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TO: District Superintendents
Superintendents of Schools
Chancellor, New York City Department of Education
Chief Administrative Officers of Nonpublic Schools Participating in the
School Lunch, Breakfast, or Special Milk Programs
Executive Directors of Residential Child Care Institutions
School Food Service Directors/Managers

FROM: Frances N. O'Donnell, Coordinator

SUBJECT: 2005-06 Free and Reduced Price Income Eligibility and Policy Information

PLEASE READ CAREFULLY

The 2005-06 attached Free and Reduced Price Policy information announces the income eligibility scales for the 2005-06 school year and provides each school food authority (SFA) with the forms and guidance needed to process applications for free and reduced price meals and/or milk. This packet reiterates the most recent information needed to make eligibility determinations.

KEEP THIS BOOKLET ON FILE: Retain with copies of public release, application form, and parent letter(s) used by your district/school for free or reduced price meal and/or milk benefits during the 2005-06 school year.

- Effective for the 2005-06 school year - households/families should only complete one application for all their children. There are other changes affecting direct certification, conversion of income and income verification.
- **New York City information**
This packet contains information for both New York City as well as for the rest of the state. The direct certification letter for New York City and the questions and answers for New York City, which are different, are included on pages 17-19. Be sure you refer to the questions and answers for your area of the state.
- **Foreign Language Applications**
An application and parent letter in Spanish are included in this booklet. An application and parent letter in Yiddish can be accessed at <http://www.nysed.gov/cn/cnms.htm>. Camera-ready prototype copies of applications are also available in 18 translated foreign languages: Thai, Spanish, French, Portuguese, Creole (Haitian), Japanese, Vietnamese, Hmong, Russian, Laotian, Mandarin Chinese, Cambodian, Urdu, Somali, Croatian, Korean, Serbian and Hindi. Each packet contains a letter to households, an application, instructions on how to complete the meal benefit application, a chart for yearly income eligibility guidelines, a waiver for information for health insurance, a verification selection letter to parents and a verification letter of results and

adverse action. These can be downloaded from USDA's web site at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/translations> or contact your respective Child Nutrition Representative for the languages you need.

Common Errors

- Pre-printed applications

Applications cannot be computer generated based on prior knowledge of family names, family size, social security number, income, etc. Applications must be completed manually by the family and signed by an adult family member.

- Inappropriate applications

All SFAs must use New York State's current application. For school year 2005-06, this application is enclosed and can also be found at <http://www.nysed.gov/cn/cnms.htm>.

- Inappropriate headings

The free/reduced price application must include the proper heading which indicates its purpose. It cannot be labeled as a "reduced fee" application for alternate purposes if it establishes eligibility for free/reduced price meals.

- Parent letter not included or wrong income scale used

Parents must also receive the required parent letter (Attachments V and VI) that includes **only the reduced price eligibility scale** in the letter. Otherwise the application cannot be approved. Parent letters incorrectly containing both scales, only the free scale or no scale jeopardize the loss of free reimbursement.

- Public announcement not sent

We have inserted the required scales in the prototype notice. (Attachment II)

It is essential that you understand there will be no exceptions to these policies. SFAs that are not in compliance will find their applications for free and reduced price meals disallowed and will incur additional printing, dissemination and approval costs to bring their programs into compliance.

Ensure everyone connected with the application process for free and reduced price meals is fully aware and in compliance with the above policies.

GENERAL INFORMATION

- The **Certification of Acceptance** form must be completed annually (Attachment XIV or XV) and maintained on file for three years plus the current year.
- Income eligibility guidelines, which must be used for the Child Nutrition Programs (CNPs), are based on the federal income poverty guidelines and are stated by household size. The information in both scales must be used for eligibility determinations and must be included in the public release to the local newspaper, the local unemployment office, and any major employer contemplating large layoffs in the area. However, only the reduced price scale may accompany the parent letter and application in those schools participating in the National School Lunch Program and/or School Breakfast Program. Including the free scale with the

parent letter and application will result in the SFA being ineligible to receive free reimbursement. The free scale may not be posted on the school website or printed in any school publication. SFAs in non-compliance would have to reissue the parent letter with the proper scale and application form and verify all reissued applications in order to receive free reimbursement for the balance of the school year.

- SFAs opting to use alternate counting and claiming procedures (Provision 2) as described in the April 1999 memorandum must retain applications for three years plus the current year following the end of the provision.

Change in Authorizing Signature: There is no federal requirement that describes who must sign Child Nutrition Program documents. The Child Nutrition Program regulations specify that an official of the SFA make written application to the state agency for any school in which it desires to operate the program. The SFA means the governing body which is responsible for the administration of one or more schools and which has the legal authority to operate the program.

The signature of the District Clerk as well as an officer of the Board of Education such as President and Vice President are accepted for the forms.

The Board of Education may delegate the Chief Administrative Officer to act as its agent with regard to entering into contracts and agreements for the Child Nutrition Programs. This policy **will not** permit the chief administrative officer's signature in lieu of board action, but will permit the chief administrative officer to sign, in all respects, **after** the board resolution.

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The University of The State of New York
THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
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INTRODUCTION

All schools participating in the federally assisted National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, or Special Free Milk Program **must** make these benefits available to eligible children each year. The State Education Department annually issues this free and reduced price policy booklet to all SFAs to assist in the correct implementation of these program requirements.

Each participating SFA must annually adopt the free and reduced price policy statement.

The 2005-2006 free and reduced price policy booklet consists of:

- the Policy Statement;
- direct certification information;
- over certification information;
- disclosure information and prototype parent letter regarding disclosure of eligibility;
- the income eligibility guidelines as issued by the United States Department of Agriculture
- a prototype public release;
- free and reduced price meal applications and instructions in English and Spanish;
- prototype parent letters regarding school meals, food substitutions for children with disabilities, and temporary approvals.

Policy Statement: This statement sets forth the conditions that must be followed for the SFA to maintain participation in the Breakfast, Lunch, or Special Milk Programs and must be officially adopted each year. Completion and signing the Certification of Acceptance (Attachments XIII or XIV) acknowledges the SFA's adoption of this policy statement.

Direct Certification: This process enables children from families receiving food stamps or Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) to receive free meals or free milk at schools participating in the Child Nutrition Programs without having to complete an application.

Public Release, Parent Letter, and Free and Reduced Price Meal Application: These attachments are in "prototype" form so that the SFA can personalize them. Any changes in the **content** of the release, parent letter, or application form **require prior approval**. Submit any changes to Barbara St.Louis at bstlouis@mail.nysed.gov. If the SFA uses the prototype letters in this policy booklet, there is no need for the SFA to send the State Education Department any information.

Parent Disclosure Letter and Consent Statements: These attachments are in "prototype" form. Any changes in the content of the parent disclosure letter or consent statements require prior approval from Barbara St.Louis at bstlouis@mail.nysed.gov.

***POLICY STATEMENT FOR FREE AND
REDUCED PRICE MEALS OR FREE MILK***

_____, (District Sponsoring Agency or governing body) responsible for administration of one or more schools referred to as the school food authority (SFA), has entered into agreement to participate in the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, and/or Special Milk Program and accepts responsibility for providing free and reduced price meals and/or free milk to eligible children in the schools under its jurisdiction.

The SFA assures the State Education Department that the school system will uniformly implement the following policy with respect to determining the eligibility of children for free and reduced price meals in each school building under its jurisdiction that participates in the programs mentioned above.

In fulfilling its responsibilities, the SFA agrees to the following:

A. Free Meals and (For Milk Only Schools) Free Milk

To serve meals or milk at no charge to children from families approved by the SFA and whose income is at or below the income levels for free meals and milk listed on the annual income eligibility guidelines, or to children from food stamp households, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) households, households participating in the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) that provide a case number, or households that provide a Direct Certification letter from the NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance.

B. Reduced Price Meals

To serve lunch at a reduced price of \$.25 or less, and breakfast at a reduced price of \$.25 or less, to children from families approved by the SFA whose income is within the range of the annual income eligibility guidelines for reduced price meals.

C. Special Conditions

To serve free or reduced price meals or free milk to foster children in cases where the court or welfare agency is legally responsible for the child and the annual personal income of the child is not above the income for free or reduced price meals of a one-member family.

To provide free or reduced price meals or free milk to those children whose parents or guardians have become unemployed, provided the loss of income causes the family income during the period of unemployment to be within the eligibility criteria.

D. **Non-Discrimination**

1. That there will be no physical segregation of, or any other discrimination against, any child because of his/her inability to pay the full price of the meal or milk. The names of children eligible to receive free or reduced price meals or milk 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 or tickets, or by any other means. Further assurance is given that children eligible for free or reduced price meals or free milk shall not be required to:
 - Work for their meals or milk.
 - Use a separate lunchroom.
 - Go through a separate serving line.
 - Enter the lunchroom through a separate entrance.
 - Eat meals or drink milk at a different time.
 - Eat a meal different from the meal sold to children paying the full price of such a meal or drink milk different from that sold to children paying the full price.
2. That in the operation of Child Nutrition Programs, no child shall be discriminated against because of his or her race, gender or sexual orientation, age, color, national origin, or physical or mental handicap.

E. **Hearing Procedures**

To establish and use a fair hearing procedure in cases of appeal by parents of the school's decision on applications and in cases where the school official challenges the correctness of information contained in an application or of the continued eligibility of any child for a free or reduced price meal or free milk. During appeal, hearing, and disposition of the case, the child will receive free or reduced price meals or free milk.

To maintain, for a period of three years plus the current year, records of all such appeals, challenges, and dispositions.

That in initiating the hearing procedure, the parent or local school official may request a conference to provide an opportunity for the parent and school official to discuss the situation, present information, and obtain an explanation of data submitted in the application and decisions rendered. Such a conference shall not in any way prejudice or diminish the right to a fair hearing.

That the hearing procedure shall provide:

1. A simple, publicly announced 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 in presenting its appeal;

3. An opportunity to examine, prior to and during the hearing, the documents and records presented to support the decision under appeal;
4. That the hearing shall be held with reasonable promptness and convenience and that adequate notice shall be given as to the time and place of the hearing.
5. An opportunity to present oral or documentary evidence and arguments supporting its position;
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 shall be conducted and the decision made by a hearing official who did not participate in making the decision under appeal or in any previous conference;
8. That the decision of the hearing official, who may not be the same person as the reviewing and/or the verification official, shall be based on the oral and documentary evidence presented at the hearing and made a part of the hearing record;
9. That the parties concerned and their designated representative shall be notified in writing of the decision of the hearing official;
10. That a written record shall be prepared with respect to each hearing which shall include: the decision under appeal; any documentary evidence and a summary of any oral testimony presented at the hearing; the decision of the hearing official, including the reasons therefore and a copy of the notification to the parties concerned of the decision of the hearing official; and
11. That such written record of each hearing shall be preserved for a period of three years plus the current year and shall be available for examination by the parties concerned or their representative at any reasonable time and place during such period.

