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Idaho children will receive free school meals this year; income guidelines set

(BOISE) – The U.S. Department of Agriculture is offering free meals to all children in eligible schools running USDA meal programs for the 2021-22 school year. This “Seamless Summer Option” also was offered last year because of the pandemic.

However, each year the USDA sets new income guidelines for the free and reduced-price meals provided through the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs, and for free milk in schools operating the Special Milk Program, and parents can submit applications even if all meals are being provided for free, the Idaho State Department of Education Child Nutrition Programs announced.

During school year 2021-22, all Idaho schools running USDA school meal programs are eligible to operate the Seamless Summer Option (SSO) providing free meals to all children in eligible schools. If a school chooses to operate as a “closed enrolled site,” the meals are available only to enrolled children. If a school chooses to operate as an “open site” the meals are available to all area children. Families should check with their districts to see which option will be offered.

Families must have the option to complete an application for free or reduced-price meals even though their school is providing free meals to all children. Households will be notified by the district if their school chooses to operate the National School Breakfast and/or Lunch program and will be collecting applications and charging the children for meals based on their reduced-price or paid status.

Households will be notified of any child’s eligibility for free meals if the individual child is known to be receiving educational support through migrant, homeless or runaway education, Head Start or court-ordered foster care. Children in households receiving Food Stamps or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance to Families in Idaho (TAFI) or Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) are eligible for free meals. No other application or verification of eligibility is required for students directly certified.

The 2021-22 income guidelines are:

Reduced Price Meals					
Participants may qualify for reduced price meals if the household income falls at or below the limits on this chart					
Household Size	Annual	Monthly	Twice Per Month	Every Two Weeks	Weekly
1	23,828	1,986	993	917	459
2	32,227	2,686	1,343	1,240	620
3	40,626	3,386	1,693	1,563	782
4	49,025	4,086	2,043	1,886	943
5	57,424	4,786	2,393	2,209	1,105
6	65,823	5,486	2,743	2,532	1,266
7	74,222	6,186	3,093	2,855	1,428
8	82,621	6,886	3,443	3,178	1,589
For each additional family member add	8,399	700	350	324	162

Free Meals					
Participants may qualify for free meals if the household income falls at or below the limits on this chart					
Household Size	Annual	Monthly	Twice Per Month	Every Two Weeks	Weekly
1	16,744	1,396	698	644	322
2	22,646	1,888	944	871	436
3	28,548	2,379	1,190	1,098	549
4	34,450	2,871	1,436	1,325	663
5	40,352	3,363	1,682	1,552	776
6	46,254	3,855	1,928	1,779	890
7	52,156	4,347	2,174	2,006	1,003
8	58,058	4,839	2,420	2,233	1,117
For each additional family member add	5,902	492	246	227	114

Applications may be submitted any time during the year. Children of parents or guardians who become unemployed are eligible for free or reduced-price meals or for free milk during the period of unemployment, provided that the loss of income causes household income to be within the eligibility criteria. Information provided on an application may be verified at any time during the school year. An application cannot be approved unless it contains the following information:

A Food Stamp, SNAP or TAFI case number (not Medicaid) for each child, or an indication that the household is receiving FDPIR and the signature of an adult household member.

OR

The names of all household members, the amount and source of income received by each household member in the prior month, the signature of an adult household member, the actual number of household members, and the last four digits of the Social Security number of the adult household member who signs the application (or an indication that the signer has no Social Security number).

Parents or guardians dissatisfied with the ruling of the school official who determines eligibility may discuss the decision with the official. Parents wishing to make a formal appeal may make a written or oral request to the school's food service hearing officer (contact the school food service office for the name, address, and phone number of the officer) for a hearing on the decision.

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