

## Free School Meals Program Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

### Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| New in This FAQ.....                        | 1  |
| General Questions.....                      | 2  |
| Applications for Educational Benefits ..... | 4  |
| Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) ..... | 5  |
| Meal Service .....                          | 6  |
| Childcare and PreK Programs .....           | 9  |
| Financial.....                              | 11 |
| Summer .....                                | 14 |
| New Sponsors.....                           | 14 |
| Other.....                                  | 15 |
| Nondiscrimination Statement .....           | 16 |

Questions and responses will continue to be added to this FAQ. Check back often for updates.

Updated: 7/31/2023

### New in This FAQ

#### **Should all directly certified students be listed as free under the MN Free School Meals Program?**

No. Some students are directly certified for reduced-price meals via Medicaid. Make sure that you are assigning the correct eligibility category to directly certified students. See the [Direct Certification](#) webpage for resources, including a Direct Certification Handbook for Public Schools, to assist with the direct certification process. Be sure to check monthly CLiCS direct certification reports for students who may move from reduced-price to free meal eligibility. Meals must be counted and claimed in the correct eligibility category for each student.

**Our school district has a blended/collaborative program with PreK and Head Start students in the same classroom. Can we claim the meals served to students in this program under the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP)?**

Students enrolled in the school district (or dually enrolled in the school district and Head Start) may be claimed by the school district. If the PreK program is licensed or certified as a childcare, then the meals can be claimed by the district under the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). If the PreK program is not licensed or certified as a childcare, the meals can be claimed under the NSLP and the SBP.

Students enrolled in only the Head Start may participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) under the Head Start Program sponsor. The district may vend these meals to the Head Start program.

## **General Questions**

**How is the Free School Meals Program different than the National School Lunch Program?**

The Free School Meals Program is a state funded program that provides reimbursement for meals served to students who do not qualify for free or reduced-price meals so all students receive the meals at no cost. Schools participating in the Free School Meals Program must participate in the National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program and adhere to the regulations of those programs.

**Is the Minnesota Free School Meal Program a temporary program?**

No. The funding for the Minnesota Free School Meals Program is permanent.

**When does this program start?**

The Free School Meals Program begins on July 1, 2023.

**Can my school participate?**

School districts, charter schools, nonpublic schools, or other participants approved for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program may participate in the Free School Meals Program.

**Can an online school participate?**

No. Students must be enrolled in a school that is eligible for the National School Lunch Program.

**Can homeschooled students participate in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program?**

No. Students must be enrolled in a school that is eligible for the National School Lunch Program. Homeschool programs are not eligible to participate in the National School Lunch Program.

**Do I need to operate the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) in order to receive free meals?**

Yes, a school will need to operate both the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP) in order to participate in the Free School Meals Program.

**Do I need to operate the School Breakfast Program (SBP) in order to receive free meals?**

Yes, a school will need to operate both the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP) in order to participate in the Free School Meals Program.

**Is there any way to participate in the Minnesota Free School Meals Program and operate only the National School Lunch Program and NOT the School Breakfast Program?**

No.

**Can a school remain on the federal national school lunch program only and NOT participate in the free school meal program that requires breakfast and lunch?**

The United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National School Lunch Program (NSLP) is a voluntary program (i.e., schools can choose whether or not to participate). If a school participates in the NSLP and has an Identified Student Percentage (ISP) <62.5%, the school must participate in the Free School Meals Program. If a school participates in the NSLP and has an ISP  $\geq$  62.5%, the school may participate in the Free School Meals Program but only if they participate in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP).

**Can our school operate the National School Lunch Program and/or the School Breakfast Program only some of the days that school is in session?**

No. The National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program must operate on all in-person academic school days.

**Is there a minimum percentage of free and reduced-price eligible students that our school must have to participate in the Free School Meals Program?**

No, there is not a minimum percentage of free and reduced-price eligible students required for a school to participate in the Free School Meals Program.

