

## School Food Management

### FAQ

- 1. Are all school meals healthy?** Most School Meals are very nutritious. Some meals are higher in calories, total fat, and saturated fat than others.
- 2. Are there nutritional guidelines for School Meals?** Yes. There are Federal Guidelines that we must follow when developing School Meals. Based on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, all School Meals must meet the following:
  - When averaged over a school week, all school meals contain 30 percent or less of total calories from fat.
  - When averaged over a school week, all school meals contain less than 10 percent of calories from saturated fat.
  - Reduction in levels of sodium and cholesterol and an increase in dietary fiber.
  - Half of all grains must be whole.
- 3. How are school Food Service Programs funded?** Food Service Programs are self-funded and must rely upon the sales of meals and a la carte menu items. School Food Service Programs are not included in the District Budgets or the General Fund. A separate budget is prepared annually and managed daily, weekly, and monthly. All monies collected go into the School Lunch Fund to pay for things such as food, labor, (including health/medical insurance, retirement, etc...) equipment costs, and other expenses.
- 4. Don't you receive money from New York State for the School Meals you serve to children?** Only if a child receives a meal. Our School Food Service Programs operate similar to a private business. We only receive revenues when we sell a meal or a product. All revenues received from the State are deposited into the School Lunch Fund Account and are included with other revenues to pay expenses mentioned in (3) above.
- 5. Who determines what meals will be offered?** Our Management Team. Decisions are based upon nutritional values, customer's acceptance, and food & labor cost. We have Federal and State Rules and Regulations to follow when developing a menu and operating a School Meals Program. It is our goal to serve nutritious meals that our customers will eat and enjoy.

- 6. Where does the food come from?** The majority of foods are purchased from local, regional, and national food distribution companies. A portion comes from the USDA Commodities Program. We have stringent guidelines on purchasing and using government and non government food products.
- 7. How does a Parent/Guardian set up an account for their child to participate in the School Breakfast & Lunch programs?** Contact your school's Cafeteria Supervisor/Manager and they'll set up an account for your child. We operate a debit system, whereas Parents/Guardians deposit money into the child's account, and money is subtracted as the child purchases a meal or other product. We have a computer system in all schools, networked to your district food service office that tracks student meal accounts. Each student has an Account Number. All information is confidential, including students eligibility for Free & Reduced Price Meals.
- 8. How can we receive a current balance of our child's account?** Call your school and ask to be connected to the Cafeteria Supervisor/Manager. He or she will be able to provide you with that information. Account History Reports are also available upon request.
- 9. How do I determine if my household is eligible for free or reduced-price meals?** Parents or Guardians should complete the School Breakfast and Lunch Application sent home at the beginning of each school year and return the form promptly to the school. The school will send you a letter informing you of your eligibility once it has been determined, based on the household size and monthly gross income. Your child is eligible for free meals if your household income falls within the free limits of the Federal Income Guidelines. Children in households receiving Food Stamps or TANF and most foster children are eligible for free meals regardless of income. Each foster child must be listed on a separate application.
- 10. Why should I complete the School Breakfast and Lunch application?** School Food offers delicious and nutritious meals daily. Completed applications allow students from eligible households to receive free or reduced-price meals throughout the school year. For parents with busy schedules, the School Breakfast Program provides a great option. Encourage your children to take advantage of the benefits of eating breakfast in school each day. Completed applications enable many students to eat lunch for free or for 25 cents. Students who do not return an application or who are not income-eligible will pay full price.

11. **Do I need to fill out an application for each child I have?** No. You need to complete only **one application per household** for all students attending the **same school**. If there are children in multiple schools living in the same household, an application must be filed in all schools. A separate application must be filed for each foster child since they are each considered a household of one.
12. **Should I return an application even if I am NOT eligible for free or reduced-price meals?** Yes! The application is also used to determine the amount of State funding our schools receive for supplies like books, classroom furniture, and other resources. Even if you feel that you are not eligible for free or reduced-price meals write **“Not Applicable”** across the front of the application and return it to the school.
13. **If I don’t have a Social Security number, can I still complete an application?** Yes. Complete the application and write the word **NONE** in the space provided.
14. **Will other government agencies see my completed application?** No. Completed applications are confidential.
15. **What if my household receives Food Stamps, Aid to Dependent Children, or Temporary Assistance to Needy Families?** You should receive a Direct Certification Letter, listing the names of school aged children in your household from the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance. When you take or mail a copy of this letter to each child’s school, those children will be eligible for free school meals. If you do not receive a Direct Certification Letter in the mail, you should complete the School Breakfast and Lunch Application and provide your Food Stamp or FDPIR/TANF case number. Your child will then be eligible for free school meals.