F. Reviewing Official

A reviewing official shall review and make determinations of eligibility using the criteria outlined in this policy to determine which individual children are eligible for free or reduced price meals or free milk. The official should sign, date, and indicate eligibility determination on each application.

G. Notice to Parents

To send at the beginning of each school year, and whenever there is a change in eligibility criteria, to the parent or guardian of each child, a letter such as the prototypes in Attachment V or VI, including a form on which to make application for free or reduced price meals or free milk, and a parent disclosure letter and consent statement.

H. Applications

To advise parents to complete the application and return it or submit the Direct Certification letter received from the NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance to the reviewing official for eligibility determination.

Such applications, direct certification letters, and documentation of action taken, will be maintained for three years plus the current year after the end of the school year to which they pertain.

To accept applications at any time during the year and to supply applications to any parent enrolling a child in a school for the first time.

To accept the eligibility of a child who transfers from one school to another under the jurisdiction of the SFA. Copies of the application or Direct Certification letter and eligibility dates should be retained with the records of both schools.

To inform parents of eligibility determinations. Parents must be notified in writing of the reason(s) for rejection of their application, notification of the right to appeal, instructions on how to appeal, and a reminder to parents that they may reapply for free and reduced price benefits at any time during the school year. Copies of rejection letters to parents must be maintained for three years plus the current year.

I. Verification of Applications

Verify the eligibility of applicant households **by November 15** in accordance with program regulations and annually maintain records including: (1) a summary of the verification efforts; (2) the total number of applications on file by October 1; (3) the percentage or number of applications verified; and (4) the total number of children represented on those applications selected for verification. Additional requirements will be detailed in the verification 2005 memo. Failure to do verification will result in the SFA being ineligible to receive free and reduced price reimbursement.

J. Anonymity and Accountability

To establish a procedure to collect money from children who pay for their meals or milk which prevents overt identification, and accounts, at the point of service, for the number of free and reduced price and full price meals served or the number of half-pints of free and full price milk served. The procedure(s) adopted will be used in order that no other child in the school will consciously be made aware, by such procedure, of the identity of the children receiving reduced price meals, free meals, or free milk.

K. Amendments to Policies

To submit to the State Education Department any alterations or amendments to the policy including eligibility criteria, applications, public announcements, etc., for approval prior to implementation. Such changes will be effective following approval by your respective regional office as indicated on page 61-62. Any and all changes in eligibility criteria shall be publicly announced in the same manner used at the beginning of the school year.

L. Records

To maintain a file of the following records for three years plus the current year after the end of the fiscal year to which they pertain:

1. All applications and Direct Certification letters returned and documentation of action taken.
2. Records of all appeals and challenges and their disposition.
3. All notifications of eligibility determinations, including benefit denial letters.
4. Records of all verification efforts and resulting eligibility changes.

M. Public Release

On or about the beginning of the school year, a public release containing the same information supplied to parents and including both free and reduced price eligibility criteria should be provided to the informational media (local newspaper), the local unemployment office, and any major employers contemplating large layoffs in the areas from which the school draws its attendance. Documentation must be kept on file for three years plus the current year identifying where the public release was sent.

N. Special Assistance - Provisions 1 and 2 (where applicable)

For more information about Provision 1 or 2, refer to the April 1999 memorandum or contact the Child Nutrition Program representative for your area.

Provision 1: Biennially, notify parents, distribute and certify applications for free students in schools where at least 80 percent of all enrolled children are eligible for free or reduced price meals. Annually, notify, distribute, and certify applications for all other students enrolled in the school. Maintain accountability and record keeping requirements as mandated by program regulations for this alternate system.

Provision 2: In schools where all enrolled children, regardless of their category of eligibility, are served meals at no charge; notify parents, distribute, and certify applications for free and reduced price students once every four consecutive school years. For three years after the base year, the school is not required to count meals served by category for claiming purposes. After the base year, the building's monthly reimbursement is based on total meal counts and monthly claim statistics from the base year. Maintain accountability and record keeping requirements as mandated by program regulations for this alternate reimbursement system.

*** If your school year begins in September, you must notify Sandy Sheedy by September 1, 2005 if you intend to participate in Provision 1 or 2 for the 2005-06 school year. If your school year begins in July, you must notify Sandy Sheedy by July 1, 2005.**

O. Administrative Prerogative

In certain circumstances, when households fail to apply for free or reduced price meals, the nutritional needs of students who are obviously at an economic disadvantage may be addressed by local officials.

Using administrative prerogative, local officials may complete an application for a student known to be eligible if the household had applied. This judgmental option acknowledges

the various reasons that a family may fail to apply for free or reduced price meals, such as lack of understanding, fear of authority, alien status, substance abuse, etc.

To exercise this option properly, an application must be completed on behalf of the student, based on the best family size and income information available. The source of this information must be noted on the application. Exhaustive prior efforts must be made by the SFA to obtain a completed application from the parent or guardian and efforts must be documented.

The names of all household members, a social security number, or an adult signature need not be secured. Instead, the name of the student, household size, estimated family income, and the administrator's signature must be provided. The household must be notified of the student's approval status for free or reduced price meals. These applications should be excluded from the verification process.

This option must be used judiciously and only after repeated efforts to obtain applications from families have been unsuccessful. It is to be used on an individual basis and not to provide eligibility determinations for large numbers of students. It also may not be used when family income is above the eligibility guidelines, even though the children are not coming to school with a meal or money. Family economic status must remain the criterion for administratively making the decision to place the student on free or reduced price meals.

P. Meal Eligibility for Homeless/Migrant/Runaway Children

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has acknowledged that the number of homeless, migrant and runaway children has risen considerably in the last few years, and that parents/guardians who are homeless or migrant often fail to return a free meal application, and these children are often not included in the direct certification process. While administrators can exercise the administrative prerogative option for determining program eligibility, this process is only intended to be exercised on a case-by-case basis and becomes burdensome in areas where there are many homeless/runaway children residing in shelters or migrant status children. USDA has therefore established the following procedures for all Child Nutrition Programs when an application is not submitted by the household or it is not anticipated that an application will be submitted:

- The migrant coordinator, homeless liaison or runaway provider may provide you with a list of eligible children. The list must be dated and signed by the coordinator, liaison or provider. These children are then directly certified for free meals for the school year. No other documentation is needed. This is the preferred option.
Other options:
- The director of the homeless shelter at which the child resides can complete and submit an application for the child;
- Local level officials may complete an application for a child and approve the child for free meals based solely on their knowledge that the child's address is a homeless shelter or that the child has no known address and is indeed homeless;

- If large numbers of homeless children make it impractical for a homeless shelter or school officials to complete individual applications, the school administrator may establish a list of eligible students based on his/her knowledge of the family's residence (shelter, address, car, etc.). The documentation necessary to substantiate free meal eligibility for a list of children must contain at a minimum the following information:
 - The child's name
 - The effective date of eligibility determination
 - The name of the shelter, etc., where the child resides
 - The signature of the determining official
 - The date of withdrawal from the shelter, school, or program.
- Documentation of migrant status children should be maintained by the school migrant coordinator as documentation to substantiate free meal eligibility. This should include the date, the child's name, and signature of the migrant coordinator.

Q. Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservation (FDPIR)

Public and nonpublic schools participating in the School Lunch, Breakfast, or Special Milk Programs with children in attendance originating from either the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe or the Seneca Nations of Indians may accept insertion of a Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservation (FDPIR) case number in lieu of household income, food stamp number, or TANF number.

R. Food Substitutions for Children With Disabilities

Federal regulations governing the operation of Child Nutrition Programs and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 require that children with disabilities be offered the opportunity to participate in all academic and nonacademic activities including the school nutrition programs. To ensure that these children are not denied reasonable access to the programs, the Department of Agriculture's regulations require schools and institutions to make reasonable accommodations, such as providing substitutions in the regular meal patterns, for children who have a disability and whose disability restricts their diet. A student with a disability is defined in 7 4CFR part 15b.3 as one who has "... a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities..." Major life activities are defined to include functions such as caring for one's self, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, and working.

Accordingly, meal substitutions must be made for children with disabilities and must be supported by a statement signed by the physician attesting to the need for the substitutions and recommending alternate foods. These meals must be offered at no extra charge. Substitutions may also be made for non-disabled children who are unable to consume the regular meal because of medical or other special dietary needs, though schools are not required to do so in these instances. Substitutions for non-disabled children must be supported by a statement signed by a recognized medical authority. Children with disabilities are not automatically eligible for free meal benefits. Parents must adhere to the same income eligibility criteria and procedures used for all children.

ADMINISTRATIVE PREROGATIVE: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. ***Can a student be approved for free or reduced price meals without an application from the parent or guardian?***

Yes. Under special circumstances, a school official may fill out an application for a student whom they have reason to believe would be eligible if the household were to apply. However, the school must first attempt to obtain an application from the household. It should not be indiscriminately used to claim ineligible students for free meals or to generate aid for other federal programs.

2. ***How can a school show that attempts have been made to obtain the application from the household?***

Copies of mailings to the household and documentation of conversations with the parent/guardian or a responsible adult in the household must be kept on file. An administrator cannot arbitrarily qualify students from families who did not reapply from the prior year.

3. ***If the parent/guardian of the student cannot be reached or communicated with due to language barriers, etc., who may be contacted for household information?***

An employer, a Social Service official, immigration official, or a relative suggested by either the student or the student's teacher may be contacted to urge the household to apply.

4. ***Is there a specific time-period that the school must allow to pass before attempts to obtain an application are deemed unsuccessful?***

No specific time-period is required. The process should be facilitated as quickly as possible so that the student is not going without meals in school.

5. ***Can an administrative prerogative be implemented during the period of time in which the school is attempting to obtain an application from the household?***

If the school has reason to believe that the student is going without meals in school on a regular basis due to financial need, the school may implement an administrative prerogative immediately.

