Spanish, Armenian, Russian, Vietnamese, Korean, Chinese

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**Sacramento City Unified, CA**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.scusd.edu/NutritionServices/Pages/default.aspx>

Forms: <http://www.scusd.edu/NutritionServices/Pages/Menus.aspx>

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**San Bernardino City Unified, CA**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.sbcusd.k12.ca.us/index.aspx?NID=437>

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## **San Diego Unified, CA**

School Meals Homepage:

<http://www.sandi.net/20451072011452577/site/default.asp?20451072011452577Nav=|207|&NodeID=207&2179Nav=|&NodeID=72&2045Nav=|&NodeID=3412>

Forms:

<http://www.sandi.net/20451072011452577/blank/browse.asp?a=383&BMDRN=2000&BCOB=0&c=55896&20451072011452577Nav=|&NodeID=182>,

<https://www.applyforlunch.com/Application> (online application)

- For school year 2010-11
- Application, instructions, parent letter
- Online application
- News release

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## **San Francisco Unified, CA**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.sfusd.edu/en/> (Click on “Nutrition and School Meals on left hand side of the page)

Forms: [http://www.sfusd.edu/en/nutrition-school-meals/meal-applications-\(apply-here!\).html](http://www.sfusd.edu/en/nutrition-school-meals/meal-applications-(apply-here!).html)

- Online Application and Frequently Asked Questions

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## **San Juan Unified, CA**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.sanjuan.edu/departments.cfm?subpage=8282>

Forms: <https://mealapps.sanjuan.edu/default.aspx> (online application)

- For school year 2010-11
- Online application
- English and Spanish

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## **Santa Ana Unified, CA**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.sausd.us/14431028113745217/site/default.asp>

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## **Cherry Creek (District 5), County of Arapah, CO**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.ccsd.k12.co.us/food/>

Forms: <http://www.ccsd.k12.co.us/food/FreeReduced/>

- For school year 2010-11
- Parent letter
- English and Spanish

**TOP OF SECTION**

**Denver Public Schools (County District 1), CO**

School Meals Homepage: <http://foodservices.dpsk12.org/nutrition.html>

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**Douglas County Schools (District 1), CO**

School Meals Homepage:

[http://www.dcsdk12.org/portal/page/portal/DCSD/Business\\_Services/Nutrition\\_Services/About\\_School\\_Meals](http://www.dcsdk12.org/portal/page/portal/DCSD/Business_Services/Nutrition_Services/About_School_Meals)

Forms:

[http://www.dcsdk12.org/portal/page/portal/DCSD/Business\\_Services/Nutrition\\_Services/Free\\_and\\_Reduced\\_Lunches](http://www.dcsdk12.org/portal/page/portal/DCSD/Business_Services/Nutrition_Services/Free_and_Reduced_Lunches)

- For school year 2010-11
- Application

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**Jefferson County School District No. R-1, CO**

School Meals Homepage: [http://www.jeffcopublicschools.org/food\\_services/index.html](http://www.jeffcopublicschools.org/food_services/index.html)

Forms:

- For school year 2010-11
- Information PowerPoint, income eligibility guidelines
- English, Russian, Vietnamese

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**Brevard County, FL**

School Meals Homepage: <http://foodservices.brevard.k12.fl.us/>

Forms:

<http://foodservices.brevard.k12.fl.us/Free%20&%20Reduced%20Info/Free%20&%20Reduced%20Info.html>, <https://mealapps.brevard.k12.fl.us/liquidoffice/lfserver/eform> (online application)

- For school year 2010-11
- Application, instructions, parent letter, income eligibility guidelines, letter to parents of new students and kindergartners
- Online application

- English and Spanish

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**Broward County School District, Ft. Lauderdale, FL**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.broward.k12.fl.us/foodservice/>

Forms: <http://www.broward.k12.fl.us/foodservice/freerduced.htm>,  
<https://www.applyforlunch.com/Application> (online application)

- For school year 2010-11
- Online application in English
- Paper application available at schools in English, Spanish, Creole, Portuguese
- School meals flyer

