

Business/Non-Instructional Operations

3541.31

Free and Reduced Price Meals and Afterschool Snacks

CREC will participate in the National School Lunch, School Breakfast and Afterschool Snack Programs. Authorization is granted to the Executive Director or designee to act on behalf of CREC Council for the purposes of participating in these programs. All applicable State and Federal guidelines will be followed.

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

10-215 Lunches, breakfasts and other feeding programs for public school children and employees.

10-215a Nonpublic school participation in feeding program.

10-215b Duties of state board of education re feeding programs.

10-216 Payment of expenses.

Title VII, Civil Rights Act, 42 U.S.C. 2000e, et seq. as amended by Title IX, Equal Employment Opportunity Act.

United States Department of Agriculture 7 C.F.R. 15, re nondiscrimination.

Policy adopted: June 16, 2010
Revised: January 15, 2025

CAPITOL REGION EDUCATION COUNCIL
Hartford, Connecticut

Policy Statement for Free and Reduced Price Meals and Afterschool Snacks

CREC will determine children's eligibility for free and reduced price meals and free and reduced price snacks in all schools or programs that participate in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and/or the School Breakfast Program (SBP) and/or the After school Snack Program (ASP). In fulfilling its responsibilities, CREC agrees:

- A. To serve meals and/or after school snacks free to children from families who provide a Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) (formerly known as Food Stamps) case number or a Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) case number on the application, or whose income is at or below the free scale of the Secretary's Income Eligibility Guidelines.
- B. To serve meals and/or after school snacks at a reduced price to children from households whose income is at or below the reduced price scale of the Secretary's Income Guidelines.
- C. That there will be no physical segregation of, nor any other discrimination against, any child because of inability to pay the full price of the meal. The names of the children eligible to receive free or reduced price meals and/or after school snacks shall not be published, posted, or announced in any manner, and there shall be no overt identification of any such children by use of special tokens, tickets or any other means. Further assurance is given that children eligible for free or reduced price meals and/or after school snacks shall not be required to:
 - 1. Work for their meals.
 - 2. Use a separate lunchroom or service area.
 - 3. Go through a separate serving line.
 - 4. Enter the lunchroom through a separate entrance.
 - 5. Eat meals at a different time.
 - 6. Eat a meal different from the one sold to children paying the full price different from that sold to children paying the full price.
- D. To set reduced price charges for lunch, breakfast or after school snacks at or below the maximum reduced price allowed by regulations and below the full price of the lunch or breakfast in accordance with Federal guidelines.
- E. That, in the operation of school nutrition programs, no child shall be discriminated against because of race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability or retaliated against for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

F. To verify in accordance with program regulations and maintain records as follows:

1. A summary of the verification efforts;
2. The total number of applications on file on October 1; and
3. The percentage or number of applications verified.

G. To establish and use a fair hearing procedure under which:

1. A family can appeal a decision made by CREC with respect to the family's free and reduced price meal application; and
2. CREC can challenge the continued eligibility of any child for free or reduced price meals and/or after school snacks.

During the appeal and hearing, the child who was determined to be eligible based on the original application submitted will continue to receive free or reduced price meals. Prior to initiating the hearing procedure, the school official or the parent/guardian may request a conference to provide an opportunity for the parent/guardian and school officials to discuss the situation, present information, and/or obtain an explanation of data submitted in the application and the decisions rendered. Such a conference shall not in any way prejudice or diminish the right to a fair hearing.

The hearing procedure shall provide the following for both the family and CREC:

1. A publicly announced, simple method for making an oral or written request for a hearing.
2. An opportunity to be assisted or represented by an attorney or other person.
3. An opportunity to examine, prior to and during the hearing, the documents and records presented to support the decision under appeal.
4. Reasonable promptness and convenience in scheduling a hearing, and adequate notice as to its time and place.
5. An opportunity to present oral or documentary evidence and arguments supporting a position without undue interference.
6. An opportunity to question or refute any testimony or other evidence and to confront and cross-examine any adverse witnesses.
7. That the hearing be conducted and the decision be made by an official who did not participate in the decision under appeal or any previous conference.
8. That the decision of the hearing official be based on the oral and documentary evidence presented at the hearing and entered into the hearing record.
9. That the parties concerned and any designated representative thereof be notified in writing of the decision.
10. That for each hearing a written record be prepared, including the decision under appeal, any documentary evidence, and a summary of any oral testimony

presented at the hearing, the decision of the hearing official and the reasons therefore, and a copy of the notification to the parties concerned, of the hearing.

11. That such written records shall be retained for a period of 3 years after the date of the final Claim for Reimbursement for the fiscal year to which they pertain, except that if audit findings have not been resolved, the records shall be retained beyond the 3-year period as long as required for resolution of the issues raised by the audit. These records must be made available for examination by the parties concerned or their designees at any reasonable time and place during the period.

12. The designated hearing official is CREC's Director of Operations.

- H. To designate a determining official to review applications and make determinations of eligibility. Such official(s) will use the criteria outlined in this regulation to determine which individual children are eligible for free and reduced price meals.
- I. To develop and distribute to each child's parents or guardian a letter, as provided in sample on-line materials, and to distribute the public media release annually. In addition, an application form for free and reduced price meals, along with the letter provided by the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) shall be distributed with the parent/guardian letter at or about the beginning of each school year, or whenever there is a change in eligibility criteria. The letter to parents/guardians with the free and reduced price meal application attachment shall have only the income eligibility guidelines for reduced price meals with an explanation that households with incomes at or below the reduced price guidelines may be eligible for either free or reduced price meals. Interested parents or guardians are responsible for filling out the application and returning it to the school/program for review. Such applications and documentation of determinations made will be maintained for a period of 3 years following the end of the school year to which they pertain.
- J. Applications may be filed at any time during the year. Parents or guardians enrolling a child in a school/program for the first time shall be supplied with appropriate meal application materials, regardless of the time of year the child is registered. If a child transfers from one school to another under the jurisdiction of CREC, eligibility for free or reduced price meals or free milk will be transferred to and honored by the receiving school/program. Parents or guardians will be promptly notified of the acceptance or denial of their application. Children will be served meals immediately upon the establishment of their eligibility.

It is recognized that in certain cases foster children are also eligible for these benefits. If a household has a child living with them who is a legal ward of the state of Connecticut, that child is considered a family of one, and monthly income from the State should be listed.

When an application is rejected, parents or guardians will be provided written notification, which shall include:

1. The reason for the denial of benefits, e.g., income in excess of allowable limits or incomplete application;
2. Notification of the right to appeal;
3. Instructions on how to appeal; and
4. A statement reminding parents that they may reapply for free and reduced price benefits at any time during the school year.

The reasons for ineligibility shall be properly documented and retained on file at the LEA level.

- K. To submit a public/press release containing both the free and reduced price eligibility guidelines and all other information outlined in the parent/guardian letter to the local news media, local unemployment offices, and major employers contemplating or experiencing large layoffs.
- L. To establish a procedure to collect money from children who pay for their meals and after school snacks and to account for the number of free, reduced price and full price meals and/or after school snacks served. This collection procedure will be used so that no other child in the school/program will consciously be made aware by such procedure of the identity of the children receiving free or reduced price meals.
- M. To provide program information in languages other than English.
- N. To receive and process civil rights complaints in accordance with the CSDE's Civil Rights Complaint Procedures for School Nutrition Programs.
- O. To submit to the Connecticut State Department of Education any alterations, etc., before implementation. Such changes will be effective only upon approval. All changes in eligibility criteria must be publicly announced in the same manner used at the beginning of the school year.

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