6. ***What should the school official be looking for as evidence that the student is not getting proper nourishment?***

The student's teacher, the school nurse, or other school personnel in direct contact with the student may notice behavior indicating under nourishment, such as irritability, listlessness, complaints of headache or stomach aches, and absenteeism. School cafeteria personnel

may notice that a student has no food during the lunch period or is constantly requesting to charge lunch.

7. ***Can a school official simply write a note to the food service manager to add a student's name to the list of eligible students?***

No. The school official must complete an application that contains the name of the student, the household size, an estimated family income, and a signature of the school official.

8. ***How should the school tell the student and the household that the student would have access to free meals in the school cafeteria?***

The household must be informed of the decision via phone, correspondence, or in person. The student may be told by the teacher, school nurse, or other school official.

9. ***Is an application completed by a school official handled in the same way as those submitted by households?***

Yes. Like other applications, it must be counted for purposes of the claim for reimbursement and retrievable by building during a review. However, the application should not be included in the verification process.

10. ***Can the administrative prerogative be implemented for families or groups of students who appear to be lacking proper nutrition?***

No. Applications must be completed on an individual basis.

11. ***Can an application be completed for a student who appears to be lacking proper nourishment, if the household has indicated that it is not eligible for benefits?***

No. An application can only be completed for students who appear to be missing meals for reasons of financial need. Other problems occurring in a household that may result in poor eating habits, but are not a reflection of family economic status, should not be resolved by this measure.

DIRECT CERTIFICATION FACT SHEET

Direct certification is the process that enables children from families receiving food stamps or Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) to receive free meals or free milk at school **without having to complete an application**. In New York State, TANF is the program used to disseminate Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) funds. TANF has replaced Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) as a result of welfare reform legislation. In conjunction with the State Education Department, the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (TADA) is sending a letter to all families with school-age children (ages 4-18) who currently receive food stamps or TANF benefits. This letter (sample follows) can be submitted to the child's school as certification of eligibility of the child/children listed for free meals or milk **in lieu of the family completing an application for free meals/milk**. SFAs must still provide families with school-age children free/ reduced price applications and parent letter.

Direct Certification results in more students gaining access to the school nutrition programs, because some parents do not complete the application forms correctly or do not submit applications. Since direct certification letters do not need to be reviewed for completeness, administrative time incurred by reviewing officials to process applications will be reduced. Additionally, direct certification letters are not subject to the verification process and will reduce the number of applications which schools must verify, thereby further reducing administrative time and cost.

To deter ineligible families from receiving benefits, the letter from TADA will use three different fonts or print styles - one for the family name and address, another for the body, and a third for the listing of eligible children.

Families must submit the original letter to the child's school in order to protect the integrity of the process.

****NEW**** Families applying for food stamps or TANF after the annual Direct Certification letters have been generated are receiving a statement with their approval of benefits notice. This statement is also an additional acceptable form of direct certification. Families must provide both the cover letter (which has the family name and address) and the page that validates that the children named are eligible for free meals.

Record keeping and reporting requirements for children whose eligibility is obtained from these direct certification letters are the same as for free and reduced price application forms. They must be:

- retrievable by building, where the child is fed;
- and maintained for three years plus the current year, regardless of the child's actual attendance during this period

Please ensure that principals, teachers and the school lunch director in your district/school are made aware of this method of certification for free meals/milk and the name of the reviewing official. In the event that some students present them with a direct certification letter, they would be able to forward it directly to the reviewing official for immediate processing.

Reviewing officials often want to require families to identify each child's school and grade before the Direct Certification letter can be processed. Children are automatically entitled to benefits based on the fact that they receive food stamps or TANF benefits. The State or the school food authority (SFA) cannot and should not impose an additional standard. Our goal is to expedite, not complicate the process.

The number of children eligible for program benefits as a result of direct certification must be included on reimbursement claim forms when reporting numbers of approved applicants. Schools can use last year's applications and direct certification letters **only** until September 30, 2005. Parents or guardians have the right to decline the meal benefits and must be informed of this right and the process to do so.

SFAs that participate in the Child and Adult Care Program and/or Summer Food Service Program may use the direct certification letter for these programs also.

The following questions and answers will assist you in responding to questions regarding direct certification: **NYC only 1-16.**

- 1. Does direct certification apply to my child who attends a school that doesn't have a lunch or a breakfast program?***

Direct certification applies to children who attend schools where the federal government pays for the milk served to children and free milk is available to eligible students. Contact the school principal or school lunch director to find out if the school participates in the Special Milk Program with the free milk option.

- 2. Do these free meals apply to any food that my child obtains at school?***

Direct certification applies only to meals served to your child under the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs. It does not apply to food obtained separately (ala carte items or an ala carte type of school food service program).

- 3. Does this apply to my child who attends a nonpublic school?***

Yes, if the nonpublic school participates in the National School Lunch, School Breakfast, or Special Milk Programs. Contact the school principal to find out if the school takes part in any of these federal programs.

- 4. What if one of the children listed lives in my household, but is not my child?***

Kinship is not a factor in establishing the child's eligibility. Fill in the name of the school and grade the child attends and return the TADA letter to the school.

- 5. What if one of the children listed is no longer in my household?***

The letter should be provided to the household of the child.

6. *What should I do if one of my children is not listed on a letter?*

Complete the free/reduced price meal application.

7. *Can my preschooler (4 year old), who is listed on the letter, get free lunch or free milk?*

A four-year old child can only receive the free milk or free meal benefits if the child is enrolled in a school.

8. *Can I refuse to accept these free meals for my children?*

Yes, you can refuse these benefits by not sending the letter from TADA to the school.

9. *What if one or more of my children doesn't like school lunch? Can I refuse the free meals for some of the children listed in the letter?*

By federal regulation, the school must provide the same free meal benefits for all the children in the household. Even if only one child likes the school lunches, you should accept the free meal benefits. The meals will be made available to all the children, but they are not required to take them.

10. *If my child qualifies for free school meals, can he/she get free milk when he/she brings a lunch from home to school?*

No. The school cannot give your child free milk in schools where free meals, which include milk, are available to students. The school can give free milk only to its half-day pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students, who are not in school during the meal service, providing the school participates in the Special Milk Program with the free milk program.

11. *If my child qualified for free school meals, can he/she get free milk at recess time?*

No. The free meal benefits apply only to complete meals in schools offering lunches or breakfasts for which the federal government makes payments to the school.

12. *Is free milk for pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students only?*

Not necessarily. If the pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students are half-day students and are, therefore, not in school when breakfast and lunch meals are served, these children are eligible for free milk. Free milk is available to any student in a school where the federal government pays for milk under the Special Milk Program, but does not pay for meals, and the school has opted to offer free milk.

13. *Can my child, who is home schooled, get a free lunch when he/she makes use of other school facilities?*

Federal regulations restrict the availability of the free meals to enrolled school children. Free school meals are not available to the home-schooled child.

- 14. *Can my child who has graduated from high school but is living in my household, get free meals at school if he/she is listed on this letter?***

No. Only enrolled students are eligible to take part in these benefits.

- 15. *What if no child in my household is old enough to be responsible for getting this letter to the school?***

If you are uncomfortable about having a child take the letter to the school, either mail it or take it to the school yourself. The school must have an approved application or this letter on file so it can give your child a free meal or free milk.

- 16. *When will my child receive free meals or free milk?***

Any child who received free meals last year will get free meals/milk at the start of school this year. If your family is new to the school system or first-time recipients of free meal benefits, you should call the lunch director or principal of the school.

The following questions and answers will assist you in responding to questions 1-20 regarding direct certification in all areas of New York State, except New York City:

- 1. *Does direct certification apply to my child who attends a school that doesn't have a lunch or a breakfast program?***

Direct certification applies to children who attend schools where the federal government pays for the milk served to children and free milk is available to eligible students. Contact the school principal or school lunch director to find out if the school participates in the Special Milk Program with the free milk option.

- 2. *Do these free meals apply to any food that my child obtains at school?***

Direct certification applies only to meals served to your child under the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs. It does not apply to food obtained separately (ala carte items or an ala carte type of school food service program).

- 3. *Does this apply to my child who attends a nonpublic school?***

Yes, if the nonpublic school participates in the National School Lunch, School Breakfast, or Special Milk Programs. Contact the school principal to find out if the school takes part in any of these federal programs.

- 4. *What if one of the children listed lives in my household, but is not my child?***

Kinship is not a factor in establishing the child's eligibility. Fill in the name of the school and grade the child attends and return the TADA letter to the school.

- 5. *What if one of the children listed is no longer in my household?***

Indicate on the letter that the child is no longer in the household, and complete the information for the children who are still in your household. Return the letter to the school.

- 6. *What should I do if one of my children is not listed on the letter?***

If there are children in your family whose names do not appear on the TADA letter, or who are under 4 years of age or over 18 and attend a school that participates in the School Lunch, Breakfast, or Special Milk Programs, you must complete a free and reduced price meal application for the children to receive program benefits. **You cannot add names to the TADA letter.**

- 7. *How do I notify the school about changes in income or loss of benefits?***

Send a note or call the school official identified in the letter to parents that you received with the Application for Free and Reduced Price School Meals/Milk.

8. *What do I do when my children go to different schools in the same school district?*

Send the letter from TADA to the school of one of the children. The school administration will be responsible for making any necessary copies and giving the information to the other schools within the same school district.

9. *What do I do when my children go to different schools in different school districts?*

You should send the TADA letter to the school district where most of your children attend school. Attach a note asking the school administrator to send copies of the letter to all of the other schools your children attend.

10. *What do I do when some of my children go to public school and some go to private schools?*

If all the schools that the children attend are within New York State and all provide milk or meals under the Special Milk Program or the National School Lunch and/or the School Breakfast Programs, you can send the letter to the school attended by most of your children. Attach a note asking the school administrator to send copies of the letter to all of the other schools listed.

11. *Can my preschooler (four-year old), who is listed on the letter, get free lunch or free milk?*

A four-year-old child can only receive the free milk or free meal benefits if the child is enrolled in a school.

12. *Can I refuse to accept these free meals for my children?*

Yes, you can refuse these benefits by not sending the letter from TADA to the school.

13. *What if one or more of my children doesn't like school lunch? Can I refuse the free meals for some of the children listed in the letter?*

By federal regulation, the school must provide the same free meal benefits for all the children in the household. Even if only one child likes the school lunches, you should accept the free meal benefits. The meals will be made available to all the children, but they are not required to take them.