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**Dade County School District, Miami, FL**

Meals page: <http://nutrition.dadeschools.net/freerduced.html>

School Lunch Homepage: <http://nutrition.dadeschools.net/lunchpgm.html>

School Breakfast Homepage: <http://nutrition.dadeschools.net/brkfstpgm.html>

Forms: <http://nutrition.dadeschools.net/documents.asp>

- For school year 2006-2007
- Application, verification letter, verification results letter

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**Duval County School District, Jacksonville, FL**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.duvalschools.org/static/students/lunch/index.asp>

Forms: Using link above click on “Free and reduced Lunch Info” or use this link:  
<http://www.duvalschools.org/static/students/lunch/downloads/Application.pdf>

- For school year 2010-2011
- Application, instructions, parent letter

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**Hillsborough County School District, Tampa, FL**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.sdhc.k12.fl.us/sns/>

Forms: [http://www.sdhc.k12.fl.us/sns/Application\\_Info\\_Eng.asp](http://www.sdhc.k12.fl.us/sns/Application_Info_Eng.asp), <http://www.sdhc.k12.fl.us/sns>  
(online application)

- Parent letter, information pamphlet in English and Spanish

- Online application coming soon
- Link to USDA web site with application in 26 languages

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**Lee County Schools, FL**

School Meals Homepage: <http://nutrition.leeschools.net/>

Forms: [http://nutrition.leeschools.net/lunch\\_menu.htm](http://nutrition.leeschools.net/lunch_menu.htm), <https://rocketscan.leeschools.net/> (online application)

- For school year 2010-11
- Web site gives information on direct certification, application tips, and eligibility
- Online application
- English and Spanish

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**Orange County School District, Orlando, FL**

School Meals Homepage: <https://www.ocps.net/op/food/Pages/default.aspx>

Forms: <https://www.ocps.net/op/food/Pages/FreeandReduced.aspx>

- Instructions
- FAQ on free and reduced-price meals

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**Osceola County Schools, FL**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.osceola.k12.fl.us/depts/cg/Index.asp>

Forms: [http://www.osceola.k12.fl.us/depts/cg/OnlineFree\\_Reduced.asp](http://www.osceola.k12.fl.us/depts/cg/OnlineFree_Reduced.asp)

- For school year 2010-11
- Online application
- English and Spanish

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**Palm Beach County School District, FL**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.palmbeach.k12.fl.us/sfs/parent/>

Forms: <http://www.palmbeachschools.org/sfs/MealApplicationInformation.asp>, <https://mealapps.palmbeach.k12.fl.us/> (online application)

- For school year 2010-11
- Online application available in English or Spanish
- Printed application in English, Spanish, and Creole is available at school sites

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**Pasco County Schools, FL**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.pasco.k12.fl.us/nutrition/>

Forms: [http://www.pasco.k12.fl.us/nutrition/free\\_reduced/](http://www.pasco.k12.fl.us/nutrition/free_reduced/),  
[http://www.pasco.k12.fl.us/nutrition/free\\_reduced/application/](http://www.pasco.k12.fl.us/nutrition/free_reduced/application/) (online application)

- For school year 2010-11
- Online application
- General information (instructions, direct certification, FAQ)
- English and Spanish

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**Pinellas County Schools, FL**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.pinellas.k12.fl.us/CI/STEPS/FoodServices.html>

Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Information:  
<http://www.pinellas.k12.fl.us/CI/STEPS/wellness.html>

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**Polk County Schools, FL**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.polk-fl.net/parents/generalinformation/nutrition.htm>

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**Seminole County Schools, FL**

School Meals Homepage: <http://foodservice.scps.k12.fl.us/>

Forms: <http://foodservice.scps.k12.fl.us/>, <https://foodservice.scps.k12.fl.us/lfserver/EFORM-10-11> (online application)

- For school year 2010-11
- Online application, including instructions section by section

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**Volusia County Schools, FL**

School Meals Homepage: <http://blackboard.volusia.k12.fl.us/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp>

