

SAMPLE PUBLIC MEDIA RELEASE

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. All sponsors of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP) and Special Milk Programs (SMP) **are required** to send out a Public Release at the beginning of the school year. **SMP sponsors should only include the free milk Income Eligibility Guidelines and should adapt the wording accordingly.**
2. Use the following as a guide and complete your own copy with specific information where needed.
3. Retain one copy of your version for audit purposes.

The **Preston BOE** announced today its policy for determining eligibility of children may receive free or reduced-price meals served under the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP), or free milk served under the Special Milk Program (SMP).

Local school officials have adopted the United States Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Income Eligibility Guidelines (IEGs) for family size and income criteria for determining eligibility.

The following income guidelines will be used in Connecticut from **July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2018**, for determining eligibility of participants for free and reduced-price meals and free milk in the Child Nutrition Programs.

Income Guidelines for Free and Reduced-Price Meals in Child Nutrition Programs School Year 2017-18											
FREE MEALS/MILK						REDUCED-PRICE MEALS					
Number in Family	Annual Gross Income	Monthly Gross Income	Twice Per Month	Every Two Weeks Gross Income	Weekly Gross Income	Number in Family	Annual Gross Income	Monthly Gross Income	Twice Per Month	Every Two Weeks Gross Income	Weekly Gross Income
1	15,678	1,307	654	603	302	1	22,311	1,860	930	859	430
2	21,112	1,760	880	812	406	2	30,044	2,504	1,252	1,156	578
3	26,546	2,213	1,107	1,021	511	3	37,777	3,149	1,575	1,453	727
4	31,980	2,665	1,333	1,230	615	4	45,510	3,793	1,897	1,751	876
5	37,414	3,118	1,559	1,439	720	5	53,243	4,437	2,219	2,048	1,024
6	42,848	3,571	1,786	1,648	824	6	60,976	5,082	2,541	2,346	1,173
7	48,282	4,024	2,012	1,857	929	7	68,709	5,726	2,863	2,643	1,322
8	53,716	4,477	2,239	2,066	1,033	8	76,442	6,371	3,186	2,941	1,471
Each Additional Family Member	+ 5,434	+ 453	+ 227	+ 209	+ 105	Each Additional Family Member	+ 7,733	+ 645	+ 323	+ 298	+ 149

The above income calculations are made based on the following formulas: Monthly income is calculated by dividing the annual income by 12; twice monthly income is computed by dividing annual income by 24; income received every two weeks is calculated by dividing annual income by 26; and weekly income is computed by dividing annual income by 52. All numbers are rounded upward to the next whole dollar.

Children from families whose income is at or below the levels shown are eligible for free or reduced-price meals or free milk. **Application forms are being sent to all homes.** To apply for free or reduced-price meals or free milk, households should fill out the application and return it to the school. Only one application is required per household and an application for free or reduced-price benefits cannot be approved unless it contains complete eligibility information as indicated on the application and instructions. The information provided on the application is confidential and will be used only for the purposes of determining eligibility and for administration and enforcement of the lunch, breakfast and milk programs. Additionally, all school-aged children in income-eligible households can receive school meal benefits regardless of a child's immigration status and the district/school does not release information for immigration-related purposes in the usual course of operating the CNPs. Note that the district MAY share your eligibility information with education, health, and nutrition programs to help them evaluate, fund, or determine benefits for their programs, auditors for program reviews, and law enforcement officials to help them look into violations of program rules. This information may also be verified at any time during the school year by school or other program officials. Applications may be submitted at any time during the year.

For up to 30 operating days into the new school year, eligibility from the previous year will continue within the same local educational agency (LEA). When the carry-over period ends, unless the household is notified that their children are directly certified or the household submits an application that is approved, the children must pay full price for school meals and the school will not send a reminder or a notice of expired eligibility.