14. *If my child qualifies for free school meals, can he/she get free milk when he/she brings a lunch from home to school?*

No. The school cannot give your child free milk in schools where free meals, which include milk, are available to students. The school can give free milk only to its half-day pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students, who are not in school during the meal service, providing the school participates in the Special Milk Program with the free milk program.

15. *If my child qualifies for free school meals, can he/she get free milk at recess time?*

No. The free meal benefits apply only to complete meals in schools offering lunches or breakfasts for which the federal government makes payments to the school.

16. *Is free milk for pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students only?*

Not necessarily. If the pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students are half-day students and are, therefore, not in school when breakfast and lunch meals are served, these children are eligible for free milk. Free milk is available to any student in a school where the federal government pays for milk under the Special Milk Program, but does not pay for meals, and the school has opted to offer free milk.

17. *Can my child, who is home schooled, get a free lunch when he/she makes use of other school facilities?*

Federal regulations restrict the availability of the free meals to enrolled school children. Free school meals are not available to the home-schooled child.

18. *Can my child who has graduated from high school but is living in my household, get free meals at school if he/she is listed on this letter?*

No. Only enrolled students are eligible to take part in these benefits.

19. *What if no child in my household is old enough to be responsible for getting this letter to the school?*

If you are uncomfortable about having a child take the letter to the school, either mail it or take it to the school yourself. The school must have an approved application or this letter on file so it can give your child a free meal or free milk.

20. *When will my child receive free meals or free milk?*

Any child who received free meals last year will get free meals/milk at the start of school this year. If your family is new to the school system or first-time recipients of free meal benefits, you should call the lunch director or principal of the school.

SAMPLE

NEW YORK STATE
OFFICE OF TEMPORARY AND DISABILITY ASSISTANCE
40 NORTH PEARL STREET
ALBANY, NEW YORK 12243-0001

George F. Pataki
Governor

Brian J. Wing
Commissioner

Upstate Letter

PLEASE COMPLETE AND SEND OR TAKE THIS DIRECT CERTIFICATION LETTER TO THE SCHOOL YOUR CHILD ATTENDS.

August 2005

Dear Parent/Guardian:

The children listed below **are approved** to receive free lunch and/or breakfast if they attend a school that participates in the National School Lunch and/or School Breakfast Programs, or free milk in a school that participates in the Special Milk Program. **TO RECEIVE THIS BENEFIT, COMPLETE AND TAKE OR SEND THIS LETTER TO ONE OF THE SCHOOLS, WHICH YOUR CHILD/CHILDREN ATTEND. THE SCHOOL WILL FORWARD COPIES TO ALL SCHOOLS LISTED BELOW OR YOU MUST COMPLETE THE FREE AND REDUCED PRICED MEAL APPLICATION THAT WILL BE SENT TO YOU BY THE SCHOOL.**

This letter also entitles your child to free meals if they attend a program such as a school, club or camp that participates in the Summer Food Service Program. Make a copy for your records so you can provide it to the sponsor.

Commissioner
NYS Education Department

Commissioner
NYS Office of Temporary and Disability
Assistance

Name

Date of Birth

School

Grade

Please Complete This Information

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY/AFFIRMATIVE ACTION EMPLOYER

SAMPLE

**NEW YORK STATE
OFFICE OF TEMPORARY AND DISABILITY ASSISTANCE
40 NORTH PEARL STREET
ALBANY, NEW YORK 12243-0001**

**George F. Pataki
Governor**

**BrianJ. Wing
Commissioner**

New York City Letter

**PLEASE COMPLETE AND SEND OR TAKE THIS DIRECT CERTIFICATION
LETTER TO THE SCHOOL YOUR CHILD ATTENDS.**

August 2005

Dear Parent/Guardian:

The children listed below **are approved** to receive free lunch and/or breakfast if they attend a school that participates in the National School Lunch and/or School Breakfast Programs, or free milk in a school that participates in the Special Milk Program. **TO RECEIVE THIS BENEFIT, COMPLETE AND TAKE OR SEND THIS LETTER TO ONE OF THE SCHOOLS THAT YOUR CHILD/CHILDREN ATTEND. THE SCHOOL WILL FORWARD COPIES TO ALL SCHOOLS LISTED BELOW OR YOU MUST COMPLETE THE FREE AND REDUCED PRICED MEAL APPLICATION THAT WILL BE SENT TO YOU BY THE SCHOOL.**

This letter also entitles your child to free meals if they attend a program such as a school, club or camp that participates in the Summer Food Service Program. Make a copy for your records so you can provide it to the sponsor.

If you have any questions, please review the back of this letter, or call your child's school lunch director, or call the toll free hotline number 1-800-342-3009.

Commissioner
NYS Education Department

Commissioner
NYS Office of Temporary and Disability
Assistance

(Vea el otro lado para la version en espanol)

Name	Date of Birth	School	Grade
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Please Complete This Information

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY/AFFIRMATIVE ACTION EMPLOYER

SAMPLE

Notice Number: C129ET3104

FOOD STAMPS

National School Lunch and/or Breakfast Programs

The children listed below are approved to receive free lunch and/or breakfast if they attend a school that participates in the National School Lunch and/or Breakfast Programs. To receive this benefit, you must take or send a copy of this notice to the school that your child attends.

Child's name/Children's names

This notice also entitles your child/children to free meals if they attend a program such as school, club or camp that participates in the Summer Food Service Program. Make a copy for your records so you can provide it to the sponsor.

You will also need to obtain a copy of the first page of the letter which lists the family's name and address. This is needed to ensure the integrity of the direct certification process. The letter is transmitted when families are accepted for Food Stamps or TANF or are renewed.

Por Favor Complete Y Lleve O Envié Por Correo Esta Certificacion/Carta
A La escuela A La Cual Su Hijo(A) Asiste

Agosto de 2005

Estimado(a) Padre/Madre/Guardián:

El niño(a) cuyo nombre aparece abajo ha sido aprobado para recibir almuerzo y/o desayuno gratis si asiste a una escuela que participa en el Programa Nacional de Almuerzo y/a Desayuno.

PARA RECIBIR ESTE BENEFICIO:

(1) COMPLETE Y LLEVE O ENVIE POR CORREO ESTA CARTA A LA ESCUELA A LA QUE SU HIJO(A) ASISTE,

O

(2) COMPLETE LA SOLICITUD QUE LA ESCUELA ENVIARA A SU CASA. ESTA SOLICITUD ES PARA ALIMENTOS GRATUITOS.

Si usted tiene alguna pregunta, por favor revise las páginas adjuntas o llame a la escuela a la cual su hijo(a) asiste o llame al telefono gratuito de informacion 1-800-342-3009.

Atentamente,

Comisionado
Depto. De Education
Del Estado de Nueva York

Comisionado
Oficina de Asistencis Temporal y
Asistencia para Incapacitados

Nombre

Fecha de Nacimiento

Favor de proveer la siguiente información.

Escuela

Grado

ALL CHILDREN REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS ARE STILL ELIGIBLE FOR THE SCHOOL MEALS PROGRAM AND THE MILK PROGRAM

1. What do I do if some of my children go to:

- different schools in the same school district?
- public school and some go to private school?
- different schools in different districts?

Send this letter to one of the schools your children attend. That school is responsible for making and sending the necessary copies of this letter to the other schools you listed on the front of the letter.

2. What do I do if one of my children is not listed on the letter?

YOU CANNOT ADD NAMES TO THIS LETTER. If there is a child/children in your household whose name is not listed on this letter, you must fill out the Free and Reduced Priced Meal Application form provided by the school.

3. What if a child/children listed on the letter is no longer in the household?

If only one child is listed on the letter and that child is no longer in the household, **DESTROY THE LETTER.**

If other children are listed on the letter, **CROSS-OFF THE NAME OF THE CHILD WHO IS NO LONGER LIVING WITH YOU.** Fill in the information (school and grade) for the other children living with you and send the letter to school.

4. What if a child/children lives with me, but is not my child/children?

Fill in the information and send the letter to school.

5. Can my pre-schooler who is listed on the letter get free lunch or milk?

Yes, if the child is **ENROLLED AND ATTENDING SCHOOL.**

6. If my child qualifies for free school meals, can he/she get free milk when bringing a lunch from home?

NO. THE CHILD CANNOT GET FREE MILK. In order to have the free milk, the child **MUST** get a school meal.

7. Can home-schooled children or children who have graduated, get free meals?

No. School meals are not available to children who are being educated at home or to children who have graduated.

PLEASE RETURN THE CERTIFICATION LETTER TO THE SCHOOL YOUR CHILD ATTENDS

LEA ESTA PAGINA ANTES DE LLAMAR A LA ESCUELA DE SU HIJO(A) GRATUITO O AL TELEFONO DE INFORMACION GENERAL

1. ¿Qué debo de hacer, si uno de mis hijos no recibe la carta?
Si usted no recibió una carta para uno de sus hijos, usted deberá llenar una solicitud para Comidas a Precio Reducido o Gratuitas (Free and Reduced Meal Application) para ese niño(a).
2. ¿Qué pasa si el niño(a) mencionado en la carta ya no vive en mi casa?
Si el niño(a) está viviendo actualmente en otra casa, destruya la carta.
3. ¿Qué pasa si el niño(a) mencionado en la carta vive en mi casa pero no es mi hijo(a)?
Escriba el nombre de la escuela y el grado que atiende y envíelo a la escuela.
4. ¿Puede mi hijo(a) en edad preescolar (de 4 años de edad), mencionado en la carta, recibir almuerzo o leche gratuitamente?
Sí, si su hijo(a) en edad preescolar (de 4 años de edad), mencionado en la carta, recibe almuerzo o leche gratuitamente?
5. Si mi hijo(a) califica para comidas gratis, ¿puede él/ella obtener leche gratis si lleva el almuerzo de la casa?
No. Para obtener la leche, el niño(a) deberá recibir la comida completa.
6. ¿Puede mi hijo(a), quien está siendo educado en casa o quien ya se graduó, obtener comidas gratis?
No. Las comidas gratis no están disponibles para un niño que está siendo educado en casa o que se graduó. El niño(a) deberá estar actualmente matriculado en una escuela para recibir este beneficio.
7. ¿Puede mi hijo(a), quien atiende una escuela que no tiene el programa de almuerzo o desayuno, recibir este beneficio?
No. Pero póngase en contacto con el director de la escuela o con el director de servicios de comidas para saber si la escuela participa en el Programa Especial de Leche Que le daría derecho a leche gratuitamente.
8. ¿Qué pasa si a mi hijo(a) no le gusta el almuerzo de la escuela?
¿Puedo rechazar este beneficio?
Sí, si desea rechazar este beneficio NO envíe esta carta a la escuela.

