



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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NEWS RELEASE

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Income Eligibility Guidelines for Free and Reduced-Price Meals, Milk Announced

Effective from July 1, 2008 to June 30, 2009

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (RIDE) has announced the Income Eligibility Guidelines for free or reduced-price meals or free milk for the 2008-09 school year:

| HOUSEHOLD SIZE | FREE MEALS OR MILK | | | REDUCED PRICE MEALS | | |
|---|--------------------|---------|--------|---------------------|---------|--------|
| | YEARLY | MONTHLY | WEEKLY | YEARLY | MONTHLY | WEEKLY |
| 1 | 13,520 | 1,127 | 260 | 19,240 | 1,604 | 370 |
| 2 | 18,200 | 1,517 | 350 | 25,900 | 2,159 | 499 |
| 3 | 22,880 | 1,907 | 440 | 32,560 | 2,714 | 627 |
| 4 | 27,560 | 2,297 | 530 | 39,220 | 3,269 | 755 |
| 5 | 32,240 | 2,687 | 620 | 45,880 | 3,824 | 883 |
| 6 | 36,920 | 3,077 | 710 | 52,540 | 4,379 | 1,011 |
| 7 | 41,600 | 3,467 | 800 | 59,200 | 4,934 | 1,139 |
| 8 | 44,941 | 3,746 | 865 | 65,860 | 5,489 | 1,267 |
| For each Additional family member Add... | +4,680 | +390 | +90 | +6,660 | +555 | +129 |

Application forms for free and reduced-price meals and free milk are sent to all households; additional copies are available at the principal's office at each school. Applications may be submitted to the school at any time during the school year. The information provided on the application by a household is confidential and will be used to determine eligibility for school meal benefits.

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Applications must contain complete documentation of eligibility information requested, including (1) names of all household members, (2) Social Security number of the adult household member who signs the application, (3) amount and source of income received by each household member, and (4) the signature of an adult household member certifying that the information provided is correct.

There are several ways in which children can be eligible for school meal benefits. Foster children may be eligible for meal benefits regardless of the income of the household with whom they reside.

Children in households receiving Food Stamps or FIP (Family Independence Program) may be automatically eligible for school meal benefits. RIDE and the Department of Human Services (DHS) have worked together to automate the Direct Certification process that certifies students for free school-meal benefits. This process is called Electronic Direct Certification (eDC). These families will receive an informational letter from DHS indicating that the children are automatically eligible for meal benefits and no further action is needed.

Households receiving Food Stamps or FIP that have not been matched by electronic Direct Certification will receive a letter from DHS instructing them to bring the letter to school, and a meal benefit application is not required. Households receiving Food Stamps or FIP that are not issued letters may report their Food Stamp or FIP number on the meal-benefit application in place of household and income information.

Meal-benefit applications may be checked for accuracy. School officials may ask for documentation to verify the information provided on the application.

If the household adult applying for meal benefits for children does not agree with a decision of a school official as to eligibility, the decision should be discussed with that official on an informal basis. A formal appeal may also be requested to the school superintendent for a hearing on the decision.

In accordance with federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, the USDA and RIDE are prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability. To file a complaint of discrimination, write to *USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington D.C. 20250-9410*, or call (800) 795-3272 or (202) 720-6382 (TTY). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

In addition, Rhode Island does not discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation or religion. To file a complaint of discrimination in the food program on the basis of sexual orientation or religion, write to the R.I. Department of Education, Office of Equity and Access, 255 Westminster Street, Providence, R.I. 02903, or call (401) 222-8437.