**Can we participate in the MN Kindergarten Milk Program if our kindergarten students are participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP)?**

Yes, kindergarten students participating in the NSLP and SBP may receive a milk at snack time and that milk can be claimed for reimbursement. This milk must be served at a snack time separate from breakfast and lunch.

**Is the After School Snack Program included in the MN Free School Meal Program?**

No. The After School Snack Program is not part of the MN Free School Meals Program.

**Can a private school or charter school participate in the Free School Meals Program by teaming up with a public school district?**

Yes. A private school or charter school may work with their local school district to become a joint agreement site under the school district. The school district is not required to take on joint agreement sites. The private school or charter school looking to become a joint agreement site should contact their local school district as soon as possible to determine if the school district is willing and able to take on this responsibility.

## **Can we provide meals to our students through this program on weekends, during the summer, or on other school breaks?**

The National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program can only operate on academic school days. Other federal child nutrition programs such as the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), Seamless Summer Option (SSO), and Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) may be available for schools to operate on non-academic days.

## **Applications for Educational Benefits**

### **Do I still need to collect Applications for Educational Benefits?**

Yes, federal regulations require applications to be distributed. Schools should continue to collect Applications for Educational Benefits to determine if a student qualifies for free or reduced-price meals.

Applications for Educational Benefits are not needed to determine eligibility for students on the direct certification list.

Students who receive meals at no charge, but who are not approved for free meals through federal school nutrition programs, must be correctly listed on meal eligibility rosters and the Minnesota Automated Reporting Student System (MARSS) data according to their actual school meal eligibility status – either reduced-price or paid. Meals served to these students must be correctly claimed as reduced-price or paid meals to receive the correct federal and state reimbursements.

### **Why is important to continue to collect Applications for Educational Benefits?**

A school's eligibility for programs such as the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), the Seamless Summer Option (SSO), and federal after school snack and supper programs is based on free and reduced-price eligibility.

Additional federal meal reimbursement is available to schools/districts that meet severe need criteria based on free and reduced-price eligibility.

Students and families may qualify for other program fee reductions based on their eligibility for free or reduced-price meals.

### **If a family refuses to complete an Application for Education Benefits, are we supposed to refuse to serve them a meal?**

No. A family is not required to complete an Application for Educational Benefits. A student may not be refused a meal because a family has not completed an Application for Educational Benefits.

### **Can we offer incentives to families to fill out the Applications for Educational Benefits?**

No. Incentives and gifts are not allowable costs to the Food Service Fund or the General Fund.

# Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)

## Is my school required to participate in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)?

A school's participation in CEP is not mandatory.

If a school's Identified Student Percentage (ISP) is  $\geq 62.5\%$ , the school must participate in CEP in order to participate in the free school meals program.

If a school's ISP is  $<62.5\%$ , the school is not required to participate in CEP; however, the school must participate in the Free School Meals Program.

## What if my school is already participating in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)?

If your school is already participating in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), you can continue to participate on your current 4-year cycle or establish a new 4-year cycle. Sponsors are encouraged to review the ISP based on April 1, 2023 data and establish a new base year for 2023-24 if their new ISP is higher. A higher ISP will maximize the amount of federal reimbursement and reduce the state's cost.

## Our school was planning to apply for the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) for the 23-24 school year. With the Free School Meal Program in Minnesota, should we still consider applying for CEP?

Yes. Schools with an ISP  $\geq 62.5\%$  must participate in the CEP to participate in the Free School Meals Program. Schools with an ISP  $< 62.5\%$  should consider participating in CEP.

Schools with a high ISP can utilize CEP to maximize their federal reimbursement and reduce the state's cost.

