

Dear Parents and Guardians,

The school meals program is funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, school corporations across the country have been operating with the use of a federal waiver that allowed them to feed every child for free through the end of this school year. The use of this waiver will not be available after this school year and corporations will return to the traditional eligibility requirements for free, reduced and paid meals. This means that for School Year 2022-2023, our school corporation will process free and reduced-price meal benefit applications.

The Food Services Department does have the ability to Directly Certify students who receive SNAP, TANF, some Medicaid, are certified as homeless, migrant, or are wards of the state (foster children). Households who are found to be directly certified will be notified in writing of the free or reduced-price meal status prior to the start of school and will not need to complete an application.

Meal benefit applications will not be available until July 1\*. Households are encouraged to apply before the start of the school year to avoid unpaid meal charges. Students who are not approved for free or reduced-price meal benefits before the start of the school year will be classified as paid status and meal charges may begin to accumulate starting the first day of school. Meal charges accrued before the approval of a meal benefit application will be the responsibility of the household.

**You do NOT need to complete an application if:**

- You receive notification that your child(ren) are directly certified.
- You know your household does not qualify for meal benefits. (Please have money in your child's account on the first day of school.)

\*Applications received prior to July 1 will not be effective for the 2022-2023 school year.

Thank you,

*Jenna Maguire, FSD*



# Indiana Department of Education

Dr. Katie Jenner, Secretary of Education

## Return to Traditional Meal Benefit Eligibility Program Year 2023

Effective for Program Year (PY) 2023, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) waiver to provide free meals for all students under the Seamless Summer Option (SSO) will expire. Notification of this expiration will be necessary to ensure households understand the need to apply for free or reduced benefits for school meals. The State Agency has developed a template located on the next page to use to notify households of the expiration of these waivers.

### Keep in mind the following:

- Applications for PY 2023 cannot be distributed or accepted prior to July 1 and the updated Meal Benefit Application for PY 2023 must be used.
- Meal charges accrued by households who have not been approved for free or reduced benefits are the responsibility of the household. Excess funds from the school food service account cannot be used to cover the cost of lunches charged when meal benefits have not been established.
  - Update and share the food service Charging Policy with school administration, internal staff, and with households. The policy must be enforced as written.
- The letter below is for the purpose of communicating the change in program operations to households prior to the change taking effect.

### CEP Schools:

- If all schools in your corporation have been approved for Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) in the past 3 years or you have applied and have been approved to operate CEP for PY 2023, you will not need to send this letter or collect applications for meal benefits. Please use the CEP notification letter that is required to be sent to households.
- If only some of the schools in your corporation are approved for CEP, those students who do not attend a CEP school will need to have eligibility established by either DC or a meals application.

### 30-day Carry-over

- USDA has issued some flexibilities for the 30 day carry-over period. Guidance is coming soon!