

Media Release for Seamless Summer Option Free Meals in School Year 2021-2022

La Porte Independent School District announced its policy today that this school year, healthy meals will be offered every school day to all students at no cost. Typically, a student's household must meet income eligibility requirements to qualify for free or reduced-price meals. However, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) issued guidance that allows schools to offer meals to all students at no cost for the 2021-2022 school year.

While no application or eligibility determination is required for your student to receive free meals this school year, income eligibility requirements will likely resume in the 2022-2023 school year. As such, La Porte ISD will process household applications during School Year 2021-2022 to ensure student eligibility for free or reduced-price meals during the first 30 days of the 2022-2023 school year while 2022-2023 applications are being processed. Each school/site or central office has a copy of the policy, which may be reviewed upon request.

Starting on August 2, 2021 La Porte ISD will begin distributing letters to the households of the children in the district about these 2022-2023 eligibility benefits and actions households need to take to apply. Applications also are available at School Nutrition Department 2015 Sens Rd. La Porte, TX 77571.

Criteria for Free and Reduced-Price Meal Benefits to Start School Year 2022-2023

The following criteria will be used to determine a child's eligibility for free or reduced-price meal benefits at the beginning of School Year 2022-2023:

Income

1. Household income that is at or below the income eligibility levels

Categorical or Automatic Eligibility

2. Household receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF); or Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)

Program Participant

3. Child's status as a foster child, homeless, runaway, migrant, or displaced by a declared disaster
4. Child's enrollment in Head Start or Even Start

Income Eligibility

For those households that qualify for free or reduced-price meals based on income, an adult in the household must complete the free and reduced-price meal application and return it to School Nutrition Department 2015 Sens Rd. La Porte, TX 77571 or your child's home campus. Those individuals filling out the application will need to provide the following information:

1. Names of all household members
2. Amount, frequency, and source of current income for each household member
3. Last 4 digits of the Social Security number of the adult household member who signs the application or, if the adult does not have a social security number, check the box for "No Social Security number"
4. Signature of an adult household member attesting that the information provided is correct

Categorical or Program Eligibility

La Porte ISD is working with local agencies to identify all children who are categorically and program eligible. LPISD will notify the households of these children that they do not need to complete an application. Any household that does not receive a letter and feels it should have should contact Belinda Guerrero 281-604-6950 or guerrero@lpisd.org.

Any household that wishes to decline benefits should contact Nutrition Department at 281-604-6950 or email guerrero@lpisd.org with the request.

Applications may be submitted anytime during the school year. The information households provide on the application will be used to determine eligibility. Applications may also be verified by the school officials at any time during the school year.

Determining Eligibility

Under the provisions of the free and reduced-price meal policy, School Nutrition Department will review applications and determine eligibility. Households or guardians dissatisfied with the Reviewing Official's eligibility determination may wish to discuss the decision with the Reviewing Official on an informal basis. Households wishing to make a formal appeal for a hearing on the decision may make a request either orally or in writing to Mr. Mike Clausen, 1002 San Jacinto La Porte, TX 77571 281-604-7072.

Unexpected Circumstances

If a household member becomes unemployed or if the household size increases, the household should contact the school. Such changes may make the children of the household eligible for benefits if the household's income falls at or below the attached current income eligibility guidelines.

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the *USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form*, (AD-3027) found online at: <https://www.usda.gov/oascr/how-to-file-a-program-discrimination-complaint>, and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

La Porte Independent School District 2021-2022 School Year

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Children need healthy meals to learn. This school year, La Porte ISD can offer healthy meals every school day to all students at no cost. Typically, a student's household must meet income eligibility requirements to qualify for free or reduced-price meals. However, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) issued guidance that allows schools to offer meals to all students at no cost for the 2021-2022 school year.

While no application or eligibility determination is required for your student to receive free meals this school year, income eligibility requirements will likely resume in the 2022-2023 school year. As such, to establish eligibility for free or reduced-price meals for the 2022-2023 school year, please complete an application for free or reduced-price meals this school year.

Please note that if you received a notification letter that a child is directly certified for free or reduced-price meals, do not complete an application. Let the school know if any children in the household attending school are not listed in the letter.

The questions and answers that follow and attached directions provide additional information on how to complete the application. Complete only one application for all the students in the household and return the completed application to the School Nutrition Dept. 2015 Sens Road, La Porte, TX 77571 or your child's home campus. If you have questions about applying for free or reduced-price meals, contact Belinda Guerrero the School Nutrition Dept at 281-604-6950.

