

Lewis Center for Educational Research

**BP 3553: BUSINESS - NON-INSTRUCTIONAL OPERATIONS
UNIVERSAL MEALS PROGRAM**

Adopted: September 12, 2011

Revised: May 8, 2023

Lewis Center for Educational Research (“LCER”) is committed to providing a healthful school environment that promotes and protects student’s health, well-being, and ability to learn by supporting healthful eating and physical activity.

The school meal program aims to improve the diet and health of school children, help mitigate childhood obesity, model healthful eating, support the development of lifelong healthful eating patterns, and support special dietary needs when possible cultural food preferences.

The household size and income criteria identified below will be used to determine eligibility for free, reduced-price, or full-price meal benefits. The review of all applications will comply with the privacy rights and disclosure protections established by the federal Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (Public Law 113-79) and the federal Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act of 1998 (Public Law 105-277).

APPLYING FOR BENEFITS: An application for free or reduced-price meals cannot be reviewed unless all required fields are completed. A household may apply at any time during the school year. If you are not eligible now, but your household income decreases, household size increases, or a household member becomes eligible for CalFresh, California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs), or Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) benefits, you may submit an application at that time.

DIRECT CERTIFICATION: An application is not required if the household receives a notification letter indicating all children are automatically certified for free meals. If you did not receive a letter, please complete an application.

VERIFICATION: School officials may check the information on the application at any time during the school year. You may be asked to submit information to validate your income or current eligibility for CalFresh, CalWORKs, or FDPIR benefits.

The School Nutrition Programs (SNP) is administered by the California Department of Education (CDE), Nutrition Services Division. SNP staff monitor regulatory compliance and provide training and technical assistance for the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, Afterschool Snack Program, Special Milk Program, Fresh Fruit and Vegetable, Summer Food Service Program, Summer Camp Special Milk Program, and Team Nutrition.

Beginning in School Year (SY) 2022–23, California will become the first state to implement a statewide Universal Meals Program for all school children. California’s Universal Meals Program is designed to build on the foundations of the federal National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP). There are three key pillars that have been established to ensure that the program is a success:

1. California's State Meal Mandate is expanded to include both a nutritiously adequate breakfast and lunch for all children each school day.
2. California's Universal Meals Program requires very high poverty schools to participate in a federal provision.
3. The California State Legislature allocates funds to provide state meal reimbursement to cover the cost of the Universal Meals Program.