

CSBA Sample

Administrative Regulation

Free And Reduced Price Meals

AR 3553

Business and Noninstructional Operations

Note: Education Code 49550 requires all districts to provide at least one nutritionally adequate meal during each school day to low-income students, defined in Education Code 49552 as those who meet federal eligibility criteria for free and reduced-price meals. The following administrative regulation is for use by all districts, regardless of whether they receive reimbursement for free and reduced-price meals through the National School Lunch and/or Breakfast Program (42 USC 1758, 1773) and/or the State Meal Program (Education Code 49490-49494).

Applications

***Note: The California Department of Education's (CDE) Management Bulletin USDA-SNP-07-2010 clarifies that it is the responsibility of the district to ensure that applications for free and reduced-price meals and free milk meet the requirements of law. Model application forms are available from the CDE in several formats and in both English and Spanish. ***

The Superintendent or designee shall ensure that the district's application form for free and reduced-price meals and related materials include the statements specified in Education Code 49557 and 7 CFR 245.5. The district's application packet shall include the notifications and information listed in Education Code 49557.2.

(cf. 3550 - Food Service/Child Nutrition Program)
(cf. 3551 - Food Service Operations/Cafeteria Fund)
(cf. 3552 - Summer Meal Program)

The application form and related information shall be distributed in paper form to all parents/guardians at the beginning of each school year and shall be available to students at all times during the school day. (Education Code 48980, 49520; 42 USC 1758; 7 CFR 245.5)

(cf. 5145.6 - Parental Notifications)

Note: The following paragraph may be revised to reflect district practice. In addition to the paper application form described above, Education Code 49557, as amended by SB 708 (Ch. 390, Statutes of 2015), authorizes districts to make the application for free or reduced-price meals available online. Any such online application must comply with specific requirements, including, but not limited to, the provision of clear instructions for families that are homeless or are migrants.

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In addition, the district application form for free and reduced price meals shall be available online. The online application form shall require completion of only those questions necessary for determining eligibility, contain clear instructions for families that are homeless or migrant, and comply with other requirements specified in Education Code 49557.

Note: According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Eligibility Manual for School Meals: Determining and Verifying Eligibility, households enrolling a new student after the start of the school year must also be provided an application and related materials.

An application form and related information shall also be provided whenever a new student is enrolled.

At the beginning of each school year, the Superintendent or designee shall send a public release, containing the same information supplied to parents/guardians and including eligibility criteria, to local media, the local unemployment office, and any major employers in the district attendance area contemplating large layoffs. Copies of the public release shall be made available upon request to any interested person. (7 CFR 245.5)

Eligibility

Note: Districts are responsible for determining students' eligibility for free and reduced-price meals in accordance with criteria established by the CDE consistent with 42 USC 1758 and 1773 and 7 CFR 245.3. Family income levels that qualify for free or reduced-price meals, by household size, are annually posted on the CDE's web site.

Note: Pursuant to 42 USC 1769c, a district that has demonstrated a high level of, or a high risk for, administrative error may be required to implement a second-level, independent review of the eligibility determination for each application. Such districts also will be subject to additional CDE reporting requirements.

The Superintendent or designee shall determine students' eligibility for the free and reduced-price meals program based on the criteria specified in 42 USC 1758 and 1773 and 7 CFR 245.1-245.13 and made available by the California Department of Education.

***Note: Pursuant to 42 USC 1758, districts must directly certify for enrollment in the free and reduced-price meals program students who participate in the CalFresh program or California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program. 42 USC 1758 also authorizes, but does not require, districts to directly certify as eligible a student who is homeless, migratory, or a foster youth. For purpose of direct certification, districts may obtain data through the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS) or may enter into a local agreement with the county department of social or welfare services to match enrollment data. Pursuant to Education Code 49561 and 42 USC 1758, no additional application or further action is required by the household of students who are directly certified. Further information about direct certification and other eligibility issues is available in the USDA's Eligibility Guidance for School

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Meals Manual.***

Note: Pursuant to 42 USC 1759a, certain districts located in high poverty areas may be eligible to participate in alternative processes for annual determinations of student eligibility for free and reduced-price meals (Provisions 1, 2, 3, and 4). Districts participating in these alternative processes should revise the following section to reflect district practice.

