

SUSPENDED INDEFINITELY**FREE AND REDUCED PRICE MEALS**

It is the philosophical position of the Patchogue-Medford Board of Education that no child can be properly educated unless the child is properly nourished; that the establishment of good nutritional habits is to be considered an integral part of the educational curriculum for this school district; and, therefore, that every child attending one of the Patchogue-Medford Schools is entitled to breakfast and lunch each school day.

While some parents or guardians of children are capable of reimbursing the school district for the cost of such meals, it is recognized and understood that others are unable to pay this cost.

In order to provide for equitable treatment of all pupils, the following criteria shall be used to ascertain those who are eligible for free or reduced priced breakfasts and lunches:

- a. Children receiving assistance under the Aid to Dependent Children (ADC) Program of the Department of Social Services;
- b. The level of family income from all public and private sources with relation to the number of individuals in the family and the number of children in the family;
- c. Children from families who are experiencing unemployment which causes their current family income to fall within the family eligibility criteria for free and reduced price meals and free milk;
- d. Extenuating circumstances causing unusual financial burden.

All school authorities shall take such actions as are necessary to assure that no overt act shall identify children receiving free or reduced priced meals. All reasonable efforts will be taken to protect the anonymity of these children.

1. **Eligibility Standards**

Eligibility standards shall be established by the Board of Education on an annual basis.

2. **Request Procedures**

Requests for free or reduced priced breakfasts and lunches shall be submitted in the following manner:

Free and Reduced Price Meals (Continued)**2. Request Procedures (Continued)**

- a. An application will be made available on-line (under the “Food Services” tab) on or about the beginning of each academic year to the parents of children attending each school. The application shall contain complete information on (1) eligibility standards, including all criteria, with respect to free breakfasts and lunches; (2) how a family may make application for free or reduced priced meals for its children; and (3) how a family may appeal the decision of the Food Service Director with respect to such application form. When a child enrolls in school after the beginning of the academic year, the application shall be distributed to the child's parents at the time of registration.
- b. Parents or guardians who feel they are eligible under the terms shall request free or reduced priced meals on an annual basis using an application provided by the school district. The application will require an indication of the reasons for this request.
- c. Although applications will be made available to all families with children attending all schools, when one child from a family is judged eligible for free meals, the eligibility shall apply to all children from that family.
- d. The Food Services Supervisor shall verify the eligibility as required by the State of New York Education Department.
- e. A procedure shall be implemented for collecting money for their meals which prevents overt services (refer to Policy #3546.2). Identification and accounts at the point of service for free and reduced meals has been established. This procedure is used so that no other child in the school will consciously be made aware, by such procedure, of the identity of the children receiving reduced price or free meals (refer to Policy #3546.3).
- f. If a child transfers from one school to another school, the child's eligibility for free or reduced priced meals, if previously established, shall be transferred to, and honored by, the receiving school without additional investigation.

3. Public Notice

Public notice of these procedures shall include, but not be limited to, the following actions:

Free and Reduced Price Meals (Continued)

3. Public Notice (Continued)

- a. A letter shall be distributed on or about the beginning of each academic year, to the parents of children attending each school. Such letter shall contain complete information as to the location(s) of the Free and Reduced price lunch application which will include (1) eligibility standards, including all criteria, with respect to free or reduced priced meals; (2) application procedures for free or reduced priced meals; and (3) procedures for appealing any decisions with respect to such application. This application shall be distributed to the parents of any child enrolling in school after the beginning of the academic year at the time of registration.
- b. A public release containing (1) eligibility standards, including all criteria, with respect to free and reduced meals; (2) application procedures for free and reduced priced meals; and (3) procedures for appealing any decisions with respect to such application shall be made available to the informational media, local unemployment offices, major employers contemplating or experiencing large layoffs, and minority and local parent-teacher organizations on or about the beginning of each academic year, and anytime thereafter, if there is a change in the policy, and may be obtained by any interested party at the Food Services Supervisor's Office, Patchogue-Medford High School, 181 Buffalo Avenue, Medford, NY 11763, and on the District's website.
- c. Copies of the public release shall be made available to any interested party. Any subsequent changes in the school district eligibility standards shall be publicly announced in the same manner as the original standards were announced.

