

The Local Educational Agency (LEA) assures the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) that the school system will uniformly implement the following policy to determine children's eligibility for free or reduced price school meals in all National School Lunch, School Breakfast, Afterschool Snack, and/or Special Milk Programs in schools under its jurisdiction. The following forms are adopted with and considered part of this policy:

**Letter to Parents**

- Free Milk Application
- Free and Reduced Price School Meals Family Application

**Application Form**

- Free Milk Application
- Free and Reduced Price School Meals Family Application

**Sharing Information with Other Programs**

**Approval-Disapproval Form**

**Public Release**

- Sample Public Release for Free and Reduced Price Meals

- A. The State Agency agrees to:  
Submit the informational public release containing the same information outlined in the *Letter to Parents*, to local unemployment offices, major employers contemplating large layoffs, and minority and grass root organizations.
- B. The LEA (including Residential Child Care Institutions (RCCIs) with day treatment programs) agrees to:
  1. Submit to *MDE* any alterations to the *Letter to Parents*, *Family Application for Free and Reduced Price School Meals*, *Family Application for Free Milk*, etc., prior to implementation. Such changes will be effective only upon approval. All changes in eligibility criteria must be publicly announced in the same manner used at the beginning of the school year.
  2. Develop and send to each child's parent or guardian a letter, as outlined herein, including an application form for free or reduced price school meals or free milk at the beginning of each school year and whenever there is a change in eligibility criteria. Only the reduced priced guidelines may be included in the School Meals Program *Letter to Parents*. The free scale is used for Special Milk Program *Letter to Parents* only. Parents will be requested to complete the application and return it to the Eligibility Determination Official for review. Such applications and documentation of action taken will maintained for three years after the end of the fiscal year to which they pertain.
  3. Designate an Eligibility Determination Official to review applications and make the determination of eligibility. This official will use the criteria outlined in this policy to determine which individual children are eligible for free and reduced price meals and/or free milk. Foster children are also eligible for free benefits. If a household has foster children living with them and wishes to apply for free and reduced price school meals and/or free milk for the other children in the household, they must provide the information asked for on the application. Applications may be filed at any time during the year. Any parent enrolling a child in a school for the first time, at any time during the year, shall be supplied with such documents. If a child transfers from one school to another under the jurisdiction of the same school food authority, his/her eligibility for free meals, or reduced price meals will be transferred to and honored by the receiving school. All children from a family will receive the benefits they qualify for. Within ten working days of the receipt of the applications, the eligibility determination

must be made. Parents or guardians will be notified individually of the acceptance or denial of their applications. Children will be served free and reduced price school meals and/or free milk immediately upon the establishment of their eligibility. When an application is rejected, parents or guardians will be informed in writing of the reason for denial and of the fair hearing procedure.

4. Establish and use a fair hearing procedure for parents' appeals of the school's decisions on applications and for school officials' challenges to the correctness of information contained in an application or to the continued eligibility of any child for free and reduced price meals and/or free milk. During the appeal and hearing, the child will continue to receive free and reduced price meals and/or free milk. A record of all such appeals and challenges and their dispositions shall be retained for three years. Prior to 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. The hearing procedure shall provide the following:
  - a. A publicly-announced, simple method for making an oral or written request for the hearing.
  - b. An opportunity to be assisted or represented by an attorney or other person.
  - c. An opportunity to examine, prior to and during the hearing, the documents and records presented to support the decision under appeal.
  - d. Reasonable promptness and convenience in scheduling a hearing and adequate notice as to the time and place of the hearing.
  - e. An opportunity to present oral or documentary evidence and arguments supporting its position.
  - f. An opportunity to question or refute any testimony or other evidence and to confront and cross-examine any adverse witnesses.
  - g. That the hearing be conducted and the decision made by a hearing officer who did not participate in the decision under appeal.
  - h. That the decision of the hearing official be based on the oral and documentary evidence presented at the hearing and made part of the hearing record.
  - i. That the parties concerned and any designated representative thereof be notified in writing of the decision of the hearing official.
  - j. That for each hearing, a written record be prepared, including the decision under appeal, any documentary evidence and a summary of any oral testimony presented at the hearing, the decision of the hearing official and the reasons therefore, and a copy of the notification to the parties concerned of the hearing official's decision.
5. Verify applications for meal benefits in accordance with program regulations and maintain records of such verification. Prepare a summary of verification results according to regulatory requirements.
6. Serve free meals or free milk to children from families whose income are at or below the guidelines listed in Scale A (*Guidelines for Use in Schools*).
7. Serve reduced price meals to children from families whose income is at or below the guidelines list in Scale B (*Guidelines for Use in Schools*). Reduced price meals must be provided with a maximum charge is \$0.40 for lunch, \$0.30 for breakfast and \$0.15 for afterschool snack.
8. Provide these benefits to children of families who are experiencing strikes, layoffs and unemployment, which cause the family income to fall below the guidelines in *Guidelines for Use in Schools*.

9. Establish a procedure to collect from children who pay for meals or milk and to account for the number of free, reduced price, and full price meals served and the number of half-pints of full price and free milk served. This procedure will be used so that no other child in the school will consciously be made aware of such procedure or the identity of the children receiving free and reduced price meals and/or free milk.
10. The names of the children eligible to receive free meals or milk or reduced price meals shall not be published, posted, or announced in any manner. LEAs may disclose, without parent/guardian consent, participants' names and eligibility status (whether they are eligible for free meals or free milk or reduced price meals) to persons directly connected with the administration or enforcement of federal education or state education programs such as Title I, MEAP, and No Child Left Behind. In order to release the names for any other purpose such as research, grant applications, etc., the parent or guardian must sign a *Sharing Information with Other Programs* statement. Such *Sharing Information with Other Programs* must be maintained on file in the food service office. Parents must be informed that failure to grant the *Sharing Information with Other Programs* does not change their child's eligibility to receive free or reduced price meals or free milk.
11. No physical segregation of, nor any other discrimination against any child because of inability to pay the full price of the meal or milk. There shall be no overt identification of any such children by use of special tokens or tickets or any other means. Further assurance is given that children eligible for free meals or reduced price meals shall *not* be required to:
  - a. Use a separate lunchroom.
  - b. Go through a separate serving line.
  - c. Enter the lunchroom through a separate entrance.
  - d. Eat meals or drink milk at a different time.
  - e. Eat a meal or drink milk different from that sold to children paying the full price.
  - f. Work for their meals or milk.
12. In the operation of child feeding programs, no child shall be discriminated against because of race, sex, color, national origin, age, or disability.