

July 1, 2024

Re: **Nutrition Services Free Meal Program School Year 2024-2025**

Dear Families,

Outlined here is valuable information regarding the meal application process for the National School Lunch Program.

We offer Universal Breakfast and Lunch at all school sites, providing free meals to all students (TK - 12) each day we are open for school. Students who arrive late to school will have access to a “second chance breakfast” either in the classroom or in the cafeteria.

Free Meals and Meal Applications:

- Meal Applications are recommended to all our students. We cannot force anyone to apply, though we urge all families to fill out an application (only one per family required).
- Meal applications will be available in English and Spanish, online and in paper form, at the school sites and at the Nutrition Services Office at 2515 Ninth Street in Berkeley Ca. 94710.
- Alternative Income Forms or Meal Applications can be used to determine LCAP funding. Both these forms will be in your student’s school online registration packet (with a link to the meal app at ezmealapp.com)
- **To benefit LCAP** – Alternative Income forms and Meal Applications must be submitted **PRIOR to OCTOBER 1.**
- If families want to use their Free/Reduced eligibility **to qualify for other benefits** like free broadband service, please fill out a **Meal Application**. *NS cannot provide an eligibility letter without the qualifying Meal Application being filed with our office or online.*
- While meals are FREE to all students, Meal Applications are needed to determine USDA’s portion of the funding that pays for our meal program. Please take a moment to fill out a Meal Application. The information you provide is protected by your right to privacy and we will not share your information with other offices or organizations.

This letter can be found in our School Meals Calendar and on our website.

Please see reverse side for important information regarding the free/reduced price meal application process.

National School Lunch Program Meal Application Process

Every school year, families who would like to join the National School Lunch Program to qualify for free lunch based on family income are required to submit a new meal application. Here's what you need to know:

- New applications are available July 1 through June 30 of each school year, and are available in English and Spanish.
- Even if your family had been on the program the previous school year, a new application must be submitted, or your family will be dropped from the program on October 1.
- Only one application is needed per family, even if family members attend different schools.
- The district requests that all families consider applying, even if you do not intend to take advantage of the lunch program because every qualified application counts towards bringing additional federal and state funding support to our schools based on the income of our students' families. Also, if your family's income decreases during the year, please consider filling out a new application as you may qualify for the program.
- The easiest and quickest way to apply is online: <https://secure.ezmealapp.com/ApplicationScreen.aspx> There will be a verification number provided at the end of the online process. Please print out and keep the confirmation page to reference for tracking your application.
- Please look for the Notification of Eligibility letter and keep it for your records as this letter may be used to receive other benefits for families who qualify (reduced prices on tests, yearbooks, graduation tickets, etc).
- If you do not receive a Notification of Eligibility letter within 10 days of submitting your application, please contact our office for more information at (510) 644-6200. It is possible that the NS does not have the correct address on file or the application was "kicked back" due to incompleteness.
- *Do not assume you qualify* for benefits until your family receives notification in the mail informing you of your child's eligibility status (eligible or not eligible).
- If your family receives a Notification of Eligibility letter that states your student is Paid (ineligible for free lunch) and you believe this to be in error, contact Nutrition Services to discuss the application with the Director of Nutrition Services (Director, 25155 Parker Street, Berkeley. 510-644-6200).
- **Family and student confidentiality is protected** by your right to privacy; information obtained during the free and reduced-price school meals eligibility process may not be shared with other government agencies or individuals outside Nutrition Services' office. Only a student's parents or legal guardians may request information regarding that student's account or application.

Please visit our website at www.berkeleyschools.net/departments/nutrition-services for links to our menu calendar, as well as another copy of this letter and other information regarding the National School Lunch Program.

Thank you so much for your participation in our program. We are proud of the healthy and delicious food we serve, and appreciate the opportunity to support the daily lives and education of our students.

Best,
Director of Nutrition Services

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.