

**FREE AND REDUCED PRICE MEALS FOR NEEDY PUPILS**

Capistrano Unified School District agrees to participate in the national School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program, receive commodities donated by the United States Department of Agriculture, and accept responsibility for providing free and reduced price meals to eligible children at approved sites.

The District assures the California Department of Education that it will uniformly implement the following policies when administering the National School Lunch program and School Breakfast Program at approved sites. In fulfilling these responsibilities, the District agrees to the following provisions:

1. **Free Meals:** Serve meals to children from households: (1) whose income is at or below the free limit of the income eligibility guidelines; or (2) that receive food stamps or Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) that provide a case number; or (3) for whom the school has received documentation directly from the local Food Stamp/AFDC office that the children are from households currently receiving food stamps or AFDC.
2. **Reduced Price Meals:** Serve meals at a reduced price to children from households whose income is at or below the reduced price limit of the income eligibility guidelines.
3. **Limit Reduced Price Costs:** Set reduced price charges for lunch and breakfast at or below the maximum reduced price allowed by regulations (\$.40 for lunch and \$.30 for breakfast) and below the full price of the lunch or breakfast.
4. **Equal Treatment:** Ensure no physical segregation of, nor any other discrimination against, any child because of his or her inability to pay the full price of the meal. The names of the children eligible to receive free or reduced price meals shall not be published, posted, or announced in any manner, and there shall be no overt identification of any such children by use of special tokens, tickets, or any other means. Further assurance is given that children eligible for free or reduced price meals shall not be required to:
  - (a) Work for their meals
  - (b) Use a separate meal service area
  - (c) Go through a separate serving line
  - (d) Enter the meal service area through a separate entrance

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- (e) Eat meals at a different time
  - (f) Eat a meal different from the one sold to children paying the full price
5. **Nondiscrimination:** Operate the National School Lunch Program and/or School Breakfast Program so that no child shall be discriminated against because of race, sex, color, national origin, age, or handicap.
6. **Application Forms and Process:** Develop and distribute to each child's parent or guardian a letter and an application for free and reduced price meals. These forms shall be distributed at the beginning of each school year or whenever there is a change in eligibility criteria. The letter to parents shall include the free or reduced price meal application form and the income eligibility guidelines which show only the income scales for reduced price meals, with an explanation that children from households with incomes at or below the reduced price guidelines may be eligible for either free or reduced price meals.

Interested parents or guardians are responsible for completing the application and returning it to the District for review. Such applications and documentation of eligibility determinations made shall be retained for a school/site to another school/site under the jurisdiction of the same District, his or her eligibility for free or reduced price meals shall be transferred to and honored by the receiving school/site.

All children from an eligible household shall receive the same benefits. Parents or guardians shall be promptly notified of the acceptance or denial of their applications. Children shall be served free or reduced price meals immediately upon the establishment of their eligibility.

It is recognized that in certain cases foster children are also eligible for these benefits. If a household has foster children living with them and wishes to apply for free and reduced price meals for these children, the household shall be instructed to contact the District.

When an application is denied, parents or guardians shall be provided written notification which shall include: (a) the reasons for the denial of benefits, e.g., income in excess of allowable limits or incomplete application; (b) notification of the right to appeal; (c) instruction on how to appeal; and (d) a statement reminding parents that they may reapply for free and reduced price benefits at any time during the school year. The reasons for the ineligibility shall be properly documented and retained on file by the District.

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7. **Public Release:** Submit a public release containing the free and reduced price eligibility guidelines and other information contained in the letter to parent, to the local news media, local unemployment offices, and major employers contemplating or experiencing large layoffs.
8. **Collection and Accountability:** Establish a procedure to collect money from children who pay for their meals and to account for the number of free, reduced price, and full price meals served. The procedure shall be used so that no child at the school/site shall be aware of such procedure or the identities of the children receiving free or reduced price meals.
9. **Changes to Prior Year's Collection Procedures:** Notify the Department of any changes to the District's prior year's free and reduced price meals, changes in collection procedures, procedures for accepting applications from households, revisions to the public release, letter to households, or application for free and reduced price meals. Such changes will be effective only upon approval of the Department of Education.
10. **Verification:** Verify eligibility of applicant households in accordance with program regulations and annually maintain records as follows: (a) a summary of the verification efforts; (b) the total number of applications on file by October 31; and (c) the percentage or number of applications verified. Compliance with these requirements shall be monitored by the Department of Education as part of its supervisory assistance monitoring and verification efforts.
11. **Appeal Process:** Establish and use a fair hearing procedure under which a household can appeal a decision made by the District with respect to the household's application for benefits and/or any subsequent reduction or termination of benefits. During both the appeal and hearing process, the child who was previously determined to be eligible, based on the face of the application submitted, shall continue to receive free or reduced price meals. Prior to initiating the hearing procedure, the District's representative, or the child's parent or guardian may request a conference to provide an opportunity for the parent/guardian and/or the District's representative to discuss the situation, present information, and obtain an explanation of data submitted in the application and the decision rendered. Such a conference shall not in any way prejudice or diminish the right to a fair hearing.