



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 7, 2026

The Office of Public Instruction School Nutrition Programs is announcing all [Montana Local Education Agencies](#) that participate in and offer free and reduced price school meals or free milk. The U. S. Department of Agriculture reimburses organizations for healthy meals served to enrolled students according to National School Lunch Program policy guidelines. In the operation of child feeding programs, no child will be discriminated against because of race, sex, color, national origin, age or disability.

Schools who offer meals to students at no cost through the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) do not require families to apply for benefits using a household application.

Schools who operate pricing programs determine student eligibility through household application. You may apply for school meal/milk benefits at any time throughout the year by submitting an [online household application](#) (if your school utilizes this option) or a paper [household application](#) directly to your school. Children may be eligible for free or reduced-price school meals or free milk if household income is within the limits of [income eligibility](#). Please note an application for free or reduced price benefits cannot be processed without complete information per 7 CFR 245.2. The information on the application may be verified at anytime during the school year. For further information on applying, refer to the [frequently asked questions](#) or contact your child's school.

Households who receive assistance from Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR); or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) are eligible for free meals/milk and no application is required. Children who qualify for the new Medicaid direct certification may also receive either free or reduced price meals (\$0.40 for NSLP and \$0.30 SBP). Children who meet the definition of homeless, migrant, runaway, and foster are also eligible for free meals/milk and should contact your child's school for more information.

The school district will send a notice to your household about free meal/milk benefits. If you do not receive a notice of eligibility or there are children living in your household who are not listed, please contact your school district. Households who choose to decline free meal benefits should contact their local school district.

If you are eligible for unemployment compensation, you might also be eligible for free or reduced price school meals or free milk. Children having parents or guardians who become unemployed are eligible for free or reduced price meals or for free milk during the period of unemployment, provided, that the loss of income causes the household income during the period of unemployment to be within the eligibility criteria.

Head Start enrollees, as defined in § 245.2, are categorically eligible for free meals and free milk and their families should contact the school for more information. The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) participants may be eligible for free or reduced price meals.

If you do not agree with the school's decision with respect to the application, you may appeal the decision under the hearing procedure set forth in § 245.7.

Please contact your school for additional information and assistance.

Nondiscrimination Statement

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, which can be obtained online at: <https://www.usda.gov/about-usda/general-information/staff-offices/office-assistantsecretary-civil-rights/how-file-usda-discrimination-complaint/how-file-program-discriminationcomplaint>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

1. MAIL:

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or

2. FAX:

(833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or

3. EMAIL:

program.intake@usda.gov.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.