- 1. Who Qualifies for Free Meal Status?**
 - *Income*—Children can get free or reduced-price meals if a household's gross income is within the limits described in the *Federal Income Eligibility Guidelines*.
 - *Special Assistance Program Participants*—Children in households receiving benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Food Distribution Program for Households on Indian Reservations (FDPIR), or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), are eligible for free meals.
 - *Foster*—Foster children who are under the legal responsibility of a foster care agency or court are eligible for free meals.
 - *Head Start or Early Head Start*—Children participating in these programs are eligible for free meals.
 - *Homeless, Runaway, and Migrant*—Children who meet the definition of homeless, runaway, or migrant qualify for free meals. If you haven't been told about a child's status as homeless, runaway, or migrant or you feel a child may qualify for one of these programs, please call or email Jennifer Green 281-604-7033 greenj@lpisd.org.
 - *WIC Recipient*—Children in households participating in WIC may be eligible for free or reduced-price meals.
- 2. What If I Disagree with the School's Decision About My Application?** Talk to school officials. You also may ask for a hearing by calling or writing to Mr. Mike Clausen 1002 San Jacinto La Porte, TX 77571 281-604-7072.
- 3. What If My Income Is Not Always the Same?** List the amount normally received. If a household member lost a job or had hours/wages reduced, use current income.
- 4. If I Don't Qualify Now, May I Apply Later?** Yes. Apply at any time during the school year. A child with a parent or guardian who becomes unemployed may become eligible for free and reduced-price meals if the household income drops below the income limit.
- 5. We Are in The Military. Do We Report Our Income Differently?** Basic pay and cash bonuses must be reported as income. Any cash value allowances for off-base housing, food, or clothing, or Family Subsistence Supplemental Allowance payments count as income. If housing is part of the Military Housing Privatization Initiative, do not include the housing allowance as income. Any additional combat pay resulting from deployment is excluded from income.
- 6. May I Apply If Someone in My Household Is Not a U.S. Citizen?** Yes. You, your children, or other household members do not have to be U.S. citizens to apply for free or reduced-price meals.
- 7. Will Application Information Be Checked?** Yes. We may also ask you to send written proof of the reported household income.
- 8. My Family Needs More Help. Are There Other Programs We Might Apply For?** To find out how to apply for other assistance benefits, contact your local assistance office or 2-1-1.
- 9. Can I Apply Online?** Yes! The online application has the same requirements and will ask you for the same information as the paper application. Visit www.nlappscloud.com to begin or to learn more about the online application process. Contact the School Nutrition Dept. 2015 Sens RD. La Porte, TX 77571 281-604-6950 guerrero@lpisd.org if you have questions about the online application.

If you have other questions or need help, call Belinda Guerrero 281-604-6950. si necesita ayuda, por favor llame al teléfono: Belinda Guerrero 281-604-6950

Sincerely,

Yvonne Bennett, RD, LD

Director of School Nutrition

Directions for Applying for Free and Reduced-Price School Meals 2021-2022

Please use these instructions to complete the free or reduced-price school meals application. Submit one application per household, even if the children in the household attend more than one school in LPISD. Please use a **pen** (not a pencil) when completing the application. The application must be filled out completely in order for the school to make a determination if the children in your household qualify for free or reduced-price school meals. **An incomplete application cannot be approved.** Please contact Belinda Guerrero at 281-604-6950 or email guerrerobe@lpisd.org with your questions.

Step 1: List All Household Members Who Are Infants, Children, And Students Up to and Including Grade 12.

- **List** each child's name.
 - Print first name, middle initial, and last name for each child in the household in the spaces. If there are more children than lines, use the back of the application to record additional names.
 - Include all household members who are age 18 or under and are supported with the household's income including children who are not enrolled in the district. Children do NOT have to be related to anyone in the household to be a part of the household.
- **Mark** the box following the child's name to show if the child is a student in the LPISD District.
- **Record** the child's grade if the child is in school.
- **Check** the appropriate box if a child qualifies for free meals as participant in the foster care system, Head Start (including Early Head Start) or if a child meets the criteria for homeless, migrant, or runaway.
 - Checking Foster indicates that a foster care agency or court has placed the child in your home. If the application is being submitted for foster children only, complete Step 1, skip Step 2, and complete Step 3.

Participation in a Categorical Program

If all children in the household are participants in one of the following programs—*Foster, Head Start, Homeless, Migrant, or Runaway*, skip Step 2 and complete Step 3.

SNAP, TANF, and FDPIR: Do any household members (including you) currently participate in one or more of the following assistance programs: SNAP, TANF, or FDPIR?

If a child or adult in the household participates in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or Temporary Assistance to Needed Families (TANF), record the Eligibility Determination Group (EDG) number in the space.