When authorized by law, participants in other federal or state programs may be directly certified, without further application, for enrollment in the free and reduced-price meals program. (Education Code 49561; 42 USC 1758)

(cf. 6173 - Education for Homeless Children)
(cf. 6173.1 - Education for Foster Youth)
(cf. 6175 - Migrant Education Program)

Verification of Eligibility

Not later than November 15 of each year, the Superintendent or designee shall verify the eligibility of a sample of household applications approved for the school year in accordance with the sample sizes and procedures specified in 42 USC 1758 and 7 CFR 245.6a. (42 USC 1758; 7 CFR 245.6a)

If the review indicates that the initial eligibility determination is correct, the Superintendent or designee shall verify the approved household application. If the review indicates that the initial eligibility determination is incorrect, the Superintendent or designee shall: (42 USC 1758; 7 CFR 245.6a)

1. If the eligibility status changes from reduced price to free, make the increased benefits immediately available and notify the household of the change in benefits
2. If the eligibility status changes from free to reduced price, first verify the application, then notify the household of the correct eligibility status, and, when required by law, send a notice of adverse action as described below
3. If the eligibility status changes from free or reduced price to paid, send the household a notice of adverse action as described below

If any household is to receive a reduction or termination of benefits as a result of verification activities, or if the household fails to cooperate with verification efforts, the Superintendent or designee shall reduce or terminate benefits, as applicable, and shall properly document and retain on file in the district the reasons for ineligibility. He/she also shall send a notice of adverse action to any household that is to receive a reduction or termination of benefits. Such notice shall be provided 10 days prior to the actual reduction or termination of benefits. The notice shall advise the household of: (7 CFR 245.6a)

1. The change and the reasons for the change

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2. The right to appeal, when the appeal must be filed to ensure continued benefits while awaiting a hearing and decision, and instructions on how to appeal
3. The right to reapply at any time during the school year

Confidentiality/Release of Records

Note: The following section is for use by districts that have adopted a policy, pursuant to Education Code 49558, allowing district employees to use individual records of students eligible for the free and reduced-price meals program for the purpose of disaggregation of academic achievement data and for the identification of students eligible for public school choice and supplemental educational services in schools identified for program improvement pursuant to 20 USC 6316. See the accompanying Board policy and BP/AR 0520.2 - Title I Program Improvement Schools.

Note: It is recommended that the district designate by name or job title the employee(s) authorized to use records for these purposes. Districts should identify the specific title(s) of the designated employee(s) in the space provided below, such as Title I Coordinator.

The Superintendent designates the following district employee(s) to use individual records pertaining to student participation in the free and reduced-price meals program for the purpose of disaggregation of academic achievement data or for the identification of students in any program improvement school eligible for school choice and supplemental educational services pursuant to 20 USC 6316:

| Chief Business Official and/or Child Nutrition Supervisor
(title or position)

In using the records for such purposes, the Superintendent or designee shall ensure that:
(Education Code 49558)

1. No individual indicators of participation in the free and reduced-price meals program are maintained in the permanent records of any student if not otherwise allowed by law.

(cf. 5125 - Student Records)

2. Information regarding individual student participation in the free and reduced-price meals program is not publicly released.

(cf. 4119.23/4219.23/4319.23 - Unauthorized Release of Confidential/Privileged Information)

3. All other confidentiality provisions required by law are met.
4. Information collected regarding individual students certified to participate in the free and

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reduced-price meals program is destroyed when no longer needed for its intended purpose.

Nondiscrimination Plan

The district's plan for students receiving free or reduced-price meals shall ensure the following: (Education Code 49557; 42 USC 1758)

1. The names of the students shall not be published, posted, or announced in any manner, or used for any purpose other than the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs, unless otherwise provided by law.
2. There shall be no overt identification of any of the students by the use of special tokens or tickets or by any other means.
3. The students shall not be required to work for their meals or for milk.
4. The students shall not be required to use a separate dining area, go through a separate serving line or entrance, or consume their meals or milk at a different time.

(cf. 0410 - Nondiscrimination in District Programs and Activities)

(cf. 3555 - Nutrition Program Compliance)

When more than one lunch, breakfast, or type of milk is offered, the students shall have the same choice of meals or milk as is available to those students who pay the full price. (Education Code 49557; 7 CFR 245.8)

Prices

Note: The following section is for use by districts that provide reduced-price meals to students through the National School Lunch and/or Breakfast Program pursuant to 42 USC 1758 and 1773.

The maximum price that shall be charged to eligible students for reduced-price meals shall be 40 cents for lunch and 30 cents for breakfast. (42 USC 1758, 1773)

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