FOR FAVOR ENVIE ESTA CARTA DE CERTIFICACION A LA ESCUELA QUE ATENDE SU HIJO(A).

OVERCERTIFICATION

Increasingly, the number of children eligible for free and reduced price meals is used to allocate State and federal and even local funds. When the data is incorrect because ineligible families have been approved for free and reduced price meals, there is a significant misdirection of funds. New York State and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) are taking steps to ensure the integrity of child nutrition data, which are rapidly becoming the proxy for identifying poverty.

Over the years, we have modified our free and reduced price application in order to facilitate the review process and eliminate confusion by eligible families applying for benefits. We also are reiterating some of the regulations so that persons reviewing applications have a better understanding of their responsibilities.

Specifically:

1. You must have a new correctly approved application or direct certification letter on file as of October 1, 2005. You cannot use last year's application information after September 30, 2005. Previous year's application forms cannot be used for the current school year. If your school year begins in July, new applications must be obtained by August 1, 2005 or the child must be claimed in the paid category. We recommend you begin contacting families in mid-September to obtain current eligibility data to ensure access to all children who qualify. This would also assist you in your efforts to provide information on free and reduced price eligibles on the Basic Educational Data System (BEDS) report in early October. As you are probably aware, BEDS data is used for a variety of funding formulas that will affect your school and community.
2. Temporarily approved applications where the family has reported zero (0) income, (not applications with missing income) must be reviewed every 45 calendar days. You are expected to document dates and results of your contact with each family to assess their current household income every time the 45 days expire to ensure the application is still valid. It is not necessary to have the families submit a new application every 45 days. There is a prototype letter to send to parents to obtain this information (Attachment XV).
3. Only complete applications with zero income written in can be temporarily approved. Applications missing required information, such as income, must be denied if the missing information cannot be obtained.
4. Additional children cannot be written in on a direct certification letter. You must obtain an income application for those children whose names are not indicated on a direct certification letter.
5. Administrative prerogative as described in this packet is a very restrictive option that must be used judiciously and only when it can be determined through an independent source(s) that family income qualifies a child. This option is available only when exhaustive efforts to obtain an application from the family have been documented. The source of the documentation of household size and income information must be noted on the application.

6. Military Families and Eligibility in the Child Nutrition Programs

At this time, it seems to be appropriate to clarify child nutrition policy for households affected by deployments in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and possible future military contingencies. In recent years, USDA has addressed the deployment of family members for military service to accommodate free and reduced price meal eligibility determinations, tier 1 day care home determinations and meal benefits for children temporarily residing with their providers.

For the purpose of determining household size, deployed service members should be considered as family members living apart on a temporary basis. Instruct families to include the names and income of deployed service members on their application forms. The reviewing official should count the service member as part of the household in establishing a child's eligibility for free and reduced price meals, or a day care home provider's eligibility for tier 1 reimbursement rates.

Deployment of a parent or guardian may also affect the eligibility of a child, who temporarily resides with a day care home provider, to receive meals in the Child and Adult Care Food Program. Although the child may live with the provider while the service member is deployed, the child would not be considered a "provider's own" child. In this special situation, the child would continue to participate in the meal service as a nonresidential participant. To claim reimbursement for program meals, the day care home provider must have power of attorney, custody, or an agreement established by the military to provide residential care to the child.

7. Treatment of Military Housing Allowance for Families in "Privatized Housing" For Purposes of Determining Eligibility in the Child Nutrition Programs

Effective May 13, 2002, certain housing allowances are excluded from consideration in total income in the school nutrition programs, the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, the Special Milk Program and the Summer Food Service Program. In some instances, military personnel living in privatized housing receiving a housing allowance will not include this allowance in their total income when evaluating household eligibility for free or reduced price meals or free milk. The Military Housing Privatization Initiative, refers to the operation of military housing under private contractors at military installations at a number of military bases. A housing allowance is given under this privatization initiative, which is shown on the leave and earnings statement of military personnel living in the housing provided. This income exclusion is only for those military personnel living in the housing provided by the Military Housing Privatization Initiative. It does not apply to those military personnel living off base in the community neighborhood in the general commercial/private real estate market.

8. Treatment of U.S. Armed Forces Family Subsistence Supplemental Allowances (FSSA)

The Floyd D. Spence National Defense Authorization Act of Fiscal Year 2001 (Public Law 106-398) requires the Armed Forces to pay certain low-income service members and their families a family subsistence allowance not to exceed \$500 per month to reduce the number of service members and their families who rely on food stamps. The Armed Forces will pay the FSSA payment to eligible service members beginning June 1, 2001. For Child Nutrition Program (CNP) eligibility determination purposes, the FSSA payments must be counted as earned income to the household. There is no legislative authority that would permit the

exclusion of FSSA payments from consideration as income in the CNP. We have been advised that the Leave and Earnings Statement for the Marines will identify the payment as “FSSA”. The Leave and Earnings Statement for the Army, Navy and Air Force will temporarily identify the payment as “Saved Pay” and subsequently be changed to identify the payment as “FSSA”. Please note that some military families receiving FSSA payments may still be income eligible for free or reduced price meal benefits. Other military families receiving FSSA payments also may be certified to receive food stamp benefits (despite the FSSA payment); these families would be categorically eligible for free meals in the CNP.

9. Food Stamp and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) Application

School officials must familiarize themselves with valid food stamp/Temporary Assistance To Needy Families (TANF) case numbers before beginning the application approval process. They need to contact their local Department of Social Services, prior to reviewing applications to determine how to recognize a valid number. For example, in Albany County if a family received TANF or public assistance, a P will precede the six digit number (P123456). If a family receives only food stamps, an F will precede the six digit number (F123456). It is imperative that food stamps or TANF applications are correctly approved with proper numbers to prevent potential fiscal sanctions being assessed against the SFA. If families do not know their food stamp or TANF numbers, they could either (1) contact their local Department of Social Services to obtain their number (2) complete sections 4 and 5 of the application or (3) submit their direct certification letter. Applications with invalid case numbers should not be approved. Families receiving food stamps or TANF no longer have a benefit issuance card that contains the information identifying that the family is currently eligible for benefits or their food stamp or TANF number. While there are several numbers on a benefit issuance card, none are the food stamp or TANF numbers required for the application for free meals/milk. The benefit issuance card may be used for medical assistance rather than TANF or food stamps. Families must refer to the letter they received from their local Department of Social Services to obtain their food stamp or TANF numbers.

- 10.** Applications must be retained for three years plus the current year. If applications are lost, misplaced, damaged, etc., the SFA could lose reimbursement for free and reduced price meals.
- 11.** Special education students are not automatically eligible for free meals. These students qualify for free, reduced price and paid meals by using the same income guidelines or categorical criteria used for all students. The SFA may claim special education students for free or reduced price reimbursement only if a correctly approved application is on file.
- 12.** House-parents may complete and sign an application for children in their care who reside in residential child care institutions.
- 13.** Any and all contact with families regarding eligibility can and should be documented on the application.
- 14.** If an application lacks how frequently income is received, e.g., weekly, monthly, etc., the reviewing official will process the income as weekly OR place a call to the family before approving since income information is not complete.

15. Income Conversion **NEW**

Many households have different sources of income at different frequencies, such as weekly or bi-weekly wages and monthly social security benefits. Past practice was to convert all income to a monthly amount; USDA established a conversion factor of 4.33 for weekly income and 2.15 for bi-weekly income. However, use of these conversion factors has resulted in some perceived inconsistencies in the relationship between converted amounts and the weekly, bi-weekly, bi-monthly and monthly income limits shown in the published Income Eligibility Guidelines (IEGs) which are established by dividing annual income limits by the annual income frequency and rounding up to the next whole dollar. While these conversion factors have created some inconsistent results, no eligible household has been denied benefits.

To avoid these problems, we are recommending the following procedures:

- If a household has only one income source, or if all sources are the same frequency, do not use conversion factors. Compare the income or the sum of the incomes to the published IEG for the appropriate frequency and household size to make the eligibility determination.
 - If a household reports income sources at more than one frequency, the preferred method is to annualize all income by multiplying weekly income by 52, income received every two weeks by 26, income received twice per month by 24 and income received monthly by 12. *Do not round the values resulting from each conversion.* Add all the unrounded converted values and compare the unrounded total to the published IEG for annual income for the appropriate household size.
 - The application for 2005-06 reflects this information.
 1. School districts which are currently using software which uses the published conversion factors (4.33 for weekly income, 2.15 for bi-weekly income) to calculate household income on a monthly basis may continue to use that software, as long as the same income determination process is used for all households. School districts are encouraged to work with their software vendors to update the conversion methods.
- 16.** The Single child application may only be used for foster children or for households with children attending a different Local Educational Agency (LEA) than the rest of the children in the same household.

DISCLOSURE

The Healthy Meals for Healthy Americans Act of 1994, P.L. 103-448 amended Section 9(b)(2)(c) of the National School Lunch Act (NSLA) to allow limited disclosure of information about free and reduced price meals and/or free milk eligibility without parent/guardian consent. SFAs are not required to disclose eligibility information. Providing aggregate information that does not identify individuals continues to be permitted without parental consent.

Disclosure of Eligibility Information Without Parent/Guardian Consent

You may disclose, without parent/guardian consent, participants' names and eligibility status (whether they are eligible for free or reduced price meals or free milk) to persons directly connected with the administration or enforcement of the following programs:

1. Federal education programs such as Title I and National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP).
2. Certain State health or State education programs, provided the State agency or local education agency administers the program. Representatives of State or local education agencies evaluating the results and compliance with student assessment programs would be covered only to the extent that the assessment program was established at the State, not local level. This includes the System for Tracking Education Performance (STEP) which is a State electronic reporting system.
3. Federal, State or local means-tested nutrition programs with eligibility standards comparable to the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), such as the Food Stamp Program.

