



National School Lunch Program Fact Sheet

The Ohio Department of Education and Workforce, Office of Nutrition, in partnership with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) administers the National School Lunch, School Breakfast, Special Milk, After School Care Snack, and USDA Foods Programs among others.

Nationally, more than 25 million students in approximately 90,000 schools and agencies participate in Child Nutrition Programs, making them one of the country's largest food service operations. Ohio's food service programs serve more than one million meals daily across more than 3,000 sites.

Goals of Child Nutrition Programs:

- Safeguard the health and well-being of the nation's children;
- Encourage domestic consumption of nutritious agricultural foods; and
- Give children an understanding of the relationship between proper eating habits and good health.

Who can apply to participate in the lunch program?

- Any school of high school grade or under recognized by the State of Ohio as operating under public or nonprofit private ownership;
- Any public or nonprofit classes of pre-primary grades when conducted in the schools mentioned above;
- Any public or nonprofit, private licensed Residential Child Care Institution (RCCI).

What qualifies a student to participate?

Any student of high school grade or under who is enrolled in an educational unit of high school grade or under in a participating school or a child age of 21 years or younger who is enrolled in a participating RCCI. Additional benefits may be available to a student after the submission of a free and reduced-price school meals application, or the student is deemed eligible through the direct certification process. Based on the household size and income, the student may be eligible for meals free or at a reduced price. Schools must meet the Paid Lunch Equity in Pricing rule, which determines the price of lunches served to students who pay the full-paid meal price (not eligible for free or reduced-price meals). Full-paid meal prices must be at least the difference between the free and paid rate of reimbursement. Schools must also operate the National School Lunch Program as non-profit programs.

What are the meal service requirements for lunch?

To be eligible for reimbursement and USDA Foods, participating schools and agencies must prepare and serve meals that meet federal nutrition requirements. The reimbursable meal must be priced as a unit and available to all students regardless of their ability to pay. Meal service for lunch must be between 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Schools must follow the meal pattern which involves planned menus meeting at least minimum daily quantities of fluid milk, meat or meat alternate, vegetables, fruits and grains.

Schools must also ensure the children are offered a variety of vegetable subgroups weekly, milk must be 1 percent or fat-free flavored or unflavored, and half of the grains offered to students must be whole grain-rich. For more information, visit the USDA Food and Nutrition Service Nutrition Standards for School Meals website at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/nutrition-standards-school-meals>.

What reimbursement will the school or agency receive?

The school or agency is reimbursed for each complete meal served to an eligible student. Reimbursement rates are based on the student's eligibility category paid full-price, reduced-price, or free. The school is

responsible for accurately counting the meals served to students daily by eligibility category. In addition, schools are allocated a specific Planned Assistance Level (PAL) for USDA Foods based on lunches served. For the 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 school years, the State of Ohio will reimburse schools \$0.40 for a reduced-price lunch. Students eligible for reduced-price meals will receive lunch at no cost.

What records must be kept?

The following are required records that must be kept for three school years plus the current year:

- Daily menus and production records;
- Daily meal count and cash receipt worksheets (CN-7) free and reduced-price school meals applications and direct certification match results reports;
- Monthly inventories of food, labor and supplies monthly records of program costs;
- Verification records; and
- On-site accountability reviews (if more than one site).

Please contact the Office of Nutrition at to apply for one of the Child Nutrition Programs or to obtain additional information:

The Ohio Department of Education and Workforce Office of Nutrition
25 South Front Street; Mail Stop: 303
Columbus, OH 43215-4183

(800) 808-6325 (toll-free) or (614) 466-2945
(614) 752-7613 (fax)

Additional information including current reimbursement rates and student income eligibility guidelines is available at www.education.ohio.gov or www.fns.usda.gov.

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Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/USDA-OASCR%20P-Complaint-Form-0508-0002-508-11-28-17Fax2Mail.pdf>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

1. **mail:**
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or
2. **fax:**
(833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
3. **email:**
program.intake@usda.gov

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