Forms: <http://blackboard.volusia.k12.fl.us/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp>,  
<https://mealapps.volusia.k12.fl.us/lfserver/FRMealApplication> (online application)

- For school year 2010-11
- Online application, paper application, instructions, parent letter
- English and Spanish

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**Atlanta Public Schools, GA**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.atlantapublicschoolsnutrition.us/>

Forms:

<http://www.atlantapublicschoolsnutrition.us/index.php?page=lunchapps&sid=0707092223267041>,  
<https://www.schoollunchapp.com/Terms.aspx?host=atlantapublic.schoollunchapp.com&apply=1>

(online application)

- For school year 2010-11
- Online application, parent letter, instructions, eligibility information
- English and Spanish

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**Clayton County Public Schools, GA**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.clayton.k12.ga.us/departments/schoolnutrition/>

Forms: <http://www.clayton.k12.ga.us/departments/schoolnutrition/lettertothehouse.asp>

- For school year 2010-11
- Application, instructions, parent letter
- English and Spanish

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**Cobb County Schools, Marietta, GA**

School Nutrition Information:

<http://www.cobbk12.org/centraloffice/foodservices/index.htm>

Forms: <http://www.cobbk12.org/centraloffice/foodservices/freeRed.htm>,

<http://mealapps.cobbk12.org/> (online meal application)

- For school year 2010-11
- Free and reduced-price meal FAQ
- Online application in English and Spanish

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**DeKalb County Schools, GA**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.dekalb.k12.ga.us/instruction/foodservices>

Forms: <http://www.dekalb.k12.ga.us/instruction/foodservices> (on the right, click on “Family Meal Application 2010-2011”)

- For school year 2010-11
- Application, instructions, parent letter
- English and Spanish

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**Fulton County Schools, Atlanta, GA**

School Meals Homepage: <http://fultonschools.org/dept/schoolnutrition/Default.aspx>

Forms: [http://fultonschools.org/dept/schoolnutrition/free\\_reduced\\_info.aspx](http://fultonschools.org/dept/schoolnutrition/free_reduced_info.aspx),  
<https://www.schoollunchapp.com/Terms.aspx?host=fulton.schoollunchapp.com&apply=1> (online application)

- For school years 2009-10 and 2010-11
- Instructions for 2009-2010
- Online application
- English and Spanish

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**Gwinnett County Schools, GA**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.gwinnett.k12.ga.us/gcsnp.nsf?OpenDatabase&1~QuickLinks>

Forms: <http://www.gwinnett.k12.ga.us/gcsnp.nsf/pages/FreeandReducedInfo1~About>,  
<https://www.schoollunchapp.com/Terms.aspx?host=gwinnett.schoollunchapp.com&apply=1> (online application)

- For school year 2010-11
- Application, instructions, parent letter
- Application in English and Spanish, link to USDA website with application in 26 languages

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**Hawaii Department of Education, HI**

Food Services Homepage: <http://doe.k12.hi.us/schooloffice/foodservices.htm>

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**Chicago Public School District, IL**

School Meals Homepage:  
[http://www.cps.edu/Programs/Wellness\\_and\\_transportation/Pages/NutritionProgram.aspx](http://www.cps.edu/Programs/Wellness_and_transportation/Pages/NutritionProgram.aspx)

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**Jefferson County Schools, KY**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.jefferson.k12.ky.us/Departments/NutritionServices/>

Forms: <http://www.jefferson.k12.ky.us/Departments/NutritionServices/frlunch/index.html>

- For school year 2010-11
- Application, instructions, parent letter
- English and Spanish

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#### **Boston Public Schools, MA**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/meals>

Forms: <http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/meals> (scroll down to “Applications for Free and Reduced Price Meals”)

- For school year 2010-11
- Application, instructions, parent letter
- English, Cape Verdean Creole, Chinese, Haitian Creole, Portuguese, Somali, Spanish, Vietnamese (view from school district “Welcome” page by selecting language and then navigating to school meals page)

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#### **Anne Arundel County, MD**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.aacps.org/nutrition/>

