



State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
DIVISION OF FOOD AND NUTRITION
PO BOX 334
TRENTON NJ 08625-0334

PHILIP D. MURPHY
Governor
SHEILA Y. OLIVER
Lt. Governor

DOUGLAS H. FISHER
Secretary

To: School Business Administrators, Charter School Leads; Non Public School Administrators;
Food Service Directors of Schools Participating in the School Nutrition Programs

From: Arleen Ramos-Szatmary, Coordinator *Arleen Ramos-Szatmary*
School Nutrition Programs

Date: July 1, 2020

Subject: Online Free and Reduced Price Eligibility Systems

In accordance with the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004 (P.L. 108-265), FNS encourages SFAs to make electronic applications available and accept applications electronically. SFAs that use an online application, a scanned application format or an electronic application system that approves the application for free and reduced priced school meals **must get approval from this office on an annual basis to use the software program/form prior to activating it on the district's web site.**

- The **online** *Application for Free and Reduced Price School Meals, Frequently Asked Questions* (formerly, *Letter to Parent*) and the *How to Apply for Free and Reduced Price School Meals* instructions **must** include the same sections and language as the state format.
- **A hard copy must be available to parents that do not or cannot complete the application electronically.**
- The current USDA nondiscrimination statement must be included on the application or in the instructions.
- The system must include a question or data field to indicate a child's migrant worker, runaway, foster, or homeless status.
- The system may ask for a student identification number or a child's birth date. However, the household must be informed that these data fields are not required by NSLP, SBP, or SMP. Since the additional information is not required for a child's certification of eligibility for free or reduced price meals, the applicant must still be able to advance through and submit the application without completing those fields.
- In order to avoid inaccurate eligibility determinations, it is recommended that the electronic system includes a "pending period" where school officials can visually review applicants' information for questionable entries prior to the parent/guardian being notified of their determination. Determination errors identified prior to notification can prevent parental confusion, increased administrative burden, and fiscal assessment during an Administrative Review.

Email the request, along with screenshots of every page an applicant would submit during the application process or a district specific "test link" of the *2020-2021 online Household Application for Free and Reduced Price School Meals, Frequently Asked Questions* and the *How to Apply for Free and Reduced Price School Meals* instructions to Jackie Bricker at Jacqueline.Bricker@ag.nj.gov. Generic software/vendor instructions or Parent/User Guides are not acceptable.

State Agency approval of an online meal application or electronic application system **only approves** the content of the application for compliance with USDA language and content requirements. It is not an approval of the system functionality for program benefit eligibility nor for necessary NJDA or USDA reporting requirements.

Questions may be directed to Jackie Bricker at 609-847-9079.