## Where can I find the Identified Student Percentages (ISPs) for the schools in my district?

Proxy ISPs are available on the MDE website. Actual ISPs are used to determine eligibility and claiming percentages for the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP). Use the following calculation to determine your ISP:

$$\text{ISP} = \frac{\text{the number of identified students as of April 1}}{\text{the number of students enrolled in that site as of April 1}}$$

Identified students include:

- Directly certified students with the exception of students certified as Medicaid-Reduced (and household members of directly certified students).
- Homeless, migrant or runaway students.
- Head Start/Even Start/Early Start participants.
- Recipients of the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR).
- Foster children certified through means other than a free/reduced-price application.

Enrolled students are those enrolled as of April 1 who have access to either breakfast or lunch at the site(s). This would include preschool students if they have access to breakfast or lunch.

## Meal Service

**Since the Free School Meals Program is a State of Minnesota program, do we still need to follow the Federal National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) meal patterns?**

Yes. Schools participating in the Free School Meals Program must participate in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP). Schools must follow the federal meal patterns and all other federal requirements for these programs.

**What are the hours that breakfast can be served?**

Breakfast must be served at or near the beginning of the school day.

**Is there a minimum number of students necessary to operate the School Breakfast Program?**

No.

**Can the free meals be sent home like we did during the pandemic?**

No. Congregate meal service is required in the National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program. Meals may not be taken off campus, sent home, delivered, or picked up by parents or others.

**On distance learning days, can we serve meals to students who choose to come to the school?**

Meals can only be claimed if they are served and consumed at the school on an in-person academic school day in a congregate setting.

**Our school will be under construction and we will be providing classes through distance learning. Can we provide meals to our students during this time?**

Meals can only be claimed if they are served and consumed at the school on an in-person academic school day in a congregate setting.

**Can students enrolled in a virtual school in our district eat meals at one of our school buildings?**

Students must eat meals at the school where they are enrolled. Virtual schools are not eligible to participate in the National School Lunch Program or the School Breakfast Program.

While schools may provide and claim meals served to visiting students when they are visiting another school for a scheduled special event (e.g. district band concert), schools may not act as open sites under the National School Lunch Program or School Breakfast Program in order to feed any student that shows up at meal time.

**If there is a late start due to weather or professional development, can we skip serving breakfast?**

Schools should plan to serve breakfast on all in-person academic school days – even if there is a late start.

**If students go on a field trip as part of the academic school day, can the meals be claimed for reimbursement if they are not eaten at the school?**

Yes, meals can be claimed for reimbursement if the field trip is part of the academic school day. Field trip meals must be counted at the point of service (e.g. at the field trip location if lunches are distributed there) and must meet reimbursable meal pattern requirements. Field trip meals must be eaten in a congregate setting with other students attending the field trip.

Students attending a program at the same off-site location every day are not considered to be on a field trip.

**Can meals served to students participating in Postsecondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) be claimed for reimbursement?**

PSEO students enrolled in a high school participating in the School Breakfast Program and the National School Lunch Program can eat a breakfast and/or lunch at their high school. They can eat those meals on the campus outside of the regular meal times as long as the lunch is served between 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. and breakfast is served at or near the beginning of the school day.

For example, if a school starts serving lunch at 11:30 a.m., but the student leaves at 11:00 a.m. for their PSEO location, the student can be served a reimbursable meal to eat at the high school at 10:30 a.m. and the meal can be claimed.

Non-congregate meals cannot be claimed for reimbursement.

**Can a school use a clicker to count the meals?**

Only schools on CEP or in a non-base year of Provision 2 may use a clicker to count total reimbursable meals served. Although clickers are allowed for total counts for these provision schools, all schools must have proper controls in place to ensure that students are not being counted and claimed for more than one reimbursable breakfast and one reimbursable lunch per day.

Schools that are not on CEP or are in a Provision 2 base year must count and claim meals based on the eligibility of the student receiving the meal. Students who receive meals at no charge, but who are not approved for free school meals, must be correctly listed on meal eligibility rosters according to their actual school meal eligibility status – either reduced-price or paid. Meals served to these students must be correctly claimed as reduced-price or paid meals to receive correct federal and state reimbursements.