Forms: <http://www.aacps.org/nutrition/meal.asp>

- For school year 2010-11
- Instructions, FAQ
- English and Spanish

### **TOP OF SECTION**

#### **Baltimore City Public Schools, MD**

School Meals Homepage:

<http://www.baltimorecityschools.org/2167103171652780/site/default.asp>

Forms: <https://eforms.bcps.k12.md.us/lfserver/mealapp2> (online application)

- For school year 2010-11
- Online application

### **TOP OF SECTION**

#### **Baltimore County Public Schools, MD**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.bcps.org/offices/ofns/>

Forms: [http://www.bcps.org/offices/ofns/free\\_reduced\\_program.html](http://www.bcps.org/offices/ofns/free_reduced_program.html)

- For school year 2010-11
- Parent letter, instructions
- Print translations available in Spanish and Chinese

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**Howard County Public Schools, MD**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.hcpss.org/foodservice/>

Forms: <http://www.hcpss.org/foodservice/free.shtml>

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**Montgomery County Public Schools, MD**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.mcps.k12.md.us/departments/foodserv/farms/intro.shtm>

- FAQs (click “FAQ” under “Free and Reduced Price Meals Information” on a link to the left)

Forms: <http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/foodserv/farms/application.shtm>

- For school year 2010-11
- Application, instructions, parent letter
- Application materials in English, Spanish, French, Korean, Chinese, Portuguese, Amharic
- Links to income guidelines and FAQ

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**Prince George’s County Public Schools, MD**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.pgcps.org/~lunch/index.html>

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**Detroit City Schools, MI**

School Meals Homepage: <http://detroitk12.org/admin/ppo/foodservice/>

Forms: <http://detroitk12.org/admin/ppo/foodservice/> (scroll down to “Resources”)

- For school year 2010-11
- Application, instructions, parent letter

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## **Omaha Public Schools, NE**

School Meals Homepage:

<http://www.ops.org/district/CENTRALOFFICES/BusinessServices/NutritionServices/tabid/130/Default.aspx>

Forms:

<http://www.ops.org/district/CENTRALOFFICES/BusinessServices/NutritionServices/MealPrices/tabid/301/Default.aspx>

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## **Clark County School District, Las Vegas, NV**

School Meals Homepage: <http://ccsd.net/foodservice/>

School Lunch Program Homepage: <http://ccsd.net/foodservice/4-NSLP.html>

Forms: <http://ccsd.net/foodservice/4-FRApp.html>, <https://www.applyforlunch.com/> (online application)

- For school year 2010-11
- Instructions

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## **Washoe County School District, NV**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.washoecountyschools.org/parents/nutrition-services>

Forms: <http://www.washoecountyschools.org/parents/nutrition-services/nslp>, <http://www.mealsense.org/washoe/default.aspx>

- For school year 2010-11
- FAQ, Meal Sense Website for general information and eligibility
- English and Spanish

### **TOP OF SECTION**

## **Albuquerque Public Schools, NM**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.apsfacilities.org/nutrition/>

Forms: [http://apsfacilities.org/nutrition/whats\\_happening/nu\\_pro\\_eli/](http://apsfacilities.org/nutrition/whats_happening/nu_pro_eli/), [http://apsfacilities.org/nutrition/whats\\_happening/nu\\_pro\\_eli/farmeals.php](http://apsfacilities.org/nutrition/whats_happening/nu_pro_eli/farmeals.php) (online application)

- For school year 2010-11
- Online application
- English and Spanish

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### **New York City Department of Education, NY**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.opt-osfns.org/osfns/meals/default.aspx>

Forms: <http://www.opt-osfns.org/osfns/meals/default.aspx>, [https://a858-ihss.nyc.gov/ihss1/en\\_US/IHSS\\_homePage.do](https://a858-ihss.nyc.gov/ihss1/en_US/IHSS_homePage.do) (Access NYC, online application)

- For school year 2010-11
- Application, instructions, parent letter, notification of approval/denial
- English, Spanish, Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, French, Greek, Haitian-Creole, Hebrew, Italian, Korean, Russian, Hindi, Polish, Urdu

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### **Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, NC**

School Meals Homepage:

