

Program Name: School Breakfast/Lunch

National School Lunch Program

Agency: Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education (DESE)

Description: The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) is a federally assisted meal program operating in nearly 95,000 public and nonprofit private schools and residential childcare institutions. It provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free lunches to more than 26 million children each school day.

Website: <https://www.doe.mass.edu/cnp/nprograms/nslp.html>

Eligibility:

- Eligible for free meal: Income below 130% Federal Poverty Level
- Eligible for reduced price meal: Income between 130% and 185% Federal Poverty Level
- Categorically eligible: Any child/family that receives SNAP, TAFDC, or Head Start, or any child that is a homeless/runaway, or foster child.

Limitations:

- Households that have experienced a change in income due to layoffs or decreased work hours can reapply for meal benefits even if they were denied benefits prior to that income change.
- Households whose income is slightly too high to qualify for free or reduced price school meals may still be eligible for SNAP. This is because the income threshold for SNAP in Massachusetts is higher than the income threshold for free or reduced price meals. Once students qualify for SNAP, they are automatically eligible for free school meals.
- Immigrants: Immigration status is not a barrier to receiving benefit. Social security number not required, and all information contained in the application is confidential.

Amount:

A meal, rather than direct cash or vouchers to purchase food, is provided.

How to Apply:

For application information, contact the school that the child attends. Applications can be filled out at any time during the year. Households who recently experienced a change in income can reapply. If a school has 40% or more of its students automatically eligible for School Lunch, then the school will gain "community eligibility" and free lunch will be offered to all students at the school with no applications needed.

Call Project Bread for more information:

Phone: 1-617-723-5000

E-Mail: cnop@projectbread.org

Linked Services? Receiving School Lunch services does not automatically qualify one for other services, although similar income guideline levels suggest eligibility to them.

Right to appeal? There is no standard procedure, contact DESE if feel wrongly denied.

Retroactive? No, but children who received free/reduced meals in prior year have a 30 grace period to re-apply.