

## 2014-15 Household Income Guidelines and Application for Educational Benefits Requirements

This information applies to all local educational agencies (LEAs) that participate in School Nutrition Programs (SNP), *except* the following types of LEAs that will not need to collect Applications for Educational Benefits for SNP during school year 2014-15:

- Residential child care institutions that have an approved resident income policy and have no day-only students.
- Environmental learning centers or any school that serves only students whose school meal eligibility status already has been determined by another LEA.
- Schools that are approved to participate, for all meal services, in either (1) the Community Eligibility Provision or (2) Provision 2 or 3 (not a base year).\*

\* Public schools that do not need household applications for meal benefits usually will need to continue to collect a similar application from households for Minnesota Automated Reporting Student System (MARSS) reporting. MARSS data provides documentation of annual student eligibility for state compensatory revenue funding and demographic data for assessment. See discussion below on *Community Eligibility Provision and Non-SNP Household Applications*.

### New for School Year 2014-15

#### 1. Expanded Eligibility for Free School Meals

Starting school year 2014-15, additional state funds provided by the Minnesota Legislature will allow more students to receive school lunches and/or breakfasts at no charge.

- ***Students who qualify for reduced-price meals will receive school lunches at no charge.*** State funds of 52.5 cents will be paid for these lunches (the 40 cents that the household would ordinarily pay, plus the basic 12.5 cents that is already paid per lunch).

The state funds that already provide breakfasts at no charge to students qualified for reduced-price meals will continue (the 30 cents per breakfast that the household would ordinarily pay).

- ***All participating kindergarten students will receive breakfasts at no charge.*** State funds will provide the difference between federal breakfast payments and

full reimbursement for breakfasts served to kindergarten students who qualify for reduced-price or paid meals. State payments will provide 30 cents per breakfast served to kindergarten students who qualify for reduced-price meals, and \$1.30 per breakfast served to kindergarten students who qualify for paid meals.

## 2. Community Eligibility Provision and Non-SNP Household Applications

School year 2014-15 is the first year that eligible LEAs may apply for schools to participate in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP). CEP schools do not need to collect Applications for Educational Benefits, either to provide meal benefits to students (all meals are provided at no charge) or to claim meal reimbursements. This also applies to Provision 2 or 3 schools that claim all meal services using Provision 2 or 3 procedures.

Public schools that do not need to collect household applications to provide meal benefits, due to participation in either CEP or Provision 2 or 3, still need to collect household applications for MARSS reporting which records annual eligibility determinations that are used for state compensatory revenue funds and demographics for assessment records. The MDE School Finance Division will provide an ***alternative version of the Application for Educational Benefits*** that schools may use for ***non-SNP purposes***. [View the School Finance / MARSS – Student Accounting page on the MDE website.](#)

The ***costs of distributing and processing alternative Applications for Educational Benefits*** for non-SNP purposes are **unallowable costs** to the school food service account, since the applications are not used for school meal purposes.

More information about CEP is available on the MDE website. [View the SNP/ Community Eligibility Provision Webpage.](#)

## 3. Revised Nondiscrimination Statement

The required civil rights nondiscrimination statement on the second page of the Application for Educational Benefits has been revised as required by USDA. The nondiscrimination statement ***now lists the protected classes for all USDA programs***. Note that many of the listed protected classes do *not* apply to SNP. If a participant inquires to your LEA about which of the protected classes are applicable to SNP, confirm that the ***protected classes for SNP continue to be race, color, national origin, sex, age and disability***.

## Distribution of Application Packets for School Year 2014-15

All households must be informed about school meal benefits before the beginning of the school year. Application materials should be distributed within the four weeks prior to the first day of school.

- **Application packets for school year 2014-15 may not be distributed before July 1, 2014**, the date that the income guidelines are effective. Electronic application systems may not open for 2014-15 applications before July 1, 2014. For *year-round schools* only that will be operating in July 2014, applications may be distributed in June 2014.
- Do not send application packets to households with children who have been directly certified for free school meals.
- Households may not be required to complete applications.
- LEAs may take steps to facilitate the return of applications from households, such as providing return envelopes.