4. Maintenance of Records

Adequate records of breakfasts and lunches served, cash receipts, and the number of free and reduced priced breakfasts and lunches served at each location will be maintained on a daily basis by the of Food Services Supervisor. An annual report will be made to the Superintendent of Schools and the Board of Education.

5. Review Procedures

Any decision of the Food Services Supervisor regarding free meals may be reviewed by the District's hearing official, as appointed by the Board of Education or the Superintendent of Schools. This hearing will be held within the spirit of this policy, i.e., that the program of free and reduced priced meals is intended to include all of the needy, not to exclude them.

Free and Reduced Price Meals (Continued)**5. Review Procedures (Continued)**

Such hearing procedures shall provide:

- a. A simple publicly announced method for making an oral or written request for a hearing.
- b. An opportunity for the family to be assisted or represented by an attorney or other person in presenting its appeal.
- c. An opportunity to examine, prior to and during the hearing, the documents and records presented to support the decision under appeal.
- d. That the hearing shall be held with reasonable promptness and convenience to the family and that adequate notice shall be given to the family as to the time and place of the hearing.
- e. An opportunity for the family to present oral or documentary evidence and arguments supporting its position without undue interference.
- f. An opportunity for the family to question or refute any testimony or other evidence and to confront and cross-examine any adverse witnesses.
- g. 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 any previous conference.
- h. That the decision of the hearing official shall be based on the oral and documentary evidence presented at the hearing and made a part of the hearing record.
- i. That the parties concerned and any designated representative shall be notified in writing of the decision of the hearing official.
- j. 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.
- k. That such written record of each hearing shall be preserved for a period of three (3) years plus the current year, and shall be available for examination by the parties concerned or its representative at any reasonable time and place during such period.

This hearing procedure shall be followed whenever a school food official challenges the continued eligibility of any child for a free or reduced priced meal. During the pendency of the challenge, the child shall continue to receive the free

Free and Reduced Price Meals (Continued)

5. Review Procedures (Continued)

or reduced priced meals to which the child is entitled under the eligibility standards announced by the school food authority based upon the information supplied in the application made by the family.

6. Nondiscrimination Practices

The school food authorities of each of the Patchogue-Medford Schools shall take such actions as are necessary to assure that the names of children eligible to receive free meals shall not be published, posted, or announced in any manner and to assure that there shall be no overt identification of any such children by the use of special tokens or tickets, or by any other means.

7. Duration and Amendment of Policy

On occasion, this policy statement shall be submitted to the The New York State Education Department Child Nutrition Program Administration Department for review to assure full compliance with the provisions of the National School Breakfast and Lunch Programs. No alterations or amendments to the eligibility standards set forth in this policy may be made without advance approval of The New York State Education Department Child Nutrition Program Administration Department.

Policy Adopted:

January 20, 1970

Policy Revised:

August 28, 1973

Policy Revised:

February 9, 1976

Policy Revised:

September 20, 1976

Policy Revised:

August 14, 1977

Policy Revised:

November 20, 1978

Policy Revised:

December 16, 1991

Policy Revised:

October 23, 2000

Policy Reviewed:

August 26, 2013

Free and Reduced Price Meals (Continued)

Policy Revised:
October 20, 2014
Policy Revised:
August 24, 2015
Policy Reviewed:
August 29, 2016
Policy Reviewed:
August 28, 2017
Policy Revised:
August 27, 2018
Policy Revised:
August 26, 2019
Policy Reviewed:
August 24, 2020
Policy Revised:
August 23, 2021
Policy Revised:
August 29, 2022
Policy Revised:
August 21, 2023
Suspended Indefinitely:
September 16, 2024

FREE AND REDUCED PRICE MEALS REGULATION

In order to implement the Board's policy regarding free and reduced price meals, the District shall follow the guidelines set forth below.

