

The National School Lunch Program

The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) is a federally assisted meal program operating in nearly 95,000 public and nonprofit private schools and residential childcare institutions. It provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free lunches to more than 26 million children each school day. Established under the National School Lunch Act, signed by President Harry Truman in 1946, the program celebrated its 50th anniversary in 1996.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, through its Food and Nutrition Service (formerly the Food and Consumer Service), administers the program at the Federal level. At the State level, the NSLP is usually administered by State education agencies, which operate the program through agreements with local school districts. School districts and independent schools that choose to take part in the lunch program receive cash reimbursement and donated commodity assistance from USDA for each meal they serve. In return, they must serve lunches that meet Federal nutrition requirements, and they must offer free and reduced-price lunches to eligible children. In 1994, FNS launched the School Meals Initiative for Healthy Children to teach children the importance of making healthy food choices, and to support school food service professionals in delivering healthy school meals. Supported by legislation passed in 1994 and 1996, the initiative updated nutrition standards so that all school meals meet the recommendations of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. New regulations implementing the initiative became final in June, 1995, and took effect at the beginning of school year 1996-97.

Free and Reduced Price School Meals

Dear Parent/Guardian:

The Medford School System fully recognizes that children need healthy meals to learn. Our School Lunch Program offers healthy and nutritious meals when schools are in session for a full day.

ELEMENTARY LUNCH \$2.50
MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL \$2.85
BREAKFAST \$1.00
REDUCED BREAKFAST \$.30 REDUCED LUNCH \$.40

Your children may qualify for free meals or for reduced-price meals. Reduced price is \$.40 for lunch. To apply for free or reduced-price meals, please use the Free and Reduced-Price School Meals Application which is attached. We cannot approve an application that is not complete, so be sure to fill out all required information. Please return the completed application to your child(ren)'s building principal or lunch room workers. Listed below are some frequently asked questions with regard to applying for free or reduced-price school lunch:

1. Who can receive free or reduced-price meals? Children in households receiving Food Stamps or TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) and most foster children may receive free meals, regardless of your income. Also, if your household income is within the limits on the Federal Income Chart, your children may receive free or reduced-price meals.

2. Will the information I give be checked? Yes, we may ask you to send written proof of the information you give.

3. What if I stop getting Food Stamps or TANF? If your children qualify because you listed a Food Stamp or TANF case number, you must tell the school when you no longer receive Food Stamps or TANF.

4. What if my household size or income changes? If your children qualify for free or reduced-price meals based on your income, you must tell us if your household size goes down or your income goes up by more than \$50 per month (\$600 per year). Call your school; you do not have to fill out another application.

5. If I don't qualify now, may I apply again later? Yes. You may apply at any time during the school year if your household size goes up, income goes down, or if you start receiving Food Stamps or TANF. If you lose your job, your children may be able to receive free or reduced price meals during the time you are unemployed.

6. What if I disagree with the school's decision about my application? You should talk to school officials. You also may ask for a hearing by calling 781-393-2241 or writing to Food Services, Medford Public Schools, 489 Winthrop Street, Medford, MA, 02155.

7. The application is available in several languages and assistance is available.