In addition to names and eligibility status, you may disclose, without parent/guardian consent, all eligibility information obtained through the free and reduced price meal or free milk eligibility process, including all information on the application or obtained through direct certification or verification, to the following:

1. Persons directly connected with the administration or enforcement of the programs authorized under the NSLA or Child Nutrition Act (CNA) of 1966. This includes the NSLP, the School Breakfast Program, Special Milk Program, Child and Adult Care Food Program, Summer Food Service Program and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC). Program eligibility information collected for any one of the Child Nutrition Programs (CNPs) may be shared with another CNP, even if the programs are sponsored by different entities. For example, a school may disclose eligibility information from applications without parental consent to a Summer Food Service Program administered by Parks and Recreation.
2. The Comptroller General of the United States.
3. Federal, State or local law enforcement officials investigating alleged violations of any of the programs under the NSLA or CNA or investigating violations of programs authorized to have access to names and eligibility status of participants.

2005-2006 FREE AND REDUCED PRICE INCOME ELIGIBILITY ATTACHMENTS

I - Income Eligibility Scales:

These scales are published each year by the federal government and must be used to determine eligibility for free and reduced price meals for the effective dates prescribed.

II - Public Release:

Prior to the beginning of the school year this release, along with the income eligibility scales for both free and reduced price meals, must be provided to the local news media, the local unemployment office, and to any major employers contemplating large layoffs in the area.

III - Free and Reduced Price Application Forms:

Along with the parent letter, the family application (Attachment IIIA) must be distributed to all parents of children in attendance at school at the beginning of the school year and for new students when entering. Each family should complete only one application for their household. The single child application (Attachment IIIB) is available for foster children and children attending a separate school from their siblings.

IV- Free and Reduced Price Application Form Fact Sheet:

At the option of the SFA, this fact sheet may be sent home with the application or made available at the school.

V - Parent Letters: School Meal Programs

These are prototypes of the letters sent to parents each year announcing the availability of the Child Nutrition Programs. Use only those which are applicable to your school program. **Only the Reduced Price eligibility scale from Attachment I is included in the breakfast/lunch parent letter.** The prototype parent letters included in this packet contain the appropriate scales for the 2005-06 school year.

VI - Parent Letters: Special Milk

Those schools which sponsor the Special (Free) Milk program solely for half-day Kindergarten or Pre K classes may adapt the Special Milk parent letter accordingly. Include only the free eligibility scale from Attachment I when preparing the Special Milk (Free Milk available) parent letter.

VII - Notification Letter:

All parents who submit applications must be informed of the approval or denial of such applications. Written notification must be provided to each family denied program benefits and a copy of such written notification must be retained on file.

VIII - Temporarily Approved Application Letter

IX -Parent Letter - Direct Certification

X - Parent Letter - Children with Disabilities

XI - Parent/Guardian Consent Letter

XII - Parent/Guardian Consent Statement (Single Program)

XIII - Parent Guardian Consent Statement (Program Check List)

XIV - Certification of Acceptance for Districts and Nonpublic Schools

XV - Certification of Acceptance for Residential Child Care Institutions (RCCIs)

**INCOME ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES
FOR FREE AND REDUCED PRICE MEALS OR FREE MILK**
(Effective July 1, 2005 through June 30, 2006)

FREE ELIGIBILITY SCALE

Free Meals - 130%

REDUCED PRICE ELIGIBILITY SCALE

Reduced Price Meals - 185%

Household Size	Annual	Month	Twice Per Month	Every Two Weeks	Week	Household Size	Annual	Month	Twice Per Month	Every Two Weeks	Week
1	12,441	1,037	519	479	240	1	17,705	1,476	738	681	341
2	16,679	1,390	695	642	321	2	23,736	1,978	989	913	457
3	20,917	1,744	872	805	403	3	29,767	2,481	1,241	1,145	573
4	25,155	2,097	1,049	968	484	4	35,798	2,984	1,492	1,377	689
5	29,393	2,450	1,225	1,131	566	5	41,829	3,486	1,743	1,609	805
6	33,631	2,803	1,402	1,294	647	6	47,860	3,989	1,995	1,841	921
7	37,869	3,156	1,578	1,457	729	7	53,891	4,491	2,246	2,073	1,037
8	42,107	3,509	1,755	1,620	810	8	59,922	4,994	2,497	2,305	1,153
For each additional member add	4,238	354	177	163	82	For each additional member add	6,031	503	252	232	116

BOTH of the above scales should appear in the Public Announcement/release to the media (Attachment II)

ONLY the Reduced Price Eligibility Scale can appear in the Letter to Parents (for those schools participating in the National School Lunch or Breakfast Program). (Attachment V)

ONLY those schools which participate in the Special Milk Program and offer Free Milk should publish the Free Eligibility Scale in both the Public Announcement and the Letter to the Parent.

ONLY those schools where the split-session Pre-K/Kindergarten participate in the Special Milk Program and offer Free Milk should publish the Free Eligibility Scale in the Public Announcement and Letter to the Parent. The Letter to Parent should only go to those students in split-session Pre-K/Kindergartens classes.

Please note: Incomes indicated on the free and reduced price eligibility scales are maximum amounts.

ANNUAL NEWS RELEASE - PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT

(Send to newspaper, unemployment office, large area employer contemplating layoffs and keep documentation on file.)

PROTOTYPE

_____ (Local School Food Authority) today announced a free and reduced price meal (Free Milk) policy for _____ area school children.

Local school officials have adopted the following family eligibility criteria to assist them in determining eligibility:

**INCOME ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES
FOR FREE AND REDUCED PRICE MEALS OR FREE MILK**

(Effective July 1, 2005 through June 30, 2006)

FREE ELIGIBILITY SCALE

Free Lunch, Breakfast, Milk

REDUCED PRICE ELIGIBILITY SCALE

Reduced Price Lunch, Breakfast

Household Size	Year	Month	Twice Per Month	Every Two Weeks	Week	Household Size	Year	Month	Twice Per Month	Every Two Weeks	Week
1	12,441	1,037	519	479	240	1	17,705	1,476	738	681	341
2	16,679	1,390	695	642	321	2	23,736	1,978	989	913	457
3	20,917	1,744	872	805	403	3	29,767	2,481	1,241	1,145	573
4	25,155	2,097	1,049	968	484	4	35,798	2,984	1,492	1,377	689
5	29,393	2,450	1,225	1,131	566	5	41,829	3,486	1,743	1,609	805
6	33,631	2,803	1,402	1,294	647	6	47,860	3,989	1,995	1,841	921
7	37,869	3,156	1,578	1,457	729	7	53,891	4,491	2,246	2,073	1,037
8	42,107	3,509	1,755	1,620	810	8	59,922	4,994	2,497	2,305	1,153
For each additional add	4,238	354	177	163	82	For each additional add	6,031	503	252	232	116

BOTH of the above scales should appear in the Public Announcement/release to the media (Attachment #II)

ONLY the Reduced Price Eligibility Scale can appear in the Letter to Parents (for those schools participating in the National School Lunch or Breakfast Program). (Attachment #V)

See link for Family Application

See link for Family Application

See link for Single Child Application

See link for Single Child Application

See link for Family Spanish Application

See link for Family Spanish Application

See link for Spanish Single Child Application

See link for Spanish Single Child Application

**FREE AND REDUCED PRICE MEAL APPLICATION
FACT SHEET**

When filling out the application form, please pay careful attention to these helpful hints.

Food Stamp/TANF/FDPIR number:

This must be the complete number supplied to you by the agency including all numbers and letters, for example, E 123456, or whatever combination is used in your county. Refer to a letter you received from your local Department of Social Services for your number or contact them for your number. All children with the same case number may be listed on the same application. Separate applications are required for children with different case numbers.

Direct Certification:

If you receive food stamps or TANF, send in the Direct Certification Letter from the NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance instead of completing the application.

Foster Child:

A child who is living with a family but who is under the legal care of the welfare agency or court. List the child's "personal use" income. This includes only those funds provided by the agency which are identified for the personal use of the child, such as personal spending allowances, money received by his/her family, or from a job. Funds provided for housing, food and care, medical, and therapeutic needs are not considered income to the foster child. Write "0" if the child has no personal use income.

Household:

A group of related or non-related people who are living in one house and share income and expenses.

Adult Family Members:

All related and non-related people who are 21 years of age and older living in your house.

Financially Independent:

A person is financially independent and a separate economic unit/household when his or her earnings and expenses are not shared by the family/household.

Gross Income :

Is money earned or received by each member of your household before deductions. Examples of deductions are federal tax, State tax, and Social Security deductions.

Examples of gross income are:

- Wages, salaries, tips, commissions, or income from self-employment
- Net farm income
- Pensions, annuities, or other retirement income including Social Security retirement benefits
- Unemployment compensation
- Welfare payments (does not include value of food stamps)
- Public Assistance payments
- Adoption assistance
- Strike benefits
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Survivor's Benefits
- Alimony or child support payments
- Disability benefits, including workman's compensation
- Veteran's subsistence benefits
- Interest or dividend income
- Cash withdrawn from savings, investments, trusts, and other resources which would be available to pay for a child's meals
- Other cash income

If you have more than one job, you must list the income from all jobs.

If you receive income from more than one source (wage, alimony, child support, etc.), you must list the income from all sources.

Current Income :

Your income at the present time before deductions. Farmers, self-employed workers, migrant workers, and other seasonal employees may use their income for the past 12 months.

Income Exclusions: The value of any child care provided or arranged, or any amount received as payment for such child care or reimbursement for costs incurred for such care under the Child Care Development (Block Grant) Fund should not be considered as income for this program.

If you have any questions or need help in filling out the application form, please contact:

Name: _____ Title: _____

Telephone Number: _____

PROTOTYPE
Letter to Parents for School Meal Programs

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Children need healthy meals to learn. (School Name) offers healthy meals every school day. Breakfast costs [§] lunch costs [§]. Children from households that meet federal income guidelines (outlined below) are eligible for free meals or reduced price meals. Reduced price meals cost each eligible student \$.25 for lunch and \$.25 for breakfast. To apply for free or reduced price meals, submit a Direct Certification letter from the NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance **OR** complete the enclosed application, sign it, and return it to _____ as soon as possible. Please refer to the guidelines contained in this letter when completing the application. We cannot approve an application that is not complete, so be sure to fill out all required information.