### 2014-15 Application Packet

[View the 2014-15 Application for Educational Benefits packet \(PDF version\)](#). The application packet includes:

1. Household Letter (one page)
2. Instructions for completing the application (one page – may be copied on back of the household letter)
3. Application for Educational Benefits (two pages – copy back to back – second page must be included).

(Also refer to the information below about *Other Required Notifications* that may be included in the application packet.)

**Carryover of Meal Benefits from Previous School Year:** School meal benefits that were approved in school year 2013-14 (from applications and direct certifications) must be carried over into the beginning of school year 2014-15. Meal benefits must be carried over for the first 30 operating school days of school year 2014-15, or up to the date that a student is approved (from application or direct certification) or denied for school year 2014-15 meal benefits, whichever date comes first.

### Application Approval Procedures

School meal benefits are approved for the whole school year. Once an application has been approved, meal benefits are terminated or changed only when required due to verification or administrative review, or terminated at the request of a household. Households are not required to notify their LEA of changes in household income or size during the year.

References for reviewing and approving Applications for Educational Benefits:

- [Locate Procedures for Approval/Denial of Applications on SNP/Applications- Student Meals page of MDE website](#) (two pages). These procedures include a list of which sections of the application must be completed, depending on the type of application - household income, case number, or foster child application.
- [View USDA Eligibility Guidance for School Meals manual on USDA website](#). (106 pages) Information on all parts of the application and verification process including data privacy.

**Conversion of Incomes to Annual Income:** When an application has incomes that are paid at different frequencies, the LEA must convert each income to an annual income and then add the annual incomes together.

To convert to annual income:

- Multiply a weekly income by 52.
- Multiply a bi-weekly income (every other week) by 26.
- Multiply a twice-per-month income by 24.
- Multiply a monthly income by 12.

Example: A household reports incomes of \$500 received every two weeks and \$1,000 received monthly. Since the incomes are paid at different frequencies, they must be converted to annual incomes in order to add them together: \$500 bi-weekly income x 26 = \$13,000 annual income and \$1,000 monthly income x 12 = \$12,000 annual income. The two annual incomes are added together for a total annual household income of \$25,000.

**Categorical Eligibility / Extension to All Household Members:** If any household member reports a case number that appears valid from one of the programs listed below, all of the students in the household are approved for free school meals based on categorical (automatic) eligibility.

Categorical Eligibility:

If a person in a household has a case number from any of the following three programs, all students in the household have categorical (automatic) eligibility for free school meal benefits.

- Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP).
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).
- Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR).

Valid case numbers:

- MFIP and SNAP case numbers in Minnesota contain between four (4) and eight (8) digits and no letter prefix. The number is assigned to the person who applied for benefits.
- FDPIR case numbers in Minnesota are nine (9) digits (head of household's Social Security number). The number may be hyphenated.

Invalid case numbers:

Other assistance programs, for example *Medical Assistance* and *WIC*, are *not* categorically eligible. Households that receive Medical Assistance or WIC should check the household income guidelines for school meals to see whether they should complete an Application for Educational Benefits based on their household income.

**Directly Certified Students** (public schools): Application packets should not be sent to households that have been certified for free school meals using the first direct certification data for the school year. The first direct certification data for school year 2014-15 will be provided to public LEAs approximately in late June 2014.

If one child in a household is directly certified with data from MDE, then all children that the school district knows to be in the same household are also considered directly certified.

**Application for Student from Residential Child Care Institution:** When a student living in a residential child care institution (RCCI), for example a group home, attends an LEA, the RCCI director should complete the meal application for the student and indicate that the application is for a student in residential care. The completed application must identify the child and list any regular income that is available to the student in Section 2 or provide a copy of the RCCI's Residential Income Policy. The RCCI director must sign in Section 6 (Social Security number not needed).

### **Consent to Release Data for Health Insurance Purposes**

The state of Minnesota continues its efforts to notify eligible families about the availability of health care coverage through Minnesota Health Care Programs, for example MinnesotaCare. Section 5 of the Application for Educational Benefits records whether a household that has been approved for meal benefits has declined to share their eligibility information with health insurance programs. The section uses a “negative check-off” format – the household’s school meals eligibility for free or reduced-price meals may be shared with health insurance programs unless the household has checked the box to indicate that information may not be shared. Public schools annually report this data element for students in MARSS.

