

New Mexico Public Education Department

Student Nutrition Bureau

New Applicant Information

What is the National School Lunch Program?

The National School Lunch Program is a federally funded program that assists schools and other agencies in providing nutritious lunches to children at reasonable prices. In addition to financial assistance, the program provides donated commodity foods to help reduce lunch program costs. For children, the National School Lunch Program provides a nutritious meal that contains one-third of the recommended dietary allowance of necessary nutrients. For parents, the program offers a convenient method of providing a nutritionally balanced lunch at the lowest possible price. For schools, the program enhances children's learning abilities by contributing to their physical and mental well being. Studies have shown that children whose nutritional needs are met have fewer attendance and discipline problems and are more attentive in class.

What is the School Breakfast Program?

The School Breakfast Program operates in the same manner as the National School Lunch Program. School districts and independent schools that choose to take part in the breakfast program receive cash subsidies from the U.S. Department of Agriculture for each meal they serve. In return, they must serve breakfasts that meet Federal requirements, and they must offer free or reduced price breakfast to eligible children.

What are the sponsor's responsibilities administering the program?

The lunch program must be open to all enrolled children and sponsors must follow civil rights regulations and policy. Free or reduced price meals must be provided to those children who qualify for such benefits according to specified family size and income standards. Agency staff must verify income on a percentage of those children receiving free or reduced price lunches to confirm their eligibility. Records must be kept to document that the lunch program follows all federal and state rules and regulations. Some of the records that must be kept are: meal production records and inventory records that document the amounts and types of food used; number of lunches served each day, by site and by category (free, reduced price, and full price); applications submitted by families for free and reduced price meals, by site, and a description of the follow-up actions taken to verify eligibility; records of income, expenditures, and contributions received; and, the Student Nutrition Bureau of the Public Education Department conducts a comprehensive review of each agency's lunch program every five years.

How are sponsors reimbursed for meals?

The sponsors receive reimbursement based on the number of meals served to children per category: free, reduced-price, and paid. Schools can charge no more than 40 cents for a reduced-price lunch. USDA sets no limit on the amount schools can charge for a full-price meal. However, the sponsors must operate their meal services as non-profit programs. Agencies submit a monthly reimbursement claim form to the Student Nutrition Bureau. Agencies typically receive reimbursement within four to six weeks after submitting the reimbursement claim form. For the latest reimbursement rates, visit the Food and Nutrition Service website www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/governance/notices/naps/naps.htm.

What are the meal nutrition requirements?

School meals must meet Federal nutrition requirements and the dietary Guidelines for Americans, but decisions about what foods to serve and how they are prepared are made by school food authorities (SFAs). Regulations establish a standard for school lunches to provide one-third of the Recommended Daily Allowances (RDA) of protein, Vitamin A, Vitamin C, iron, and calcium. In addition, an adequate amount of calories must be provided for students. School's compliance with both the Dietary Guidelines for RDA's and Guidelines for Americans is measured over a school week's menu.

How can you apply to become a sponsor?

To apply to be a new sponsor in the National School Lunch, School Breakfast, Special Milk, and School Snack program, refer to the following website, www.ped.state.nm.us/nutrition/index.html. To request an application package or more information, please call Monday-Friday, 8 am until 5 pm, 505-827-1821.

Useful Links for additional information about the NSLP

There are numerous links to governmental web sites that cover the National School Lunch Program. The links listed below is not all-encompassing, but it will certainly get you started.

| Site address | Comment |
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| http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/ | The USDA's primary web site for its Commodity Distribution programs. |
| http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/programs/schcnp/ | The USDA's web site specifically for School and ChildCare programs. |
| http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/schfacts/ | Nutritional information about all the USDA commodities. A voluminous resource. |
| http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/facts/biub/nslp-biubguide.pdf | "Best If Used By" guidance about USDA Commodities. A very important document. |
| http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/recipes/schrecipes.htm | Recipes for Schools using USDA commodities for 50 servings & up |
| http://www.nfsmi.org/Templates/TemplateDefault.aspx?qs=cEIEPTewMiZpc01ncj10cnVI | Many more Recipes using USDA commodities for 50 servings & up |
| http://www.nmsfa.com | New Mexico School Food Service Association |
| http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/rptspubs.htm | USDA Handbooks, manuals, and other publications |