

The National School Lunch Program

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What is the National School Lunch Program?

The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) is the oldest and largest of the child nutrition programs operated by the Food and Consumer Service (FCS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Since 1946, the NSLP has made it possible for schools to serve nutritious lunches to students each school day. States receive federal reimbursement and other assistance in establishing, maintaining, and operating the program.

Child Nutrition Program, Delaware Department of Education

All U.S. Department of Agriculture Programs are equal opportunity programs. If you believe you or anyone has been discriminated against because of race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability, write immediately to the Secretary of Agriculture, Washington, DE 20250.

Why Participate in the National School Lunch Program?

Hungry children cannot learn. They are lethargic, irritable and have shorter attention spans. Many students would get no meal, or at best a nutritionally poor one, if they had to bring their own lunches. A good school lunch is not only essential to academic achievement; it is also part of a good education. Nutrition habits and food preferences learned now will be with your students for life. A school lunch is critical in districts where home nutrition habits are questionable; it is often a student's only chance for a good balanced meal.



How Does the Program Operate?

At the Federal level the program is operated FCS. In Delaware, the Department of Education operates the program through agreements made with local public schools or school districts. Where states do not administer the program, the FCS Regional Office administers it.

What Schools and Institutes Can Participate?

Any public school and charter school of high school grade or under is eligible to participate in the NSLP. Any nonprofit, private of high school grade or under can also participate. Public and licensed, nonprofit, private residential child care institutions such as orphanages, homes for retarded children, and temporary shelters for runaway children are also eligible.

What is Required for Participation?

To participate in the NSLP, schools and institutions must agree to:

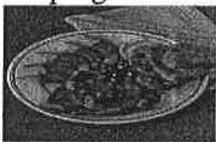
- Operate food service for all students without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability.
- Provide free and reduced price lunches to students unable to pay the full price based on income eligibility criteria. Such students must not be identified nor discriminated against in any manner.
- Serve lunches that meet the nutritional standards established by the Secretary of Agriculture.
- Operate the food service on a nonprofit basis.

Who is Eligible for Free and Reduced-Price Lunches?

By law, students of families meeting specified income criteria receive lunches either free or at a reduced-price. Eligibility determinations are made by an official at each school and are based on family size and income information provided on an application submitted by a parent or guardian.

What is the Federal Financial Assistance?

A basis amount of Federal financial assistance is provided for all lunches served, whether paid, reduced-price, or free. Additional financial assistance is provided for each reduced price and free lunch served to eligible students. These rates of reimbursement are adjusted annually in accordance with changes in the Consumer Price Index. The Department of Agriculture also provides donated commodities for lunches served under the program.



What is the Basis for the Income Eligibility Standards?

All income eligibility guidelines are derived from the federal poverty guidelines and are updated annually.

What is "Entitlement"?

In addition to cash, commodity assistance is provided to participating schools and institutions in the form of actual commodity items to be used for student' meals. By law, a specific per lunch value of commodities is required to be provided. This amount is annually indexed to reflect changes in the Price Index for food used in schools and institutions. As with general assistance, commodity assistance is provided regardless of the family income of the participating child. The commodity assistance is available for each meal served, and is provided to each state based on the number of lunches that was provide during the previous school year.

What are "Bonus Commodities"?

In addition to the entitlement commodities, the school lunch program may also receive "bonus commodities". This bonus program allows the Secretary of Agriculture to donate surplus or price support commodities, which may not be assessed against the state's mandatory allocation. The amount of commodities distributed under the bonus program varies from year to year, as do the specific types of commodities that are provided.

What Requirements Must Lunches Meet?

To qualify for federal reimbursement, school must serve lunches, which meet meal pattern requirements specified by the Secretary of Agriculture.

The lunch pattern is designed to provide, over a period of time, approximately one-third of a student's Recommended Dietary Allowance for key nutrients and calories. Meals are planned to include foods from the Food Guide Pyramid. While there are different specific requirements for each age group, it is not difficult to plan good tasting, healthy meals that offer the required balance of meats, breads, dairy products and fruits or vegetables- while reducing salt, fat and sugar.

Where Do We Get More Information?

For further information and guidance, call or write to the Delaware of Education, Child Nutrition Program, P.O. Box 1402, Dover, DE 19903; 302-739-4717.

Taken from: <http://childnutrition.doe.state.de.us/childnutrition/lunchDrog.htm>

NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH WEEK

The late John F. Kennedy most aptly expresses the purpose of National School Lunch Week in the presidential proclamation in 1963.

"Whereas, the National School Lunch Program helps make it possible for our young people to enjoy a lunch rich in the essential elements of a good diet, and helps them to learn the benefits to be derived from good nutrition; and

Whereas, the serving of a nutritious lunch to 16 million children, daily in 68,000 schools, entails the consumption of foods from the entire range and variety of items that are so abundantly and efficiently produced by our farmers, and the employment of the unexcelled skills and techniques of our highly developed food marketing system; and

Whereas, in order to gain recognition from citizens and civic groups, for the work of the National School Lunch Program, The Congress, by a joint resolution approved October 9, 1962 (76 Stat. 779), has designated the seven-day period beginning on the second Sunday of October in each year as National School Lunch Week, and has requested the President to issue annually a proclamation calling for the observances of the week

Now, therefore, I, John F. Kennedy, President of the United States of America, call upon the people of the United States to observe the week beginning October 13, 1963, as National School Lunch Week, with ceremonies and activities designed to increase the public understanding and awareness of the significance of the School Lunch Program to the child, to the home, to the farm, to industry, and to the nation.

In witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States of America to be affixed. "

JOHN F. KENNEDY

On May 14, 1970, Public Law 91-248 was passed which amended the regulations governing the National School Lunch Program. The regulations were amended to make changes in the operation of the general cash-for-food assistance and the special cash assistance phases of the National School Lunch Act, as amended, particularly as they relate to the service of free and reduced price lunches, and to prescribe regulations for school receiving only donated commodities.

For the first time, minimum income levels for free lunch eligibility had to be publicized and all families had to receive applications for free lunch. The criteria to be used by school food authorities in determining those children had to include: (1) the level of family income, including welfare grants; (2) the number of individuals in the family; and (3) the number of children in the family attending schools or service institutions.