- 1. Do I need to fill out an application for each child?** No. Complete the application to apply for free or reduced price meals. Do not fill out more than one application for your household.
- 2. Who can get free meals?** Children in households getting Food Stamps or TANF and most foster children can get free meals regardless of your income. Also, your children can get free price meals if your household income is within the free limits on the Federal Income Guidelines. Each foster child must be listed on a separate application, with Part 2 completed and include an adult signature.
- 3. Can homeless, runaway and migrant children get free meals?** Please call [*school, homeless liaison or migrant coordinator*] to see if your child(ren) qualify, if you have not been informed that they will get free meals.
- 4. Who can get reduced price meals?** Your children can get low cost meals if your household income is within the reduced price limits on the Federal Income Chart, shown on this application.
- 5. Should I fill out an application if I received a letter this school year saying my children are approved for free or reduced price meals?** Please read the letter you received carefully and follow the instructions. Call the school at [*phone number*] if you have questions.
- 6. I get WIC, can my child(ren) get free meals?** Children in households participating in WIC may be eligible for free or reduced price meals. Please fill out an application.
- 7. Will the information I give be checked?** The school may ask you at any time during the school year to verify your eligibility. You will be notified, in writing, if you have been selected for Verification. School officials may ask you to send papers showing that your child should receive free or reduce price meals at the time you applied.
- 8. If I don't qualify now, may I apply 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 getting Food Stamps, TANF or other benefits. If you lose your job, your children may be able to get free or reduced price meals.
- 9. 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 or writing to: [*name, address, phone number*].
- 10. May I apply if someone in my household is not a U.S. citizen?** Yes. You or your child(ren) do not have to be a U.S. citizen to qualify for free or reduced price meals.
- 11. Who should I include as members of my household?** You must include all people living in your household, related or not (such as grandparents, other relatives, or friends). You must include yourself and all children who live with you.
- 12. What if my income is not always the same?** List the amount that you normally get. For example, if you normally get \$1000 each month, but you missed some work last month and only got \$900, put down that you get \$1000 per month. If you normally get overtime, include it, but not if you get it only sometimes.

Income Chart: The following chart lists income levels according to household size and income levels received either yearly, monthly or weekly. If your total household income is the same or less than the amounts on the Income Chart below, your children may be eligible to receive free or reduced price meals.

REDUCED PRICE ELIGIBILITY INCOME CHART
 Effective from July 1, 2005 to June 30, 2006

Household Size	Annual	Month	Twice-Monthly	Bi-Weekly	Weekly
1.....	\$17705	\$ 1476	\$ 738	\$681	\$341
2.....	23736	1978	989	913	457
3.....	29767	2481	1241	1145	573
4.....	35798	2984	1492	1377	689
5.....	41829	3486	1743	1609	805
6.....	47860	3989	1995	1841	921
7.....	53891	4491	2246	2073	1037
8.....	59922	4994	2497	2305	1153
For each additional family member add.....	+6031	+503	+252	+232	+116

How to Apply: To get free or reduced price meals for your children you may submit a **Direct Certification letter received from the NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, OR carefully complete one application** for your household and return it to the designated office. If you now receive food stamps, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) for any children, or participate in the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR), the application must include the children's names, the household food stamp, TANF or FDPIR number and the signature of an adult household member. All children with the same case number may be listed on the same application. Separate applications are required for children with different case numbers. If you do not list a food stamp, TANF or FDPIR number for all the children for whom you are applying, the application must include the names of everyone in the household, the amount of income each household member, and how often it is received and where it comes from. It must include the signature of an adult household member and that adult's social security number, or the word "**none**" if the adult does not have a social security number. An application that is not complete cannot be approved. Contact your local Department of Social Services for your food stamp or TANF number or complete the income portion of the application.

Reporting Changes: The benefits that you are approved for at the time of application are effective for the entire school year. **You no longer need to report changes for an increase in income or decrease in household size, or if you no longer receive food stamps.**

Income Exclusions: The value of any child care provided or arranged, or any amount received as payment for such child care or reimbursement for costs incurred for such care under the Child Care Development (Block Grant) Fund should not be considered as income for this program.

Nondiscrimination Statement: This explains what to do if you believe you have been treated unfairly. In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability. To file a complaint of discrimination, write to *USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington DC 20250-9410* or call 202-720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Meal Service to Children With Disabilities: Federal regulations require schools and institutions to serve meals at no extra charge to children with a disability which may restrict their diet. A student with a disability is defined in 7CFR Part 15b.3 of Federal regulations, as one who has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities. Major life activities are defined to include functions such as caring for one's self, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, and working. You must request the special meals from the school and provide the school with medical certification from a medical doctor. If you believe your child needs substitutions because of a disability, please get in touch with us for further information, as there is specific information that the medical certification must contain.

Confidentiality: The United States Department of Agriculture has approved the release of students names and eligibility status, without parent/guardian consent, to persons directly connected with the administration or enforcement of federal education programs such as Title I and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), which are United States Department of Education programs used to determine areas such as the allocation of funds to schools, to evaluate socioeconomic status of the school's attendance area, and to assess educational progress. Information may also be released to State health or State education programs administered by the State agency or local education agency, provided the State or local education agency administers the program, and federal State or local nutrition programs similar to the National School Lunch Program. Additionally, *all* information contained in the free and reduced price application may be released to persons directly connected with the administration or enforcement of programs authorized under the National School Lunch Act (NSLA) or Child Nutrition Act (CNA); including the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs, the Special Milk Program, the Child and Adult Care Food Program, Summer Food Service Program and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women Infants and Children (WIC); the Comptroller General of the United States for audit purposes, and federal, State or local law enforcement officials investigating alleged violation of the programs under the NSLA or CNA.

The disclosure of eligibility information not specifically authorized by the NSLA requires a written consent statement from the parent/guardian.

We will let you know when your application is approved or denied.

Sincerely,

PROTOTYPE
Special Milk Program Schools
 (For use when offering Free Special Milk)

Dear Parent/Guardian:

(School Name) believes that one of the most important ways we can help our children perform better in their classrooms is to provide them with the nutrition necessary for the healthy growth of their minds and bodies. Therefore, we provide milk in our school everyday.

We invite all students to show their support for their school food service program through frequent participation. Current milk prices are \$ ___ per one half pint.

Children from households that meet Federal income guidelines (outlined below) are eligible for free milk. To apply for free milk, **submit a Direct Certification letter from the NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance OR complete the enclosed application** as soon as possible, sign it and return it to the school.

How to Apply: To receive free milk for your children **submit a Direct Certification letter from the NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, OR carefully complete the application** and return it to the school. If you currently receive food stamps, or TANF for any children or participate in the FDPIR, the application must include the children's names, your food stamp, TANF or FDPIR number and the signature of an adult household member. All children with the same case number may be listed on the same application. Separate applications are required for children with different case numbers. If you do not list a food stamp/TANF/FDPIR number for all of your children, the application must include the names of everyone in the household, the amount of income for each household member how often this income is received and where it comes from. The application must also include the signature of an adult household member and that adult's social security number, or the word "none" if the member does not have a social security number. An application that is not complete cannot be approved. Contact your local Department of Social Services for your food stamp or TANF number or complete the income portion of the application.

Income Chart: The following chart lists income levels according to household size and income levels received either yearly, monthly or weekly. If your total household income is the same or less than the amounts on the Income Chart below, your children may be eligible for free milk.

FREE ELIGIBILITY INCOME CHART

Household Size	Annual	Month	Twice/Month	Every 2 weeks	Weekly
1	12,441	1,037	519	479	240
2	16,679	1,390	695	642	321
3	20,917	1,744	872	805	403
4	25,155	2,097	1,049	968	484
5	29,393	2,450	1,225	1,131	566
6	33,631	2,803	1,402	1,294	647
7	37,869	3,156	1,578	1,457	729
8	42,107	3,509	1,755	1,620	810
For each additional member, add	4,238	354	177	163	82

Reporting Changes: The benefits that you are approved for at the time of application are effective for the entire school year. **You no longer need to report changes for an increase in income or decrease in household size, or if you no longer receive food stamps.**

Income Exclusions: The value of any child care provided or arranged, or any amount received as payment for such child care or reimbursement for costs incurred for such care under the Child Care Development (Block Grant) Fund should not be considered as income for this program.

Foster Child: Your foster child may be eligible for free milk. An application for a foster child must have the child's name, the child's "personal use" income and an adult signature. If you have questions contact the school for help with the application.

Non-discrimination Statement: This explains what to do if you believe you have been treated unfairly. In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability. To file a complaint of

discrimination, write to *USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington DC 20250-9410* or call 202-720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Fair Hearing: If you do not agree with the school's decision on your application or the result of verification, you may wish to discuss it with the school. You also have the right to a fair hearing. This can be done by calling or writing the following official:

(Name, Address, Telephone Number of Hearing Official)

Confidentiality: The United States Department of Agriculture has approved the release of students names and eligibility status, without parent/guardian consent, to persons directly connected with the administration or enforcement of federal education programs such as Title I and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), which are United States Department of Education programs used to determine areas such as the allocation of funds to schools, to evaluate socioeconomic status of the school's attendance area, and to assess educational progress. Information may also be released to State health or State education programs administered by the State agency or local education agency, provided the State or local education agency administers the program, and federal State or local nutrition programs similar to the National School Lunch Program. Additionally, *all* information contained in the free and reduced price application may be released to persons directly connected with the administration or enforcement of programs authorized under the National School Lunch Act (NSLA) or Child Nutrition Act (CNA); including the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs, the Special Milk Program, the Child and Adult Care Food Program, Summer Food Service Program and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women Infants and Children (WIC); the Comptroller General of the United States for audit purposes, and federal, State or local law enforcement officials investigating alleged violation of the programs under the NSLA or CNA.

The disclosure of eligibility information not specifically authorized by the NSLA requires a written consent statement from the parent/guardian.

Reapplication: You may apply for benefits any time during the school year. Also, if you are not eligible now, but during the school year become unemployed, have a decrease in household income, or an increase in family size you may request and complete and application at that time.

You will be notified when the application is approved or denied.

Sincerely,

NOTIFICATION LETTER FOR SCHOOL MEALS

Dear _____:

Your application for free and reduced price meals for your child(ren) has been:

- Approved for free meals.
- Approved for reduced price meals at _____ cents for lunch and _____ cents for breakfast.
- Temporarily approved for free meals. You will be contacted in 45 days to determine your status at that time.
- Denied for the following reason(s):
 - Income over the allowable amount.
 - Incomplete application. The following information is missing:
 - Other:

If you do not agree with the decision, you may discuss it with a school official and you have a right to a fair hearing. This can be done by calling or writing the following official:

Name:
 Address:
 Phone:

You may reapply for benefits at any time during the school year. If you are not eligible now but have a decrease in household income, become unemployed, or have an increase in household size, you may fill out another application at that time.