<http://www.cms.k12.nc.us/cmsdepartments/cns/Pages/BreakfastandLunchPrograms.aspx>

Forms: <http://www.cms.k12.nc.us/cmsdepartments/cns/Pages/documents.aspx> (scroll down to “other forms”)

- For school year 2010-11
- Application, instructions, parent letter
- School meals flyer
- English and Spanish

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### **Cumberland County Schools, Fayetteville, NC**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.cn.ccs.k12.nc.us/info.htm>

Forms: <http://www.cn.ccs.k12.nc.us/free.htm>

- For school year 2010-11
- Media release

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### **Forsyth County Schools, NC**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.forsyth.k12.ga.us/129410616211242937/site/default.asp>

Forms:

<http://www.forsyth.k12.ga.us/129410616211242937/blank/browse.asp?a=383&BMDRN=2000&B COB=0&c=97212&129410616211242937Nav=|&NodeID=7077>

- For school year 2010-11
- Application, instructions, parent letter

- English and Spanish

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**Guilford County, Greensboro, NC**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.gcsnc.com/education/school/school.php?sectionid=33963&>

Forms:

<http://www.gcsnc.com/education/components/scrapbook/default.php?sectiondetailid=266552&>

- We reviewed an application and instructions in English and Spanish for school year 2010-11 but they have been removed from the web site
- Instructions for school year 2009-10 in English and Spanish are currently posted

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**Wake County Public Schools, NC**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.wcpss.net/child-nutrition/>

Forms: [http://www.wcpss.net/child-nutrition/free\\_reduced\\_process.html](http://www.wcpss.net/child-nutrition/free_reduced_process.html)

- For school year 2010-11
- Application, instructions, parent letter, application information sheet
- Spanish versions of instructions, parent letter, and application information sheet

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**Cleveland Public Schools, OH**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.cmsdnet.net/Resources/Students/LunchMenus.aspx>

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**Columbus City Schools, OH**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.columbus.k12.oh.us/index.html>

Forms: <http://www.schoolsunchapp.com/> (online application)

- For school year 2010-11
- Online application, parent letter within online application
- English and Spanish

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**Philadelphia City School District, PA**

School Meals Homepage: <http://webgui.phila.k12.pa.us/offices/f/foodservices>

Forms: <http://webgui.phila.k12.pa.us/offices/f/foodservices/faqs#KfQJCBcYczvbCjQgbj80HA>

- Philadelphia has a Universal Feeding Program
- Applications may be completed online at: [www.compass.state.pa.us](http://www.compass.state.pa.us)

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#### **Greenville County, SC**

School Meals Homepage:

<http://www.schoolnutritionandfitness.com/index.php?sid=0511081654589176>

Forms:

<http://www.schoolnutritionandfitness.com/index.php?page=lunchapps&sid=0511081654589176>,

<https://www.schoollunchapp.com/Terms.aspx?host=greenville.schoollunchapp.com&apply=1>

(online application)

- For school year 2010-11
- Online application

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#### **Davidson County (Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools), TN**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.mnps.org/Page56795.aspx>

Forms: <http://www.mnps.org/Page56829.aspx>

- For school year 2009-10
- Parent letter

### **TOP OF SECTION**

#### **Knox County Schools, Knoxville, TN**

School Meals Homepage:

[http://fs.knoxschools.org/modules/groups/integrated\\_home.phtml?gid=514283&sessionid=2021d18b8f024e22ff961beb1f495253](http://fs.knoxschools.org/modules/groups/integrated_home.phtml?gid=514283&sessionid=2021d18b8f024e22ff961beb1f495253)

Forms:

<http://fs.knoxschools.org/modules/cms/pages.phtml?pageid=122484&&sessionid=2021d18b8f024e22ff961beb1f495253>,

<https://www.schoollunchapp.com/Terms.aspx?host=knox.schoollunchapp.com&apply=1> (online application)

- For school year 2010-11
- Parent letter, income eligibility on website
- Online application

