



CDE School Nutrition Unit
1525 Sherman St. Suite 309
Denver, CO 80203

Maximizing Free and Reduced Price Meal Application Collection Policy for the Healthy School Meals for All Program

Sponsors participating in the Healthy School Meals For All Program are required to implement strategies to maximize the collection of the free and reduced price meal application for the National School Lunch Program. This policy outlines requirements to maximize the collection of free and reduced-price meal applications or combo forms for sites not operating the Community Eligibility Provision. Sponsors operating CEP at all sites are not subject to this policy.

Compliance with this policy will be assessed during the School Nutrition Unit's Administrative Review process.

Application Process

Between July 1 and the first day of school, each household must be provided with a letter to households, the free and reduced-price meal application or combination free and reduced-price meal application/family economic data survey form and corresponding instructions by mail or electronically.

If used, electronic applications must be user-friendly and accessible.

Outreach and Awareness

A reminder of the availability of applications shall be communicated before Oct. 1, using two or more of the following methods: letters, emails, phone calls, text messaging, school websites, parent portals, newspaper and social media. One additional reminder must be sent out after Jan. 1 using any of the above methods.

Appropriate translations and multilingual support shall be offered in languages spoken by households. Accessible resources shall be available for households with disabilities.

Program materials must include language assuring families of the confidentiality of eligibility data.

While not required, additional methods for maximizing application collection are recommended:

- Include application information as part of the enrollment process for new students and/back to school events.
- Send reminders to families throughout the year.
- Communicate to families:

- Any additional benefits that may be available to families at the school or district level (as allowed by [disclosure rules](#)). Make applications available where those benefits are offered.
 - The public charge rule does not impact access to school meals.
 - A social security number is not required to complete the application
- Work with local trusted agencies to assist families with the process and encourage application completion.
- Provide access to tablets or computers to give families additional opportunities to complete the application. When possible, provide user-friendly online forms compatible with various devices in addition to paper forms, especially mobile devices.
- Use interactions with parents as opportunities to explain the school meals application and encourage families to return them. Examples include in-person and virtual parent teacher conferences, back-to-school nights, and other meetings.
- Sponsors may distribute a public release in addition to the State-wide release.