Sincerely,

 Name Title Date

Non-discrimination Statement: This explains what to do if you believe you have been treated unfairly. In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability. To file a complaint of discrimination, write to *USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington DC 20250-9410* or call 202-720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Prototype

TEMPORARILY APPROVED APPLICATION

Date

Dear _____:

Your application for free and reduced meals for your child(ren) has been temporarily approved for free meals. Under the program regulations, applications with **no income** can only be approved temporarily for a maximum of 45 days.

After 45 days, families must provide an update of income status for their children to continue to receive free meal benefits. You may either call our office at () with the current income information or complete the enclosed application.

If we do not receive the updated information by _____, your child(ren) will no longer be eligible to receive free meal benefits, and you will need to send your child(ren) to school with breakfast and/or lunch money.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

SAMPLE PARENT LETTER
(Optional)

(Letter to Parents Regarding Direct Certification Letters)

Dear _____:

If you receive food stamps or Aid to Dependent Children/Temporary Assistance to Needy Families ADC/TANF, you may receive a letter in August from the NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance that will simplify the process for your child or children to receive free meals or milk at school.

If you take or send the letter to (name of reviewing official) or one of the schools your child/children attend, your children will receive free meals or milk without your having to complete an application.

You will receive only one letter. If you lose it, it will not be replaced. If you do not return the letter to the school, you must fill out the Free and Reduced Price Application in order for your children to get free meals or milk.

Call _____ if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

(Sample Parent Letter)

MEAL SERVICES TO CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Most children with disabilities have no special dietary needs. They are able to participate in the Child Nutrition Programs the same as all other children in the school. In some instances, however, children with disabilities may experience difficulty when chewing and swallowing, which would require that the physical characteristics of their foods be changed. Some children with severe disabilities may need special foods or a therapeutic diet.

Federal regulations require schools and institutions to serve meals at no extra charge to those children whose disability restricts their diet in such a way that they cannot fully participate in the food service program without some modification to the foods offered or the scheduled menu. If you believe your child needs substitutions because of a disability, please get in touch with us for further information. You must request the special meals from the school and provide the school with medical certification from a medical doctor. This medical certification must contain the following:

- 1) Verification that the special meals are needed due to the student's disability, and
- 2) Recommendation/prescription for alternate foods and forms of foods needed to meet the student's special dietary needs.

If you have questions regarding the need for meal modifications, contact _____ at _____ for further information.

Sincerely,

Prototype

PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT TO RELEASE ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION FOR FREE AND REDUCED PRICE MEALS OR FREE MILK

Date

Dear Parent/Guardian:

If your child is eligible for free and reduced price meals or free milk, he/she also may be eligible for other benefits. In order to receive these benefits, you must provide written consent to permit school officials to give your name, address, and an indication that your household is eligible for free and reduced price meals or free milk, to representatives of certain programs. **Failure to sign a consent statement that will allow disclosure of this information will not affect your child's eligibility or participation in the school meals or milk programs.**

Some of the programs that may request names and eligibility information to be used to provide benefits, and for which parent/guardian consent is required, include: federal health insurance programs such as Medicaid or Children's Health Insurance program (CHIP), other federal programs, State programs, local health and education programs and other local activities. For example, the disclosure of children's eligibility for free and reduced price meals or free milk to determine eligibility for free text books, free band instruments, holiday baskets, school supplies, etc., or reduced fees for summer school or driver education programs, would require written consent by the child's parent/guardian.

If you wish to provide consent to release information contained in your child's free and reduced price meal application, to receive other benefits, please complete the attached consent statement.

Please call _____ at _____ if you have questions.

Sincerely,

Enclosure (consent statement)

* Personalize this letter to include programs that are actually available at your school.

Prototype Consent Statement (Single Program)

CONSENT TO RELEASE FREE OR REDUCED PRICE ELIGIBILITY
INFORMATION

School officials may release information that shows that my child/children are eligible for free or reduced price meals or free milk to the following program. I understand that the information will only be provided to this program.

Name of Program (to be completed by SFA) _____

I understand that I will be releasing information that will show my child/children are eligible for free and reduced price meals or free milk for my child. I give up my rights to confidentiality for this program.

Child/Children

I certify that I am the parent/guardian of the child/children for whom the free/reduced price application was made:

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____

Print Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Date: _____

Prototype Consent Statement (Program Check List)

CONSENT TO RELEASE FREE OR REDUCED PRICE ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

School officials may release information that shows that my child/children are eligible for free or reduced price meals or free milk to the following programs. I understand that the information will only be provided to the program(s) checked.

(Check the box next to the program area(s) you wish to release information to)

- Federal health programs such as Medicaid or Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP).
- State or federal programs such as the Youth Summer Work program or the Educational Talent Search Program.
- Local health and education programs and other local programs that provide benefits such as free textbooks or school supplies, free band instruments, or reduced fees for summer school or driver education.
- Community programs such as holiday baskets, summer arts and playground programs.

I understand that I will be releasing information that will show that my child/children are eligible for free and reduced price meals or free milk for my child. I give up my right to confidentiality for the program(s) checked.

Child/Children

I certify that I am the child's parent/guardian for whom the application was made.

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____

Print Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Date: _____

* Personalize your letter to only contain programs actually available at your school.

KEEP THIS FORM ON FILE. DO NOT RETURN TO SED

CERTIFICATION OF ACCEPTANCE FOR DISTRICTS AND NONPUBLIC SCHOOLS

(Residential Child Care Facilities must complete the form on Attachment XIV)

Please complete the following information and **retain on file** for examination by members of this Department or USDA during a review of your Child Nutrition Program. **Do not send the Certificate of Acceptance to your regional office.**

SCHOOL FOOD AUTHORITY NAME: _____

12-Digit LEA Code: _____

The governing body of this School Food Authority accepts this Free and Reduced Price Meal or Special Milk Program Policy Statement, including the Family Income Eligibility Criteria and all required attachments and as indicated below:

Titles of Designated Officials

A. REVIEWING OFFICIAL
ADDRESS & TELEPHONE

B. HEARING OFFICIAL
ADDRESS & TELEPHONE

C. VERIFICATION OFFICIAL
ADDRESS & TELEPHONE

An officer of the Board of Education or chairman of the community school board, pastor or executive director of the corporation operating a private or parochial school, or the headmaster or principal of a nonpublic school must sign this form.

ORIGINAL SIGNATURE OF SCHOOL OFFICIAL

TITLE

DATE

KEEP THIS FORM ON FILE. DO NOT RETURN TO SED

CERTIFICATION OF ACCEPTANCE FOR RESIDENTIAL CHILD CARE INSTITUTIONS (RCCIs)

Please complete the following information and **retain on file** for examination by members of this Department or USDA during a review of your Child Nutrition Program. **Do not send the Certificate of Acceptance to your regional office.**

SCHOOL FOOD AUTHORITY NAME: _____

12-Digit LEA Code: _____

The governing body of this School Food Authority accepts this Free and Reduced Price Meal or Special Milk Program Policy Statement, including the Family Income Eligibility Criteria and all required attachments and as indicated below:

Titles of Designated Officials

A. REVIEWING OFFICIAL

ADDRESS & TELEPHONE

(Sections B & C are only applicable to RCCIs with day treatment students)

B. HEARING OFFICIAL

ADDRESS & TELEPHONE

C. VERIFICATION OFFICIAL

ADDRESS & TELEPHONE

An officer of the Board of Directors or the Executive Director must sign this form.

ORIGINAL SIGNATURE OF SCHOOL OFFICIAL

TITLE

DATE

CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

Room 55, Albany, NY 12234-0055
NEW YORK STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
(518) 473-8781 Fax (518) 473-0018
www.nysed.gov/cn/cnms.htm



Frances N. O'Donnell, Coordinator

Barbara Malone, Support
Dechelle Johnson, DEMO

Carla Broadnax, Associate

ALBANY REGIONAL OFFICE

Serving schools in the following counties:

Region I and Region II: Sandra Ragule

Barbara St. Louis

(518) 474-3956 - Dee Krawczyk
*Albany, Clinton, Columbia, Essex, Franklin, Fulton,
Hamilton, Montgomery, Putnam, Rensselaer, Saratoga,
Schenectady, Schoharie, Warren, Washington*

Region III: Sharon Smith

(518) 473-8781 – Barbara Malone
Greene, Westchester

Region IV: Maureen Rooney

Lindsey Osterhout
(518) 474-3956 – Dee Krawczyk
Dutchess, Orange, Rockland, Sullivan, Ulster

Region V: Sharon Smith

Linda St. Pierre
Jamie Ralston
(518) 474-3956 – Dee Krawczyk
Nassau, Suffolk

Region VI, Region VII, Region VIII:

Debbie Favro

Todd Bradshaw, Ashlene Regis, Diane Carter
(518) 473-1525 – Kaleen Edwards
*Bronx, New York City (Manhattan), Kings (Brooklyn),
Queens, Richmond (Staten Island)*

BUFFALO REGIONAL OFFICE

Anna Burse

Frank Caccamise
355 Harlem Road
West Seneca, NY 14224-1892
(716) 821-7350 – Joan Gaczewski
(716) 821-7357 - Fax
Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie, Genesee,
Livingston, Monroe, Niagara, Orleans, Steuben, Wyoming

SYRACUSE REGIONAL OFFICE

Maureen Rooney

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109 South Warren Street, Suite 318
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(315) 476-3425
(315) 476-4339 – Fax
*Broome, Cayuga, Chemung, Chenango, Cortland, Delaware,
Herkimer, Jefferson, Lewis, Madison, Oneida, Onondaga,
Ontario, Oswego, Otsego, Schuyler, Seneca, St. Lawrence,
Tioga, Tompkins, Wayne, Yates*

SCHOOL MEALS INITIATIVE

Serving all counties:

Sandy Sheedy
Diane Hepburn, Tom Ring,
Amy Murrisky, Elizabeth Lattanzio
(518) 473-1525 – Kaleen Edwards

SUMMER FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM

Education Building Room 55/119, Albany, NY 12234-0119
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