**Can students get second meals for free?**

This legislation provides a maximum of one free breakfast and one free lunch per day to students at participating schools. A second breakfast and/or a second lunch is considered an a la carte item and must be priced at the adult meal rate.

**Can schools sell a la carte items?**

Yes, schools may sell a la carte items that meet the federal Smart Snacks requirements. In addition, the prices charged for a la carte items must continue to meet federal nonprogram food sales requirements. A second breakfast and/or a second lunch is considered an a la carte item and must be priced at the adult meal rate.

**We sell second entrees as an a la carte item. Is there a minimum price that I must charge for a second entrée? Is there a minimum price that I must charge for a la carte items?**

The prices charged for a la carte items must continue to meet federal nonprogram food sales requirements. USDA requires SFAs to determine if the percent of total revenue generated from their nonprogram food sales is equal to or greater than the percent of total food costs attributable to the SFA's purchase of nonprogram food. For example, if the cost of nonprogram foods is 20 percent of the SFA's total food costs, then the amount of revenue generated from the sale of the nonprogram foods must be at least 20 percent of the total revenue in the school food service account. Schools planning to sell second entrees or other a la carte items are advised to read through [USDA Memo SP 20-2016](#) for further guidance.

**Can a school deny a second meal, second entrée, or a la carte item if the student does not have money in their account to pay for it?**

Yes. Schools are not required to provide second meals, second entrees, or other a la carte items if a student does not have the funds available to pay for the item(s).

It is a best practice for the school to avoid situations that may result in a student being denied a la carte item(s) at the point of service due to a lack of funds. For example, the school could sell a la carte items separately from the reimbursable meal serving lines and ensure that the student's account has the funds available before the item is provided to the student.

**If a student brings their own lunch and only wants a milk, do we charge them for the milk or can we claim this milk for reimbursement?**

A meal must meet the meal pattern requirements in order to be claimed for reimbursement. A milk by itself does not meet the minimum requirements to be claimed for reimbursement.

If a school participates in offer versus serve, a student must take at least the minimum number of components or items under offer versus serve for the meal to be claimed for reimbursement.

If a school does not participate in offer versus serve, a student must take all meal components or items for the meal to be claimed for reimbursement.

If a student does not take a meal that meets the requirements above, the milk must be purchased at the a la carte milk price.



## Childcare and PreK Programs

**During school breaks (Winter Break, Spring Break, etc.), can we claim meals served to children attending childcare programs under the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP)?**

No. Meals can be claimed under the NSLP and the SBP on academic school days only. Schools interested in providing meals during breaks such as Winter Break or Spring Break may apply for the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).

**Our school participates in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP) and operates a childcare center in our elementary school. Can we claim the breakfasts and lunches that we serve to children in this childcare program?**

No. Per USDA memo FNS-GD-1988-0013, child care centers are not eligible to participate in the National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program. Child care centers may operate the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).

Childcare may include (but is not limited to) any of the following scenarios:

- the program is licensed or certified as a childcare
- the program serves children under 33 months of age
- the program's hours extend beyond the academic school day
- the program's operating days extend beyond the academic school year

**Will preschool students be included in the Free School Meals Program?**

If a program is federally eligible for both the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP) and operates under the school or school district, they are eligible to participate in the MN Free School Meals Program.

If a program is not operated under the school or school district, whether or not it is located in the same location, they are not eligible to participate in the NSLP, the SBP, or the MN Free School Meals Program.

Additional examples are included below.

**Our school participates in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP) and operates a PreK Program. Can we claim the breakfasts and lunches that we serve to the PreK children enrolled in this program?**

Yes, the meals can be claimed as long as they meet all of the requirements (meal pattern, point of service meal counts, etc.) of the NSLP and the SBP.

Note: PreK Programs that are licensed or certified as a childcare may not participate in the School Nutrition Programs. These licensed or certified programs may [apply for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

**Our school participates in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP). Can a PreK program in this school provide breakfast and lunch to students under the NSLP and SBP and provide a PM snack under the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)?**

No. If the school would like to provide breakfast, lunch, and a snack to the PreK program, then all three meal types should be claimed under the CACFP.