### **Civil Rights Survey**

LEAs must maintain documentation of the race and ethnicity of students for federal civil rights purposes. *If an LEA already collects racial/ethnic data on other student enrollment records, the Civil Rights Survey section may be removed from the Application for Educational Benefits form.*

### **Translations**

A Spanish translation of the 2014-15 application packet will be available on the *School Nutrition Programs/Applications–Student Meals* page of the MDE website.

USDA provides translations of a prototype school meal application in many other languages, including Somali and Hmong. [View USDA translated application packets on the USDA website.](#) A USDA application packet has eight pages including the household letter, instructions for applying, application form, and the *Sharing Information with Medicaid/State Children’s Health*

*Insurance Program* consent form. If using a USDA translated application packet, also download the English version for reference.

## **Notification of Approval or Denial of Benefits**

The prototype letter for notifying households of approval or denial of school meal benefits is available on the MDE website. [Locate Approval/Denial Letter on SNP/Applications-Student Meals page.](#)

## **Reporting Economic Indicator on MARSS (Public Schools)**

The “economic indicator” reported annually by public schools on student MARSS records is based on student eligibility for free or reduced-price school meals (or approval of the alternative Application for Educational Benefits form at CEP or Provision 2 or 3 schools).

The MARSS economic indicator for school year 2014-15 must be based only on applications and direct certifications that have been received and approved for school year 2014-15. The 2014-15 MARSS economic indicator may *not* be based on eligibility for meal benefits from school year 2013-14 that has been temporarily carried forward for meal benefits during the first 30 operating days of school year 2014-15.

## **Verification of Information Provided on Applications**

Each fall an LEA must verify a percentage (usually three percent) of approved Applications for Educational Benefits. In addition, any application may be verified “for cause.” The memorandum on verification requirements for school year 2014-15 will be posted in August 2014 on the *SNP/Applications-Student Meals/Verification* page of the MDE website.

## **Other Required Notifications to Include in Application Packet**

The application packet for school meals can be used to meet or partly meet other annual notification requirements.

### 1. Notification about School Breakfast Program

This notification requirement applies to all LEAs (public and private) that have one or more sites that offer the School Breakfast Program (SBP). Federal program regulations require LEAs with a breakfast program to outreach about the benefits of school breakfast in the annual application packet for school meals.

- [Locate breakfast flyers and other marketing resources on the Discover School Breakfast Resource Materials page of USDA website.](#)
- For more details about the SBP outreach requirement, [view the Additional Required Outreach Efforts Webpage.](#)

### 2. Notification about Minnesota Health Programs

This notification requirement applies to public school districts including charter schools. State law requires public LEAs to notify households each year about the availability of health care programs in Minnesota. This requirement may be met by including the 2014-

15 edition of the Minnesota Health Care Programs flyer in the school meals application packet.

- For more details about outreach for health programs - [Locate Additional Required Outreach Efforts and the Minnesota Health Care Programs flyer on the SNP/Applications-Student Meals page of the MDE website.](#)

If you have any questions about this information, contact Food and Nutrition Service at 651-582-8526, 1-800-366-8922 (MN Toll-free) or [mde.fns@state.mn.us](mailto:mde.fns@state.mn.us).

*For School Use Only*  
**School Nutrition Programs**  
**Household Income Guidelines for School Year 2014-15**  
**Effective July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2015**

**Household Size of One (1)**

FREQUENCY OF INCOME	FREE MEALS \$ RANGE	REDUCED-PRICE MEALS \$ RANGE	PAID MEALS \$ RANGE
Weekly	0 – 292	293 – 416	417
2 Weeks	0 – 584	585 – 831	832
2 X Month	0 – 633	634 – 900	901 or more
Monthly	0 – 1,265	1,266 – 1,800	1,801
Yearly	0 – 15,171	15,172 – 21,590	21,591

