

Free and Reduced-Price Meals and/or Free Milk Policy

The Barrington Public Schools has agreed to participate in the National School Lunch Program/School Breakfast Program or Special Milk Program and accepts responsibility for providing:

(1) free and reduced-price meals, or (2) free milk to eligible children in the schools under its jurisdiction. The School Food Authority (SFA) assures the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) that the school system will uniformly implement the following policies to administer the program(s) in the schools under its jurisdiction. In fulfilling these responsibilities, the SFA agrees to the following provisions:

- A. **Free Meals/Free Milk:** Serve meals free (or milk under the free milk option of the Special Milk Program) to children from households that submit a complete application and (1) the income of the household is at or below the free limit of the [Income Eligibility Guidelines](#) or the household provided a current Food Stamp or FIP case number or (2) the school obtained documentation directly from the State or local Food Stamp/FIP office that the children are from households currently receiving food stamps or FIP.
- B. **Reduced Price Meals:** Serve meals at a reduced price to children from households whose income is at or below the reduced price limit of the [Income Eligibility Guidelines](#).
- C. **Limit Reduced Price Costs:** Set reduced price charges for lunch and breakfast at or below the maximum reduced price allowed by regulations and below the full price of the lunch or breakfast.
- D. **Equal Treatment:** Ensure no physical segregation of, nor any other discrimination against, any child because of his/her inability to pay the full price of the meal or milk. The names of the children eligible to receive free or reduced-price meals or free milk shall not be published, posted or announced in any manner, and there shall be no overt identification of any such children by use of special tokens, tickets or by any other means that would identify the student(s).
- E. **Nondiscrimination:** In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, operate the school nutrition programs so that no child shall be discriminated against because of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability.
- F. **Verification:** Verify eligibility of applicant households in accordance with program regulations and annually maintain records as follows: (1) a summary of the verification efforts which include the selection methods used; (2) the total number of applications on file as of October 1; and (3) the percentage or number of applications verified.

Compliance with these requirements will be monitored by the State agency as part of its supervisory assistance monitoring and verification efforts.

- G. **Appeal Process:** During the appeal and hearing, the child who was determined to be eligible based on the information provided on the application will continue to receive free or reduced-price meals or free milk. Households appealing a reduction or termination of benefits as a result of verification of eligibility will continue to receive benefits if they appeal within the 10-day advance notice period. Prior to initiating the hearing procedure, the school official or the parents or guardians may request a conference to provide an opportunity to discuss the situation, present information, obtain an

explanation of data submitted on the application and the decisions rendered. Such a conference shall not in any way prejudice or diminish the right to a fair hearing.

The SFA shall promptly notify households of the approval or denial of their application(s). Children will be served meals or milk immediately upon the establishment of their eligibility.

When an application is denied, households will be provided written notification which shall include: (1) the reason for the denial of benefits, e.g., income in excess of allowable limits or incomplete application; (2) notification of the right to appeal; (3) instructions on how to appeal; and (4) a statement reminding households that they may reapply for free and reduced price benefits or free milk at any time during the school year. The reasons for ineligibility shall be properly documented and retained on file at the school or SFA level for a period of three years after end of the fiscal year to which they pertain.

The designated hearing official:

Director of Administration and Finance
Barrington Public Schools
283 County Road
Barrington, RI 02806
(401) 245-5000

who shall ensure that the hearing procedure follows the appeals process noted in this policy and [Eligibility Manual for School Meals Guidelines](#) and provides written documentation to both the household making the request and the SFA.

H. **Eligibility Officials:**

Building Principals
Barrington Public Schools
283 County Road
Barrington, RI 02806
(401) 245-5000

who will review applications and make eligibility determinations. Such official(s) will use the criteria outlined in this policy to determine which individual children are eligible for free and reduced price meals or free milk.

- I. **Application Forms and Process:** A notice about program benefits and an application form for free and reduced price meals or, where appropriate, free milk shall be distributed at or about the beginning of each school year and whenever there is a change in eligibility criteria. The notice to households with the meal application attachment shall have only the income eligibility guidelines for reduced price meals with an explanation that households with incomes at or below the reduced price guidelines may be eligible for either free or reduced price meals. The notice to households with the free milk application forms shall list the income eligibility guidelines for free milk.

Interested households are responsible for filling out the application and returning it to the school for review. The SFA shall maintain documentation of eligibility determinations for a period of three years following the end of the Federal fiscal year (September 30) to which they pertain, or longer when there are unresolved audits or reviews pending.

Applications may be submitted at any time during the year. Households enrolling a child in a school for the first time shall be supplied with appropriate meal or milk application materials regardless of the time of year the child is registered. If a child transfers from one school to another under the jurisdiction of the same SFA, his/her eligibility for free or reduced price meals, or if offered, free milk, will be transferred to and honored by the receiving school. The applications will be maintained at the originating school with a copy provided to the receiving school.

Foster children are categorically eligible for these benefits. If a household has foster children living with them and wishes to apply for such meals or milk for these children, the household shall be provided instructions for completing the application.

- J. Collection and Accountability:** Establish a procedure to collect money from children who pay for their meals and milk and to account for the number of free, reduced price and full price meals served or the number of half-pints of free and full price milk served to eligible children on a daily basis.
- K. Revision to Policies:** Submit to RIDE any revision to the administrative procedures outlined above before 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.

The following attachments are considered part of this Policy Statement and must be approved by RIDE for your school district/school to participate in the National School Lunch and Split Session Special Milk Program:

- Public Release
- Income Eligibility Guidelines for Free and Reduced Price Meals or Free Milk
- Notice to Households and Application Form for Free and Reduced Price Meals or Free Milk
- Notice to Households of Approval/Denial of Benefits
- Authorized Collection Procedures.

Non-discrimination Statement:

In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy (USDA), this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability. To file a complaint of discrimination, write to USDA, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington DC 20250-9410 or call toll free (866) 632-9992 (voice). Individuals who are hearing impaired or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339; or (800) 845-6136 (Spanish). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

In addition, Rhode Island does not discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation or religion. To file a complaint of discrimination in the food program on the basis of sexual orientation or religion, contact: Rhode Island Department of Education, Office of Equity and Access, 255 Westminster Street, Providence, RI 02903 or call (401) 222-4600.

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