

Free and Reduced Price Applications

All Local Education Agencies (LEAs) participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and/or School Breakfast Program (SBP) must make free and reduced-price meals available to eligible students.

Requirements

- ✓ LEAs must provide application materials ([OSPI application materials](#)) and other communications with households concerning eligibility, in a language that can be understood (reference [USDA website](#) for materials in 28 languages).
- ✓ LEAs must have a system in place to identify language needs of households.
- ✓ Information letters must be distributed annually, before the beginning of the school year.
- ✓ LEAs planning to use on-line or scanned applications should review the meal application materials web-based and scanned reference sheet.
- ✓ All LEAs not using on-line or scanned applications MUST use the OSPI or USDA prototype, no changes may be made.

Processing Applications:

- Use the most current version of the [USDA Eligibility Manual for School Meals](#) as a guiding document
- LEAs must process applications within 10 operating days
- Date stamp applications when received to demonstrate processing time (best practice)
- Effective date of eligibility can be the date the application was submitted or the date the application was approved
 - If using the date the application was submitted, LEA must notify CNS prior to implementation, must use this method for all schools and all programs and must have method to document and track dates
- Eligibility is carried over from the previous school year for 30 operating days or until a new eligibility determination is made, whichever is earlier
- Student Rosters must be coded according to how eligibility was determined using Washington Qualification Codes found in [the CEDARS Data Manual Appendix X](#)

Approving Applications:

- The “Determining Official” is the individual(s) responsible for reviewing and approving free and reduced-price meal applications
- Applications are approved by Categorical Eligibility or Income Eligibility:
 - **Categorical Eligibility**
 - Eligibility is determined by a household member providing an Assistance Program case number (Basic Food / TANF / FDPIR)
 - Case numbers typically have between 2-9 number and no letters
 - Households must name the source of the case number
 - Categorical Eligibility extends to all household members for Basic Food/ TANF/FDPIR (no eligibility extension for foster children / migrant / homeless / Head Start)
 - **Income Eligibility**
 - Income Application must include;
 - Names of ALL household members
 - Last four digits of the Social Security number of the adult who signs the application or indicates that they have none
 - Current amount of income for each household member
 - When no income is provided the application is still considered complete
 - Convert to annual income when there is more than one pay frequency
(Weekly x 52; Every Two Weeks x 26; Twice a Month x 24; Monthly x 12)

Household Notification

- Households must be notified of their eligibility status
- The “Hearing Official” is the individual responsible for reviewing and making a determination regarding an appeal to benefit determination
- The hearing official cannot be the same person as the Determining Official
- Household Notification letters should include the name and contact information of the Hearing Official
- Households approved for free or reduced price meals may be notified in writing or verbally (including directly certified students)
- Households who are denied benefits must be provided **written** notification, including:
 - Reason for denial of benefits
 - Right to appeal / Instructions on how to appeal
 - Statement that the family may re-apply anytime during the school year

Reference:

- ✓ [CFR 245](#)
- ✓ [USDA Eligibility Manual for School Meals](#)

Resources:

- ✓ OSPI CNS Web Page [Free and Reduced Price Information](#)
- ✓ [Free and Reduced-Price Meal Applications training](#)

Acronym Reference

-CEDARS	Comprehensive Education Data and Research System
-CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
-CNS	Child Nutrition Services
-FDPIR	Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations
-LEA	Local Education Agency
-OSPI	Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
-TANF	Temporary Assistance to Needy Families
-USDA	United States Department of Agriculture