

P7405 FREE AND REDUCED PRICE MEALS

BOARD POLICY:

The school district shall provide free or reduced price meal benefits to eligible students enrolled in those schools participating in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs. Eligibility standards consistent with current Federal guidelines will be established to determine the recipients of such meals. All information collected concerning pupils or their families shall be kept confidential, and the rights of all parties shall be protected at all times.

Administrative Implemental Procedures:

1. Nutrition Services shall identify students eligible for free meal benefits through the Direct Certification process, using documentation obtained directly from the appropriate State or local agency or other individual authorized to certify that the children are members of a Food Assistance (FA) household or are members of a household receiving assistance under Federal Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) or Temporary Assistance to Families (TAF). Children certified as homeless, migrant or runaway are also directly certified. Students identified for Direct Certification by Nutrition Services shall be notified by mail. Households shall not be required to submit applications for children receiving benefits through Direct Certification.
2. Nutrition Services will distribute a letter with information/instructions to each child's parent or guardian during the enrollment process. The letter will include information about completing an application for meal benefits online, where to obtain a paper application and instructions for completing and submitting the paper application. Paper applications will be available during the school year at any USD 259 school office, as well as the Nutrition Services office. Completed applications may be submitted to any attendance center or to the district Nutrition Services office.
3. The Director of Nutrition Services is delegated the authority and responsibility for approving or disapproving applications for free or reduced price meals.
 - a. The building principal, assistant principal, cafeteria manager, selected secretaries and clerks, and other selected staff shall provide assistance by receiving paper applications and reviewing applications for completeness. Schools must not require households to complete an application, and must not require households to complete separate applications for students enrolled at different attendance centers. Schools must collect and review applications in a manner that does not overtly identify households applying for free or reduced price meal benefits. School personnel shall immediately forward applications to Nutrition Services for approval.
 - b. When an application has been received in the Nutrition Services office, Nutrition Services will use free and reduced processing software to determine eligibility for free or reduced price meals. The software will use current Federal income eligibility guidelines and procedures to evaluate applications based on income and household size.
4. Written notification of the approval or denial of benefits will be provided to each household by Nutrition Services. School personnel are to retain a copy of an application at the school until the application has been processed. After the application has been processed, any copies are to be forwarded to the Nutrition Services office.

5. If a student transfers to another school within the district, the student shall retain his/her original meal status. The household cannot be required to complete another application when transferring to a different school within the district.
6. A family shall be permitted to submit additional applications at any time during the school year. A household approved for free or reduced price meals is not required to report changes in circumstances such as an increase in income, a decrease in household size or a change in eligibility for Food Assistance or Temporary Assistance to Families. Except during the grace period or as the result of the verification process, a student's eligibility remains in effect for the entire school year, unless an application is received outside of the verification process that would increase the student's benefits.
7. Information submitted on an application shall be kept confidential.
 - a. The free and reduced price benefit eligibility status of all students will be maintained in a confidential manner and will be accessible only to persons who have direct administrative or enforcement responsibility in the Nutrition Service program, Federal education programs, State health or education programs or Federal, State, or local means-tested nutrition programs with eligibility standards comparable to the National School Lunch program. Authorization to obtain and use information must be given by the Director of Nutrition Services each school year.
 - b. The parent or legal guardian may waive confidentiality to release eligibility information for the purposes of a reduction of school fees. Confidentiality may be waived by completing and signing a separate Consent for Disclosure form available at any USD 259 school office, or by completing it electronically in Wichita Public Schools enrollment. When confidentiality is waived for a reduction of fees, the status will be used only for the purpose identified by the parent or guardian on the completed waiver form.
8. The district shall make no physical segregation of, nor any other discrimination against, any child because of his/her inability to pay the full price of the meal. The names of the children eligible to receive reduced price or free meal benefits shall not be published, posted, distributed or announced in any manner and there shall be no overt identification of any such children. Further assurance is given that children eligible for reduced price or free meal benefits shall not be required to:
 - a. Work for their meals
 - a. Use a separate Nutrition Service area
 - b. Go through a separate serving line
 - c. Enter the food service Nutrition Service area through a separate entrance
 - d. Consume meals at a different time
 - e. Eat a meal different from the meal sold to children paying the full price.When more than one lunch, breakfast or type of milk is offered that meets program requirements, a child eligible for free or reduced price meal benefits shall have the same choice of meals and milk that is available to a child who pays the full price for his/her meal.
9. It shall be the responsibility of the Director of Nutrition Services to initiate the annual verification process. The eligibility status of free or reduced price meal benefit recipients shall be verified in accordance with United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) regulations (7CFR Part 245) and KSDE guidance. According to USDA guidelines, applications shall be randomly selected for verification. Applications that are deemed to be questionable shall also be verified for cause. Using documentation provided by households, benefits will be determined to stay the same, decrease, or increase. Households will be notified in writing of the results of verification.

10. It shall be the responsibility of the Director of Nutrition Services to establish a fair hearing procedure for parent/guardian appeals of Nutrition Services' determinations on applications. The procedures shall include:
- a. The Superintendent or designee shall act as a hearing official.
 - b. In the written notification of benefits, Nutrition Services shall inform parent/guardians when an application is denied, of the reason for the denial and about the hearing procedure.
 - c. During appeals and hearings the children shall continue to receive reduced price or free meal benefits.
 - d. An opportunity will be provided for the parent/guardian or the district to request an informal conference prior to initiating the formal hearing procedure. The conference shall be used to discuss the situation, present information, obtain an explanation of data submitted in the application and of decisions rendered. Such a conference shall not in any way prejudice or diminish the right to a fair hearing.
 - e. The district shall develop a formal hearing procedure that provides a simple method of requesting a hearing, an opportunity to be assisted or represented by an attorney or other person, and an opportunity to examine, prior to and during the hearing, the documents and records presented to support the decision under appeal. A hearing will be scheduled with reasonable promptness and convenience, with adequate notice as to the time and place of the hearing.
 - f. Opportunity will be provided for the presentation of oral or documentary evidence and arguments supporting the presenter's position. Opportunity to question or refute any testimony or other evidence and to confront and cross examine any adverse witnesses will be provided.
 - g. The decision of the hearing official shall be based on USDA eligibility guidelines. Oral and documentary evidence will be presented at the hearing and made a part of the hearing record. The decision of the hearing official shall be binding.
 - h. The parties concerned and any designated representatives thereof will be notified in writing within five (5) days of the decision of the hearing official.
 - i. In accordance with Federal law and the United States Department of Agriculture policy, Wichita Public Schools is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability. To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6372 (TTY).

Administrative Responsibility: Operations Division – Nutrition Services

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