If a child or adult in the household is a participant in Food Distribution Program for Households on Indian Reservations (FDPIR), check the box to indicate participation. The Nutrition Department will contact you to obtain documentation of FDPIR participation.

If the students in the household are eligible based on SNAP, TANF, or FDPIR, skip Step 2 and complete Step 3.

Step 2: Report Income for All Household Members.

Part A. Last Four Digits of Social Security Number (SSN) of an Adult Household Member

- **Provide** the last four digits of the Social Security number (SSN) of an adult in the household or check the box for no SSN.

A social security number is not required to apply for these programs.

Part B. Income for All Adult Household Members (Including Yourself, But Not Children)

- **Record** the first and last name of each adult in the household in the space provided.
 - If there are more adults in the household than available spaces, use the back of the application. **Children's income is reported in Part C.**
 - Include all adults living in the household that share income and expenses, even if the adult is not related to anyone in the household and does not receive any income. Do not include adults that are not supported by the household's income and do not contribute income to the household.
- **Record** the amount of income the adult receives under the type of income: Working Earnings; Public Assistance/Child Support/Alimony; Pensions/Retirement/Social Security/Supplemental Security Income (SSI); and All Other.

Report all amounts in gross income only and in whole dollars. Gross income is the total income received before taxes or deductions. Ensure that the income reported has not been reduced by the amounts deducted for taxes, insurance premiums, or any other purpose. The Adult Income Information Box provides additional information on the types of income that need to be reported. Foster children may be included as a member of the household or may be included on a separate application.

Reduced-Price Meal Income Eligibility Guidelines					
Family Size	Annually	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

Write a 0 in any field where there is no income to report. If you write 0 or leave any fields blank, you are certifying (promising) that there is no income to report. If local officials have known or available information that the household income was reported incorrectly, the application will be verified for cause.

- **Circle** how often each type of income is received (frequency).
 - W = Weekly
 - E = Every 2 Weeks
 - T = Twice per Month
 - M = Monthly
 - A = Annually

Part C. Income for Children in the Household

- **Record** total income for each child in the household who receives regular income by how often income is received (frequency).

Record adult income in Part B.

Record the income of each child who receives regular income under the frequency indicating how often the income is received.

The Child Income Information Box (on the right) provides additional information on the types of income that needs to be reported for children in the household.

Part D. Total Household Members

- **Record** the total number of children and adults in the household in the appropriate box.

This number MUST be equal to the number of household members listed in Step 1 and Step 2. It is very important to list all household members as the size of the household determines the household eligibility.

Step 3: Provide Contact Information and Adult Signature.

- **Read** the certification statement.
- **Write** your current address and contact information in the space provided. Sharing a phone number, email address, or both is optional, but helps us reach you quickly if we need to contact you.

If you have no permanent address, this does not make your children ineligible for free or reduced-price school meals.

- **Print** the name of the adult signing the form, **sign** the form, and **record** today's date in the appropriate spaces.

All applications must be signed by an adult household member. By signing the application, the household member is promising that all information has been truthfully and completely reported. Before completing this section, please read the privacy and civil rights statements on the back of the application.

Step 4: Return the Application.

- **Return** the application to Nutrition Dept. 2015 Sens Rd. La Porte, TX 77571 or your child's school.

Adult Income Information Box

Earnings from Work

General Types of Income

- Salary, wages, cash bonuses
- Strike benefits

U.S. Military

- Allowances for off-base housing, food, and clothing
- Basic pay and cash bonuses (do NOT include combat pay, FSSA, or privatized housing allowances)

Self-Employed Worker

- Net income from self-employment (farm or business)—calculated by subtracting the total operating expenses of the business from its gross receipts or revenue.

Public Assistance/ Child Support/Alimony

(Do not report the value of any cash value public assistance benefits NOT listed on the chart.)

- Alimony payments
- Cash assistance from State or local government
- Child support payments from court-ordered child support or alimony decree should be reported here. Informal but regular payments should be reported as *other* income in the next part.
- Unemployment benefits
- Worker's compensation

Pensions/Retirement/ Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

- Annuities
- Income from trusts or estates
- Private Pensions or disability
- Social Security (including railroad retirement and black lung benefits)
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Veteran's benefits

All Other Income

- Earned interest
- Investment income
- Regular cash payments from outside household
- Rental income

Child's Income Information

Earnings from Work

For Example: A child has a job where she or he earns a salary or wages.

Social Security, Disability Payments

For Example: A child is blind or disabled and receives Social Security benefits.

Social Security, Survivor's Benefits

For Example: A parent is disabled, retired, or deceased, and their child receives social security benefits.

Income from any other source

For Example: A child receives income from a private pension fund, annuity, or trust