### **TOP OF SECTION**

#### **Memphis City School District, TN**

School Meals Homepage: [http://www.mcsk12.net/aboutmcs\\_nutrition\\_services.asp](http://www.mcsk12.net/aboutmcs_nutrition_services.asp)

Forms: [http://www.mcsk12.net/aboutmcs\\_nutrition\\_services\\_la.asp](http://www.mcsk12.net/aboutmcs_nutrition_services_la.asp)

- For school year 2010-11
- Application, instructions

### **TOP OF SECTION**

#### **Shelby County School District, TN**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.scscafe.com/>

Forms: <http://www.scscafe.com/FreeReduced/tabid/1114/Default.aspx>,  
<https://nutrition.scsk12.org/lfsrver/EFORM> (online application)

- For school year 2010-11
- Online application, instructions, parent letter, sample application

### **TOP OF SECTION**

#### **Aldine Independent School District, TX**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.aldinecafe.com/>

Forms: <http://www.aldinecafe.com/FreeReduced/tabid/1160/Default.aspx>

- For school year 2010-11
- Application, instructions, parent letter
- English and Spanish

### **TOP OF SECTION**

#### **Arlington Independent School District, TX**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.aisd.net/aisd/Default.aspx?alias=www.aisd.net/aisd/fns>

Forms: <http://www.aisd.net/aisd/FreeReduced/tabid/9578/Default.aspx>

- For school year 2010-11
- Parent letter, instructions, FAQ, income guidelines, “What do I need to know?” document
- English, Spanish, Vietnamese

### **TOP OF SECTION**

#### **Austin Independent School District, TX**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.austinisd.org/schools/menus/index.phtml>

Forms: <http://www.austinisd.org/schools/menus/benefits.phtml>  
[https://mealapps.austinisd.org/lfsrver/FRA\\_Application](https://mealapps.austinisd.org/lfsrver/FRA_Application) (online application)

- Online application

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**Brownsville Independent School District, TX**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.bisd.us/fs/>

Forms: <http://www.bisd.us/fs/> (Select “Letter to Parents”)

- For school year 2010-11
- Parent letter regarding free meals for all students
- English, Spanish

**TOP OF SECTION**

**Conroe Independent School District, TX**

School Meals Homepage: <http://childnutrition.conroeisd.net/>

Forms: <http://childnutrition.conroeisd.net/Free%20and%20Reduced%20Information>,  
<https://www.schoollunchapp.com/District.aspx> (online application)

- For school year 2010-11
- Online application

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**Cypress-Fairbanks Independent School District, TX**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.cfsd.net/dept2/food/default.htm>

Forms: <https://freeandreduced.cfsd.net/start.aspx> (online application)

- For school year 2010-11
- Online application

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**Dallas Independent School District, TX**

School Meals Homepage:

[http://www.dallasisd.org/inside\\_disd/depts/business/auxiliary/food\\_svc/](http://www.dallasisd.org/inside_disd/depts/business/auxiliary/food_svc/)

Forms: [http://www.dallasisd.org/inside\\_disd/depts/business/auxiliary/food\\_svc/FreeRed.html](http://www.dallasisd.org/inside_disd/depts/business/auxiliary/food_svc/FreeRed.html),

- We reviewed an online application for school year 2010-11 available in English and Spanish, but it has since been removed from the web site
- FAQ on free and reduced-price meals

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## **El Paso Independent School District, TX**

School Meals Homepage: [http://www.episd.org/departments/food\\_services/](http://www.episd.org/departments/food_services/)

Forms: [http://www.episd.org/departments/food\\_services/meal-programs.php](http://www.episd.org/departments/food_services/meal-programs.php)

- For school year 2010-11
- General information

### **[TOP OF SECTION](#)**

## **Fort Bend Independent School District, TX**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.fortbend.k12.tx.us/childnutritiondept/>

Forms: <http://www.fortbendisd.com/childnutritiondept/meals.cfm>

- For school year 2010-2011
- FAQ on website

### **[TOP OF SECTION](#)**

## **Fort Worth Independent School District, TX**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.fwisd.org/nutrition/Pages/default.aspx>