**Our school participates in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP) and operates an Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) Program. Can we claim the breakfasts and lunches that we serve to the ECSE children enrolled in this program?**

Yes, the meals can be claimed as long as they meet all of the requirements (meal pattern, point of service meal counts, etc.) of the NSLP and the SBP.

**Our school participates in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP) and rents/provides space to another entity that operates a childcare center in our elementary school. Can we claim the breakfasts and lunches that we serve to children in this childcare program?**

No. If a program is not operated under the school or school district, whether or not it is located at the same location, they are not eligible to participate in the NSLP, SBP or the MN-FSM.

The childcare program may apply for the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).

**Our school participates in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP) and rents space in our elementary school to a Head Start program that is not operated by our school district. Can we claim the breakfasts and lunches that we serve to children in this Head Start program?**

No. If a program is not operated under the school or school district, whether or not it is located at the same location, they are not eligible to participate in the NSLP, SBP or the MN-FSM.

The Head Start program may apply for the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).

**If PreK or Kindergarten students attend a half day program, are they eligible to participate in the Free School Meal Program if they are not at school for both breakfast and lunch?**

Yes. An individual student is not required to participate in both the School Breakfast Program and the National School Lunch Program.

**If our district has a joint agreement with a private school that has children in grades PreK-8, can the meals served to PreK students be claimed for reimbursement?**

If the school is eligible to participate in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP) and the PreK program is operated by that school, then the meals served to PreK students can be claimed for reimbursement under the NSLP and SBP.

**In the 23-24 school year, will we need to continue to send meal counts to School Readiness for the Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Program meal reimbursement?**

If a school is participating in the National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program, meals served to students in VPK can be counted and claimed on the CLiCS reimbursement claim in the appropriate category of eligibility (free, reduced-price, or paid) at the school where they are served.

Schools that do not claim meals served to VPK students in CLiCS may continue to claim their meals through the current process with School Readiness.

**Can we claim meals for a PreK Program in our district under the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP) if the PreK Program is in its own building?**

If the PreK program is operated by the district and the meals meet all of the requirements (meal pattern, point of service meal counts, etc.) of the NSLP and SBP, they can be claimed for reimbursement. The site will need a CLiCS site ID and the meals must be claimed at this site.

**What meal pattern should we use for meals that we serve to PreK students?**

PreK students eating in the cafeteria with other elementary students can be served the meal pattern that is used for the other elementary students.

PreK students eating meals separately from the other elementary students should follow the meal pattern applicable to the age of the student.

## **Financial**

**Could you please provide a breakdown of the reimbursement from the Federal and State portions for the paid meals for SY 2023-24?**

[Federal reimbursement rates](#) were published on July 7, 2023 for the 23-24 school year. [Reimbursement rates](#) are posted on the MDE website and will be updated soon to include the 23-24 school year information.

**Our school has only operated the National School Lunch Program this school year, but we are going to add the School Breakfast Program next school year. If we have a vended meal contract, do we need to go out for bid again or can we just do an addendum to add the breakfast service to our contract?**

If adding the breakfast service to a school's vended meals contract will increase the total value of the contract by 10% or more, the school is required to rebid the contract for SY 2023-24. Sponsors should refer to the [MDE Meal Service Contracts](#) webpage for resources and templates and send questions to [MDE.FSMC@state.mn.us](mailto:MDE.FSMC@state.mn.us).

**Can our school claim reimbursement for all of the meals that we prepare? Can our school claim reimbursement for all of the meals that we order from our vendor?**

No. Meals can only be claimed if they are served to eligible students and meet reimbursable meal requirements. Meals must be counted at the point of service and claimed in the correct federal eligibility category. Up to one reimbursable breakfast and one reimbursable lunch may be claimed per student per day.