**Household Size of Two (2)**

FREQUENCY OF INCOME	FREE MEALS \$ RANGE	REDUCED-PRICE MEALS \$ RANGE	PAID MEALS \$ RANGE
Weekly	0 – 394	395 – 560	561
2 Weeks	0 – 787	788 – 1,120	1,121
2 X Month	0 – 853	854 – 1,213	1,214 or more
Monthly	0 – 1,705	1,706 – 2,426	2,427
Yearly	0 – 20,449	20,450 – 29,101	29,102

**Household Size of Three (3)**

FREQUENCY OF INCOME	FREE MEALS \$ RANGE	REDUCED-PRICE MEALS \$ RANGE	PAID MEALS \$ RANGE
Weekly	0 – 495	496 - 705	706
2 Weeks	0 – 990	991 – 1,409	1,410
2 X Month	0 – 1,072	1,073 – 1,526	1,527 or more
Monthly	0 – 2,144	2,145 – 3,051	3,052
Yearly	0 – 25,727	25,728 – 36,612	36,613

**Household Size of Four (4)**

FREQUENCY OF INCOME	FREE MEALS \$ RANGE	REDUCED-PRICE MEALS \$ RANGE	PAID MEALS \$ RANGE
Weekly	0 – 597	598 - 849	850
2 Weeks	0 – 1,193	1,194 – 1,698	1,699
2 X Month	0 – 1,292	1,293 – 1,839	1,840 or more
Monthly	0 – 2,584	2,585 – 3,677	3,678
Yearly	0 – 31,005	31,006 – 44,123	44,124



**Household Size of Five (5)**

FREQUENCY OF INCOME	FREE MEALS \$ RANGE	REDUCED-PRICE MEALS \$ RANGE	PAID MEALS \$ RANGE
Weekly	0 – 698	699 - 993	994
2 Weeks	0 – 1,396	1,397 – 1,986	1,987
2 X Month	0 – 1,512	1,513 – 2,152	2,153 or more
Monthly	0 – 3,024	3,025 – 4,303	4,304
Yearly	0 – 36,283	36,284 – 51,634	51,635

**Household Size of Six (6)**

FREQUENCY OF INCOME	FREE MEALS \$ RANGE	REDUCED-PRICE MEALS \$ RANGE	PAID MEALS \$ RANGE
Weekly	0 – 800	801 – 1,138	1,139
2 Weeks	0 – 1,599	1,600 – 2,275	2,276
2 X Month	0 – 1,732	1,733 – 2,465	2,466 or more
Monthly	0 – 3,464	3,465 – 4,929	4,930
Yearly	0 – 41,561	41,562 – 59,145	59,146

**Household Size of Seven (7)**

FREQUENCY OF INCOME	FREE MEALS \$ RANGE	REDUCED-PRICE MEALS \$ RANGE	PAID MEALS \$ RANGE
Weekly	0 – 901	902 – 1,282	1,283
2 Weeks	0 – 1,802	1,803 – 2,564	2,565
2 X Month	0 – 1,952	1,953 – 2,778	2,779 or more
Monthly	0 – 3,904	3,905 – 5,555	5,556
Yearly	0 – 46,839	46,840 – 66,656	66,657

**Household Size of Eight (8)**

FREQUENCY OF INCOME	FREE MEALS \$ RANGE	REDUCED-PRICE MEALS \$ RANGE	PAID MEALS \$ RANGE
Weekly	0 – 1,003	1,004 – 1,427	1,428
2 Weeks	0 – 2,005	2,006 – 2,853	2,854
2 X Month	0 – 2,172	2,173 – 3,091	3,092 or more
Monthly	0 – 4,344	4,345 – 6,181	6,182
Yearly	0 – 52,117	52,118 – 74,167	74,168

**Additional Free Meals – add for each additional household member:**

Frequency	Amount
Weekly	\$102
2 Weeks	\$203
2 X Month	\$220
Monthly	\$440
Yearly	\$5,278

**Additional Reduced-Price Meals – add for each additional household member:**

Frequency	Amount
Weekly	\$145
2 Weeks	\$289
2 X Month	\$313
Monthly	\$626
Yearly	\$7,511