No application is required if the district directly certifies a child based on a household member receiving assistance from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or the Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) program. All children in these households are eligible for free meal benefits. Households receiving assistance under the SNAP/TFA programs will be notified of their eligibility and their children will be provided free benefits unless the household notifies the determining official that it chooses to decline benefits. If any children were not listed on the eligibility notice, the household should contact the district or school to have free meal benefits extended to those children. Households receiving SNAP or TFA benefits for their children should only submit an application if they are **not** notified of their eligibility by **October 1, 2017**.

Some children *may* be directly certified for free or reduced-price meals based on Medicaid. No application is required if the district directly certifies a child based on Medicaid. All children in these households are eligible for free or reduced-priced meal benefits. Households receiving assistance under Medicaid will be notified of their eligibility and their children will be provided free or reduced-price benefits accordingly, unless the household notifies the determining official that it chooses to decline benefits. If any children were not listed on the eligibility notice, the household should contact the district or school to have free or reduced-price meal benefits extended to those children.

If a child is not directly certified, the household should complete a free and reduced-price meal application form. The application for the SNAP or TFA households require the SNAP or TFA case number. The signature of an adult household member is also required.

Children in households participating in WIC may be eligible for free or reduced-price meals. Please send in an application or contact the determining official for more information.

When known to the district/school, households will be notified of any child's eligibility for free meals if the individual child is Other Source Categorically Eligible because the child is categorized as either: Homeless; runaway as defined by law and determined by the district's or school's homeless liaison; or enrolled in an eligible Head Start or pre-kindergarten class as defined by law. Households with children who are categorically eligible under Other Source Categorically Eligible Programs should complete an

application and check-off the relevant box. Questions should be directed to the determining official. For any child not listed on the eligibility notice, the households should contact the school or determining official about any child also eligible under one of these programs or should submit an income application for the other children.

Households notified of their children's eligibility must contact the determining official or school if it chooses to decline the free meal benefits. If households/children are **not** notified by the district/school of their free meal benefits and they receive benefits under Assistance Programs or under Other Source Categorically Eligible Programs, the parent/guardian should contact the determining official or their school.

Foster children that are under the legal responsibility of a foster care agency or court, are categorically eligible for free meals. A foster parent does not have to complete a free/reduced meal application if they can submit a copy of the legal document or legal court order showing that the child is a foster child. Additionally, a foster child may be included as a member of the foster family if the foster family chooses to also apply for benefits. If the foster family is not eligible for free or reduced-price meal benefits, it does not prevent a foster child from receiving free meal benefits. Note however, that a foster child's free eligibility does not automatically extend to all students in the household.

Application forms for all other households require a statement of total household income, household size and names of all household members. The last four digits of the social security number of an adult household member must be included or a statement that the household member does not have one. The adult household member must also sign the application certifying that the information provided is correct.

Under the provisions of the policy for determining eligibility for free and reduced-price meals, the **determining official** will review applications and determine eligibility. If a parent is dissatisfied with the ruling of the determining official, he/she may wish to discuss the decision with the determining official on an informal basis. If he/she wishes to make a formal appeal, a request either orally or in writing, may be made to **hearing official** for a hearing to appeal the decision.

The policy contains an outline of the hearing procedure. Each school and the central office of the school district has a copy of the policy, which may be reviewed by an interested party.

If a household member becomes unemployed or if household size changes at any time, the family should contact the school to file a new application. Such changes may make the children of the household eligible for reduced-price meals, free meals, or free milk, if the family income falls at or below the levels shown in the Income Guidelines.

Questions regarding the application process may be directed to the determining official at **860-889-6098**.

This is the Public Release we will send on **August 1, 2017** to the following news media outlets, the local unemployment office, major employers contemplating layoffs, etc.

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| 1. <u>Norwich Bulletin</u> | 3. <u>Preston School Website</u> |
| 2. <u>The New London Day</u> | 4. _____ |

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- (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;*
- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or*
- (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.*

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