**Students in our district have prepaid accounts that they have used to pay for meals, a la carte milk, and/or a la carte snack items. Will we need to refund the money on these accounts next school year?**

If your school/school district will sell a la carte items or second meals next school year, funds can remain on students' prepaid accounts to pay for these a la carte items. Refunds should be made if a la carte will not be available for students to purchase and/or if a parent requests a refund of funds on the account.

**Many students in our school/district have negative balances. Can those negative balances be deleted?**

No. A debt owed to the nonprofit school food service account remains on the accounting documents until it is either collected or determined to be uncollectable. Unpaid meal debt can be paid with nonfederal funds, including the General Fund or donations.

**Will meals be free for teachers and staff?**

No. School Nutrition Programs funds may not subsidize meals served to nonprogram adults. The adult meal price must be set high enough so that the cost of the meal is fully paid by the customer. For school year 23-24, the minimum price for a breakfast served to an adult is \$2.25 and the minimum price for a lunch served to an adult is \$4.95.

**What can reimbursement funds be used for?**

All revenue from foodservice operations must be retained solely for the operation and improvement of school meal programs. This includes expenses such as food, labor, supplies, and equipment used to prepare and serve reimbursable meals.

**More students are going to eat meals now that they are available at no cost. Is there any money available for facility upgrades for our kitchen?**

A sponsor's nonprofit school foodservice account may be used to purchase needed equipment and supplies for the purpose of upgrading kitchens to accommodate an increase in meals being prepared and served. MDE has developed a Child Nutrition Programs equipment list of items that will receive automatic state agency approval. The SFA may purchase those equipment items, following proper federal, state or local procurement procedures, as applicable, without submitting a written request to MDE for approval. If an SFA chooses to select equipment that was not included on the MDE-approved list, it must submit a request for approval to the state agency prior to purchasing the item as required at 2 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 225 Appendix B, section 15. Refer to [MDE's Equipment Purchase Policy and Pre-approved Equipment List](#) for further information.

Please be aware that the following expenses are considered capital expenses that would add to the permanent value of the school building and are therefore unallowable: Supplies, equipment, and labor costs associated with facility improvement, rearrangement, and/or reconversion; Costs associated with remediation or repair to a school building (i.e., plumbing, heating, air conditioning, ventilation). These costs should be borne by the SFA's general fund or another nonfederal fund source.

**With meals being available at no cost, should schools continue to complete the Paid Lunch Equity tool to determine the cost of a meal?**

No. The MN Free School Meals Program is considered non-pricing so there is no requirement for participating schools to evaluate the need to raise the student paid meal lunch price using the PLE tool. Sponsors should report their paid lunch price as zero.

**Are meal charge policies still required? Do we have to send them home or include them in our handbook?**

Yes, meal charge policies are required under MN statute 124D.111. The policy does not need to be sent home, but must be posted on the school or district’s website.

**How will compensatory funding be impacted by the Free School Meals Program?**

The Free School Meals Program legislation contains a “hold-harmless” provision for fiscal year 2025.

MDE is working with the legislature to put a long-term solution in place.

**How will the Free School Meal Program affect our Title I funds?**

ESEA Title funds and services are not dependent on free or reduced-price meal eligibility status for traditional school districts. Additionally, the FFY23/SFY24 calculations use October 1, 2022 data, so there are no immediate (SFY24) implications for any ESEA Title program, including traditional public school districts, public charter schools, and nonpublic equitable services.

More information about Title I, Part A allocations can be found on the [ESEA Title Programs website](#) or by contacting [mde.esea@state.mn.us](mailto:mde.esea@state.mn.us).

**In the 23-24 school year, will we still need to enter the breakfasts served to kindergarteners in the paid eligibility category in the “Kindergarten Paid Meals Served” column in the monthly claim in CLICS?**

No. There is no need to claim the breakfasts served to paid eligible kindergarten students in the “Kindergarten Paid Meals Served” column when participating in the MN Free School Meals Program.