Forms: [http://www.fwisd.org/nutrition/Pages/free\\_reduced.aspx](http://www.fwisd.org/nutrition/Pages/free_reduced.aspx),  
[https://nutrition.fwisd.org/lfsrver/FRA\\_Letter](https://nutrition.fwisd.org/lfsrver/FRA_Letter) (online application)

- For school year 2010-11
- Parent letter, instructions, online application
- English and Spanish

### **[TOP OF SECTION](#)**

## **Garland Independent School District, TX**

School Meals Homepage: [http://www.garlandisd.net/departments/food\\_services/index.asp](http://www.garlandisd.net/departments/food_services/index.asp)

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## **Houston Independent School District, TX**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.houstonisd.org/portal/site/FoodServices>

Forms: <http://www.mealapps.houstonisd.org/> (online application)

- For school year 2010-11
- FAQ on free and reduced-price lunch program, NSLP Information on website
- Online application in English and Spanish

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### **Katy Independent School District, TX**

School Meals Homepage: [http://www.katyisd.org/food\\_services/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.katyisd.org/food_services/Pages/default.aspx)

Forms: [http://www.katyisd.org/food\\_services/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.katyisd.org/food_services/Pages/default.aspx) (scroll down to “Documents & Forms”), <https://freereduced.katyisd.org/> (online application)

- For school year 2010-11
- Application, instructions, parent letter
- Online application
- English and Spanish

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### **Lewisville Independent School District, TX**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.lisd.net/childnutrition/index.html>

Forms: <http://www.mealsense.org/Lewisville> (click “How to Apply”)

- For school year 2010-11
- Application, instructions, parent letter
- English and Spanish

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### **North East Independent School District, San Antonio, TX**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.neisd.net/foodserv/HTML/menus.html>

Forms: <http://www.neisd.net/foodserv/pdf/GuidelineLetterwithinstructions-English-Aug2010.pdf>, [https://mealapps.neisd.net/lfserver/eform\\_eng](https://mealapps.neisd.net/lfserver/eform_eng) (online application)

- For school year 2010-11
- Online application, instructions, parent letter
- English and Spanish

## [TOP OF SECTION](#)

### **Northside Independent School District, San Antonio, TX**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.nisd.net/business/child-nutrition>

Forms: <http://www.nisd.net/business/child-nutrition/mealapplications/files>,

- For school year 2010-11
- Application, instructions, parent letter, FAQ
- English and Spanish

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## **Pasadena Independent School District, TX**

School Meals Homepage:

<http://pasadena.tx.schoolwebpages.com/education/school/school.php?sectionid=1255&>

Forms: <https://www.schoollunchapp.com/> (online application)

- For school year 2010-11
- Online application
- English and Spanish

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## **Plano Independent School District, TX**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.pisd.edu/parents/nutrition/index.shtml>

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## **San Antonio Independent School District, TX**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.saisd.net/dept/foodnutrition/>

Forms: <http://www.saisd.net/dept/foodnutrition/2-free-a-reduced>, <https://fsapps.saisd.net/>  
(online application)

- For school year 2010-11
- Parent letter, instructions, flyer, FAQ
- Online application in English and Spanish, print materials on website in English only

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## **Alpine School District, UT**

School Meals Homepage: <http://www.alpine.k12.ut.us/phpApps/genericPage.php?pdid=937>

Forms: <http://www.alpine.k12.ut.us/phpApps/genericPage.php?pdid=937> (under the “Forms” menu on the left-hand side of the page)

- For school year 2010-11
- Application, instructions, parent letter, disclosure form
- English and Spanish

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## **Davis School District, UT**

School Meals Homepage:

<http://www.davis.k12.ut.us/21381016112139957/site/default.asp?21381016112139957Nav=|&NodeID=576>

Forms:

<http://www.davis.k12.ut.us/21381016112139957/blank/browse.asp?a=383&BMDRN=2000&BCOB=0&c=56389&21381016112139957Nav=|&NodeID=577>

- For school year 2010-11
- Application, instructions, parent letter, disclosure form
- English and Spanish

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### **Granite District, Salt Lake City, UT**

