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Applications required for free and reduced price meals for 2022-2023 school year

This summer, families who need assistance paying for school meals will be required to submit an application for free and reduced price school meals for the first time since 2020.

The change comes with Congress' passing of the \$3 billion Keep Kids Fed Act, which reinstates a requirement, suspended during the pandemic, that low-income students who fall above the poverty line pay a reduced price for school meals. Previously during the pandemic, the full price of meals was covered for all students, and no application was required.

“We’re committed to making sure that not a single family in Idaho struggles to find healthy, balanced meals for their kids this school year,” Superintendent of Public Instruction Sherri Ybarra said. “What’s different in 2022 is that parents once again need to fill out an application to access these meals. I want to make sure all parents know about this change – including those who didn’t have children in school before the pandemic hit.”

Families that participate in federal assistance programs like Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or Temporary Assistance for Families in Idaho (TAFI) automatically qualify. Those families on Food Distribution Programs on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) automatically qualify for the program, but an application may still be required to participate. Families may also qualify for free and reduced price meals based on income guidelines, and do not need to be enrolled in an assistance program to access meals.

Most schools and districts in Idaho participate in the National School Lunch Program. Parents should contact the district their children attend to fill out an application. To find your district, go to <https://www.idaho.gov/education/school-districts/>. The contact information for each district will be listed on their website. Families only need to submit one application per household, even if their children attend more than one school in the district.

Though there are no due dates to apply for free and reduced price meals, families should apply on or before the start of the school year to confirm eligibility and enrollment in the program. Families can also apply at any time during the school year. Once deemed eligible, they will remain so for the entire school year. An application must be re-submitted at the beginning of each school year.

“We don’t want families that have received free meals over the past two years to get sidelined by this change in federal policy,” Superintendent Ybarra said. “Please, if you need help with school meals, contact your district office. We want all Idaho kids to be fed, healthy and ready to learn and succeed.”

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