



MEAL PROGRAM

2025 - 2026



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The Altus Schools Meal Program is essential to promoting student well-being and academic success. Research consistently shows that proper nutrition enhances cognitive function, boosts attention span, and leads to higher achievement scores. By offering nutritious meals during the school day, schools help improve student health, support learning outcomes, and reduce food insecurity to create a foundation for lifelong success.

Recognizing these connections, Altus Schools have developed a meal program that abides by the State Meal Mandate for Non-classroom Based Charter Schools in accordance with the California Department of Education's Universal Meals Program implementation guidelines and California Education Code (EC) Section 49501.5, which requires charter schools serving grades transitional kindergarten through 12 (TK–12) to provide free or reduced breakfast and lunch to students who request a meal every school day. Further, charter schools offering non-classroom-based instruction must offer a nutritionally adequate breakfast and lunch for eligible pupils on any school day that the pupil is scheduled for educational activities.

Key Aspects of Ed Code Section 49501.5

All public school districts, county offices of education, and charter schools in California serving students in grades TK-12 must provide a nutritionally adequate breakfast and lunch free of charge to any pupil who requests a meal, regardless of their eligibility for free or reduced-price meals, starting in the 2022-2023 school year. This is part of the [CA Universal Meal Program](#).

- **Universal Meals:** The code establishes the framework for the Universal Meals program, ensuring all students in participating schools have access to free, nutritionally adequate meals.
- **Breakfast and Lunch:** The provision of both breakfast and lunch, free of charge, to any student who requests a meal.
- **No Income Verification:** The program operates without regard to a student's eligibility for free or reduced-price meals.
- **School day Definition:** The code defines "school day" to include various instructional and educational activities, such as state-funded preschool, summer school, and even school-sponsored field trips.

- **Implementation:** The program applies to all public school districts, county offices of education, and charter schools serving students in grades TK-12.

While the State Meal Mandate does not apply to remote learning, students who are participating in virtual learning and are on campus for any period of time during a school day are also eligible to receive a meal. The Altus Schools Meal Program offers all students a free and nutritionally adequate meal each school day regardless of the time they spend at the school site.

Guidelines and Requirements

In accordance with the California Department of Education's [Breakfast](#) and [Lunch](#) Meal Patterns, each school provided breakfast and lunch meal must include a serving combination of the following:

Breakfast:

- **Fruit:** 1 cup per day (K-12) offered as dried fruit, pureed fruit, and fruit cups.
- **Milk:** 1 cup per day (K-12). Milk must be 1% or less.
- **Whole Grains:** 1 oz per day (K-12) offered as whole grain rich food items.

Lunch:

- **Fruit:** 1 cup per day (9-12) and 1/2 cup per day (K-8).
- **Whole Grains:** 2 oz per day (9-12) and 1 oz per day (K-8).
- **Meat/Meat Alternative:** 2 oz per day (9-12) and 1 oz per day (K-8) offered as meat sticks, chicken salad, trail mix, and protein bars.
- **Vegetables:** 1 cup per day (9-12) and $\frac{3}{4}$ cup per day (K-8) offered as red, green, orange, legumes, or starchy options.

Additional Guidelines

- Foods containing caffeine are not allowed in middle schools or high schools.
- At least **two** milk choices must be offered that contain vitamins A and D at levels specified by the Food and Drug Administration. All milk must be fat-free or low-fat.