1. Free Meals
To serve meals at no charge to children from families approved by the school district and whose income is at or below the income levels for free meals listed on the annual income eligibility guidelines, or to children from SNAP households, Aid to Families with Dependent Children Assistance units, or Aid to Dependent Children households that provide a case number.
2. Reduced Price Meals
To serve breakfast or lunch at a reduced charge, to children from families approved by the school district and whose income is within the range of the annual income eligibility guidelines for reduced price meals.
3. Special Conditions
To serve free or reduced price meals 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 to those children whose parents or guardians have become unemployed, provided: the loss of income causes the family during the period of unemployment to be within the eligibility criteria.
4. Non-Discrimination
 - a) That there will be no physical segregation of, or any other discrimination against, any child because of his inability to pay the full price of the meal. The names of 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 or tickets, or by any other means.
 - b) 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 disability.

Free and Reduce Price Meals Regulation (Continued)
Hearing Procedures (Continued)

5. 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. During appeal, hearing and disposition of the case, the child will receive free or reduced price meals.

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:

- a) a simple publicly announced method for making an oral or written request for a hearing;
- b) an opportunity to be assisted or represented by an attorney or other person on presenting its appeal;
- c) an opportunity to examine, prior to and during the hearing, the documents and records presented to support the decision under appeal;
- d) that the hearing shall be held with reasonable promptness and convenience to the family and that adequate notice shall be given to the family as to the time and place of the hearing;
- e) an opportunity for the family to present oral or documentary evidence and arguments supporting its position without undue interference;
- f) an opportunity for the family to question or refute any testimony or other evidence and to confront and cross-examine any adverse witnesses;
- g) 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;
- h) that the decision of the hearing official shall be based on the oral and documentary evidence presented at the hearing and made a part of the hearing record;
- i) that the parties concerned and their designated representative shall be

notified in writing of the decision of the hearing official;

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Free and Reduce Price Meals Regulation (Continued)

- j) 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
 - k) that such written record of each hearing shall be preserved for a period of three (3) 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.
6. Reviewing Official
A reviewing official(s) 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. The official should sign, date and indicate eligibility, determination on each application.
7. 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, including a form on which to make application for free or reduced price meals.
8. Applications
To advise parents to complete the application and return it to the reviewing official for eligibility determination.
- Such applications 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 school district. Copies of the application 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.

Free and Reduce Price Meals Regulation (Continued)9. Verification of Applications

Verify the eligibility of applicant households by *November 15* 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 1*; (c) the percentage or number of applications verified; and (d) the total number of children represented on those applications selected for verification.

10. Anonymity and Accountability

To establish a procedure to collect money from children who pay for their meals which prevents overt identification, and to account for the number of free and reduced price and full price meals 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 identify of the children receiving reduced price meals, free meals.

11. Amendments to Policies

To submit to the State Education Department any alterations or amendments to the governing policy or this regulation, including eligibility criteria, applications, public announcements, etc., for approval prior to implementation. Such changes will be effective following approval by the local regional office. Any and all changes in eligibility criteria shall be publicly announced in the same manner used at the beginning of the school year.

12. 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.

- a) all applications returned and documentation of action taken;
- b) records of all appeals and challenges and their disposition;
- c) all notifications of eligibility determinations; and
- d) records of all verification efforts and resulting eligibility changes.

13. 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.

Free and Reduce Price Meals Regulation (Continued)
Administrative Prerogative (Continued)

14. Special Assistance Provisions

Annually, 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 recordkeeping requirements as mandated by program regulations for this alternate system.

Adult meals may not be subsidized to any degree from child nutrition funds.

15. 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 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.

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Free and Reduce Price Meals Regulation (Continued)

16. 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. 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:

1. 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.
2. The director of the homeless shelter at which the child resides can complete and submit an application for the child.
3. 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.

17. 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 the 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.

Accordingly, meal substitutions must be made for children with disabilities and must be supported by a statement signed by physician licensed health care provider 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 3546.1-R**

Free and Reduce Price Meals Regulation (Continued)

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.

Attachments:

- Parent Letter (English)
- Household Application (English)
- Parent Letter (Spanish)
- Household Application (Spanish)

Revised:

April 25, 2011

Revised:

August 26, 2013

Reviewed:

August 24, 2015

Revised:

August 29, 2016

Reviewed:

August 28, 2017

Revised:

August 27, 2018

Revised:

August 26, 2019

Reviewed:

August 24, 2020

Revised:

August 23, 2021

Revised:

August 29, 2022

Reviewed:

August 21, 2023

Suspended Indefinitely

September 16, 2024