



Free and Reduced Priced School Meal Program

The National School Lunch Program was created more than 50 years ago as “a measure of national security to safeguard the health and well-being of the Nation’s children.” The program was

Congress’ response to the fact that so many young men responding to the draft in World War II were being rejected because of conditions caused by severe nutritional deficiencies. In 1946, the National School Lunch Act was enacted to provide American children with at least one healthful meal every school day.

Public or nonprofit private schools of high school grade or under and public or nonprofit private residential child care institutions may participate in the school lunch program. Schools that choose to participate in the NSLP receive cash subsidies and donated commodities from the U.S. Department of Agriculture for each meal they serve. Schools must, in return for this assistance, provide lunches that meet federal nutrition guidelines. They also must offer free or reduced price lunches to eligible children.

School Lunches Win

The National School Lunch Program provides school children with one-third or more of their Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) for key nutrients. USDA research shows that children who participate in NSLP take in more superior nutrients than children who do not participate. It’s not a secret that well-fed children do better at school. Researchers at Harvard Medical/Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston found that hungry children are more likely to have behavioral and academic problems than children who get enough to eat. At school, hungry children had more problems with irritability, anxiety and aggression, as well as more absences. (*Pediatrics*, January 1998. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, February 1998).

In Fiscal Year 2001, the National School Lunch Program cost \$6.5 billion and fed 27.4 million children!

Frequently Asked Questions

How is eligibility for NSLP determined?

Household income determines eligibility for free or reduced lunches. To receive a reduced-price lunch, household income must be below 185% of the federal poverty level (\$34,040 for a family of four). To receive a free meal, household income must be below 130% of poverty (\$23,920 for a family of four). Families who receive Food Stamps or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families are automatically eligible for free meals.

How does a person apply to participate in NSLP?

Normally, parents apply to the school in order for their children to receive a free or reduced-price lunch. The school must send an application home with each child each year. Parents can apply to participate in the program at any time during the school year.

What are the nutritional requirements for school lunches?

School lunches must meet the applicable recommendations of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, which means no more than 30% of calories from fat and less than 10% from saturated fat. School lunches must also provide one-third of the RDA for:

- Protein
- Vitamin A
- Vitamin C
- Iron
- Calcium
- Calories



What items are included in a school lunch?

The following items must be made available:

- 1/2 pint fluid whole milk and unflavored low fat milk, skim milk or buttermilk
- 2 oz of meat/meat alternate (i.e. poultry, fish, cheese, egg, dry beans or peas, peanut butter or other nut butters)
- 3.4 cup (total serving) of two or more fruits and/or vegetables
- 1/2 servings of enriched or whole-grain bread/bread alternate (i.e. rolls, muffins, noodles or rice)

School Breakfast Program

Founded in 1966 as a pilot project through the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 in areas where children had long bus rides to school and where many mothers were working, the School Breakfast Program is a federally assisted meal program that operates in public and non-profit, private schools and residential child care institutions. The School Breakfast Program operates like the School Lunch Program. Sadly, though, not every child who eats lunch has an opportunity to eat breakfast in school. More than 97,700 schools offer the school lunch program but only 72,000 schools offer the breakfast program. Compared to eating school lunch every day, only about 30% of children eat school breakfast.

Schools and institutions that participate in the School Breakfast Program receive cash subsidies from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In return, they must serve breakfasts that meet federal requirements, and they must offer free or reduced price breakfasts to eligible children.

Children Win with the School Breakfast Program

Studies indicate that the School Breakfast Program provides children with one-fourth or more of the Recommended Daily Allowance (RDA) for key nutrients. According to the Food Research and Action Center's report *Breakfast for Learning*:

- Students who eat school breakfast at the start of the school day show a general increase in math and reading scores.
- Students who increase their participation in the school breakfast program improve their math grades.
- Children who eat a complete breakfast, versus a partial breakfast, make few mistakes and work faster in math and number checking tests.
- Schools that serve breakfast to all students in the classroom show increases in standardized test scores.
- Children who eat breakfast at school—closer to class and test-taking time—perform better on standardized tests than those who skip breakfast or eat breakfast at home.
- Children who participate in school breakfast have lower rates of absence and tardiness.

Frequently Asked Questions

How is eligibility for the School Breakfast Program determined?

Household income determines eligibility for the School Breakfast Program. To receive a reduced-price breakfast, household income must be below 185% of the federal poverty level. To receive a free meal, household income must be below 130% of poverty. Families who receive Food Stamps or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families are automatically eligible for free meals.

How does a person apply to participate in the School Breakfast Program?

Normally, parents apply to the school in order for their children to receive a free or reduced-price meal. The school must send an application home with each child each year. Parents can apply to participate in the program at any time during the school year. The same application covers both lunch and breakfast.

What are the nutritional requirements for school breakfast?

Decisions about what specific foods to serve and how they are prepared are made at the local level. However, school breakfasts must meet the applicable recommendations of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans—no more than 30% of calories from fat and less than ten percent from saturated fat. Breakfast must meet one-fourth of the RDA for:

- Protein
- Calcium
- Iron
- Vitamin C
- Vitamin A
- Calories

Contact Information

For more information on Free and Reduced Price School Meals in Greenville County, you may contact:



1-800-768-5700