School Meals Homepage:

<http://www.graniteschools.org/departments/businessservices/foodservices/Pages/default.aspx>

Forms:

<http://www.graniteschools.org/departments/businessservices/foodservices/Pages/FreeReducedApplication.aspx>

- For school year 2010-11
- Application, instructions, parent letter, disclosure form
- English and Spanish

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### **Jordan District, UT**

School Meals Homepage: <http://departments.jordandistrict.org/nutritionservices/>

Forms: <http://departments.jordandistrict.org/nutritionservices/application.html>

- For school year 2010-11
- Application, instructions, parent letter, income eligibility guidelines, disclosure form
- English and Spanish
- Nutrition services flyer

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### **Chesterfield County Schools, VA**

School Meals Homepage: <http://chesterfield.k12.va.us/CCPS/operations/nutrition.htm>

Forms: <http://chesterfield.k12.va.us/CCPS/operations/nutrition.htm> (Under “Forms” tab)

- For school year 2010-11
- Application, instructions
- English and Spanish

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### **Fairfax County Schools, VA**

School Meals Homepage: [http://www.fcps.edu/fs/food/food\\_at\\_school/free\\_reduced/](http://www.fcps.edu/fs/food/food_at_school/free_reduced/)

Forms: [http://www.fcps.edu/fs/food/food\\_at\\_school/free\\_reduced/](http://www.fcps.edu/fs/food/food_at_school/free_reduced/)

- For school year 2010-11
- Application, instructions, parent letter
- English, Arabic, Farsi, Korean, Spanish, Urdu, Vietnamese

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### **Henrico County Schools, VA**

School Meals Homepage:

<http://www.henrico.k12.va.us/HealthNutrition/NutritionServices/index.html>

Forms:

<http://www.henrico.k12.va.us/HealthNutrition/NutritionServices/ApplicationInformation.html>

- For school year 2010-11
- Application, instructions, parent letter
- Spanish available at schools, other languages available through the VA Department of Education

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### **Loudon County Schools, VA**

School Meals Homepage: <http://cmsweb1.loudoun.k12.va.us/50990510144133/site/default.asp>

Forms: <http://cmsweb1.lcps.org/50990510144133/site/default.asp> (scroll down to “Free and Reduced Price Meal Program)

- For school year 2010-11
- Application, instructions, parent letter
- English and Spanish

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### **Prince William County Schools, VA**

School Meals Homepage: <http://pwcs.menus.schoolfusion.us/>

Forms: <http://pwcs.menus.schoolfusion.us/> (on the menu on the left side, click on “Meal Applications” then “English applications”),

[https://mealapp.pwcs.edu/lfserver/PWCS\\_FRA\\_English](https://mealapp.pwcs.edu/lfserver/PWCS_FRA_English) (online application)

- For school year 2010-11
- Instructions, parent letter, link to online application, FAQ

- Online application
- English and Spanish

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**Virginia Beach City Schools, VA**

School Meals Homepage: [http://www.vbschools.com/food\\_services/](http://www.vbschools.com/food_services/)

Forms: [http://www.vbschools.com/food\\_services/free\\_meals.asp](http://www.vbschools.com/food_services/free_meals.asp)

- General information

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**Milwaukee Public Schools, WI**

School Meals Homepage:

[http://mpsportal.milwaukee.k12.wi.us/portal/server.pt/comm/programs\\_resources/310/lunch\\_menu\\_nutrition/38262](http://mpsportal.milwaukee.k12.wi.us/portal/server.pt/comm/programs_resources/310/lunch_menu_nutrition/38262)

Forms:

[http://mpsportal.milwaukee.k12.wi.us/portal/server.pt/comm/programs\\_resources/310/lunch\\_menu\\_nutrition/38262](http://mpsportal.milwaukee.k12.wi.us/portal/server.pt/comm/programs_resources/310/lunch_menu_nutrition/38262), <http://www.sns.milwaukee.k12.wi.us/> (online application)

- For school year 2010-11
- Application, instructions, FAQ
- Online application
- English and Spanish

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