Regularly Offered Items

Milk/Juice

- 1% Low-fat White Milk
- 1% Low Fat Vanilla/Chocolate Milk
- Ripple Dairy Free White Milk

- Capri Sun 100% Fruit Juice

Fruit and Vegetable Items

- That's It 100% Fruit Bars
- Dole Mixed and Peaches Fruit Cups
- Thats It Pure Fruit Bars
- GoGo SqueeZ Fruit Pouch
- Brothers Apple/Peach Fruit Crisps
- Noka Superfruit Smoothie Pouch
- Libby's Variety Vegetable Cup
- Heaven and Earth Veggie Chips
- Bada Bean Bada Boom Roasted Bean Snacks

Whole Grains and Proteins

- KIND Healthy Whole Grains Breakfast Protein Bar- Blueberry Almond, Banana Dark Chocolate, Double Dark Chocolate (GF)
- Skinny Pop Original Popped Popcorn (GF)
- Cereal Cups- Cheerios (GF), Frosted Mini Wheats, Honey Bunches of Oats
- Triscuits Whole Grain Crackers
- Wheat Thins Snack Crackers
- Whole Grain Cheez Its Snack Packs

Meat/Meat Alternatives

- Beef and Turkey Meat Sticks 1 oz
- Bumble Bee Chicken Salad Packs 2.9 oz with Crackers
- Starkist Chicken Creations Pouches 2.6 oz
- IQ Protein Bar (vegan protein)
- Oh! Nuts Pumpkin Seeds (vegan protein)
- Nut Harvest, Trail Mix 2.25 oz bags (vegan protein)

Meal Access for Students

- One teacher from each resource center is responsible for monitoring the supply and demand of the food items and placing orders to restock.
- Students are allowed items from each labeled shelf of the Meal Cart. The cart is located in the resource center's designated eating area.
- Unlimited water is available.
- Students are allowed to eat in a designated area at any time during their daily visit to the resource center.
- Students obtain information about what constitutes a nutritiously adequate meal through signage at the resource center, school communications, and school staff.
- Instructional and support staff receive guidance throughout the year through multiple channels, including instructional meetings, resource center visits, and the Wave.
- Students can take home food items when requested.

Additional Food Resources

CalFresh is also known as the federal [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program \(SNAP\)](#). It is a program for low-income families and individuals that meet certain income guidelines. CalFresh benefits help supplement a food budget and allow families and individuals to buy nutritious food. Families may be eligible to receive CalFresh within three days if they qualify for CalFresh Expedited Services.

CalFresh benefits are accessed by using an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card. An EBT card is used the same way as a debit or ATM card. Eligibility and the amount of CalFresh benefits issued depend on household size, income, and certain living expenses.

For more information about CalFresh and application instructions, visit **BenefitsCal** at <https://benefitscal.com/> or the following county agencies:

- **San Diego County** Health and Human Services Agency: https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/hhsa/programs/ssp/food_stamps.html
- **San Bernardino County** Transitional Assistance Department: <https://wp.sbcounty.gov/tad/programs/calfresh/>
- **Riverside County** Department of Public Social Services: <https://rivcodpss.org/apply-benefits>

Urgent Food Assistance

Families can also get immediate food assistance through various community organizations throughout San Diego. Families may **call 2-1-1** or visit <https://www.211.org/> for resources in their local community, across all counties in California. For a quick search of other food resources, visit the following organizations:

San Diego		
Organization	URL	Link
San Diego Food Bank	https://www.sandiegofoodbank.org/get-food/	Get Food - San Diego Food Bank
Feeding San Diego	https://feedingsandiego.org/find-food/	Get Food-Feeding San Diego
Find Help	https://www.findhelp.org/food/food-pantry--san-diego-ca	FindHelp.org- Food Pantries San Diego

San Bernardino		
Organization	URL	Link
Feeding America	https://www.feedingamericaie.org/	Feeding America
San Bernardino CalFresh	https://wp.sbcounty.gov/tad/programs/calfresh/	San Bernardino CalFresh
Find Help	https://www.findhelp.org/food/food-pantry--san-bernardino-ca	FindHelp.org Food Pantries San Bernardino

Riverside		
Organization	URL	Link
Feeding America	https://www.feedingamericaie.org/	Feeding America
Riverside County Benefits	https://rivcodpss.org/apply-benefits	Riverside County Benefits
Find Help	https://www.findhelp.org/food/food-pantry--riverside-ca	FindHelp.org-Food Pantries Riverside