All students must be correctly listed on meal eligibility rosters according to their actual federal school meal eligibility status: free, reduced price, or paid. In addition, meals served to students must be claimed in the student’s correct federal eligibility category to receive correct federal and state reimbursements.

## Summer

**We are operating an academic summer school program at several of our schools in July. Can we operate the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) at these sites? Will our district be able to claim these meals under the Free School Meals Program?**

Yes, you can operate the NSLP and the SBP at an academic summer school. The CLICS application for the School Nutrition Programs must be submitted and approved for all months that you are planning to claim meals at the site(s).

Reimbursable meals served under NSLP and SBP can be claimed only for students enrolled in the academic summer school. Meals must be counted at the point of service. Meals must be claimed by the student's eligibility category. The Free School Meal Program reimbursement rates begin on July 1, 2023.

**Our school is planning an academic summer school program for a couple of hours each morning. Is it possible to operate only the School Breakfast Program for our summer school program after July 1?**

Federal regulations and Minnesota statutes allow the School Breakfast Program to be operated at a site without the National School Lunch Program.

Schools participating in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) must operate both the School Breakfast Program and the National School Lunch Program.

Beginning July 1, 2023, Minnesota schools participating in the Minnesota Free School Meals Program must operate both the National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program.

**What summer programs can operate the National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program?**

Academic summer school programs can operate the National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program. Academic summer school programs include classes that provide credits and extended school year (ESY) programs.

Summer camps, summer enrichment, and summer day care programs may not participate in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program.

## New Sponsors

**Is there any training scheduled for schools that want to start operating the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program in the 23-24 school year?**

Additional New School Nutrition Program Sponsor Application Process Training is scheduled. For more information, email [mde.fns@state.mn.us](mailto:mde.fns@state.mn.us) with the subject line: New School Nutrition Program Sponsor Training. Include your school name, address, and contact information in the email.

**Our school has never participated in the National School Lunch Program, but we would like to participate now that meals will be free. How can we sign up our school?**

Instructions for becoming a new sponsor are found in the document [Application Process for the School Nutrition Program](#). This process can take six to nine months to complete and should be started a minimum of six months prior to the first day of school nutrition operation.

Schools that are not currently participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) may also consider contacting their local school district to determine if the school district is willing and able to add the school as a joint agreement site under their program.

**My school participated in NSLP in the past and has not been on the program for several years. How can we sign our school up for the free meal program?**

Sponsors who have not participated in the National School Lunch Program for more than one year will need to apply through the new sponsor process.

Instructions for becoming a new sponsor are found in the document [Application Process for the School Nutrition Program](#). This process can take six to nine months to complete and should be started a minimum of six months prior to the first day of school nutrition operation.

Schools that are not currently participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) may also consider contacting their local school district to determine if the school district is willing and able to add the school as a joint agreement site under their program.

**We currently participate in the Special Milk Program and would like to switch to the National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program. What do we need to do?**

While schools participating in the Special Milk Program are already set up in CLiCS, there are several other steps necessary to operate the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program. Schools on the Special Milk Program should follow the instructions for becoming a new School Nutrition Program sponsor.

Instructions for becoming a new sponsor are found in the document [Application Process for the School Nutrition Program](#). This process can take six to nine months to complete and should be started a minimum of six months prior to the first day of school nutrition operation.

Schools that are not currently participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) may also consider contacting their local school district to determine if the school district is willing and able to add the school as a joint agreement site under their program.

## Other

**My question was not answered in this FAQ, who should I contact?**

Additional questions can be submitted to the MN Department of Education, Nutrition Program Services division by emailing [mde.fns@state.mn.us](mailto:mde.fns@state.mn.us).

## Nondiscrimination Statement

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ad-3027.pdf>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

- 1. mail:**  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or
- 2. fax:**  
(833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
- 3. email:**  
[Program.Intake@usda.gov](mailto:Program.Intake@usda.gov)

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.