

Media Release Free Meals in School Year 2021-2022 Sample

The Diocese of Shreveport Child Nutrition Program announced its policy today that this school year, healthy meals will be offered every school day to all students at no cost. Typically, a student's household must meet income eligibility requirements to qualify for free or reduced-price meals. However, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) issued guidance that allows schools to offer meals to all students at no cost for the 2021-2022 school year.

While no application or eligibility determination is required for your student to receive free meals this school year, income eligibility requirements will likely resume in the 2022-2023 school year. As such, the *Diocese of Shreveport Child Nutrition Program* will process household applications during School Year 2021-2022 to ensure student eligibility for free or reduced-price meals during the first 30 days of the 2022-2023 school year while 2022-2023 applications are being processed. Each school/site or central office has a copy of the policy, which may be reviewed upon request.

Starting on *August 9, 2021*, the *Diocese of Shreveport Child Nutrition Program* will begin distributing letters to the households of students in our Catholic Schools about these 2022-2023 eligibility benefits and actions households need to take to apply. Applications are available at <https://www.dioshpt.org/child-nutrition-program> or at each school site.

Criteria for Free and Reduced-Price Meal Benefits to Start School Year 2022-2023

The following criteria will be used to determine a child's eligibility for free or reduced-price meal benefits at the beginning of School Year 2022-2023:

Income

1. Household income that is at or below the income eligibility levels

Categorical or Automatic Eligibility

2. Household receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF); or Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)

Program Participant

3. Child's status as a foster child, homeless, runaway, migrant, or displaced by a declared disaster
4. Child's enrollment in Head Start or Even Start

Income Eligibility

For those households that qualify for free or reduced-price meals based on income, an adult in the household must complete the free and reduced-price meal application and return it to *Susan German, CNP Manager at sgerman@dioshpt.org or 3500 Fairfield Ave., Shreveport, LA 71104*. Individuals filling out the application will need to provide the following information:

1. Names of all household members
2. Amount, frequency, and source of current income for each household member
3. Last 4 digits of the Social Security number of the adult household member who signs the application or, if the adult does not have a social security number, check the box for "No Social Security number"
4. Signature of an adult household member attesting that the information provided is correct

Categorical or Program Eligibility

The Diocese of Shreveport Child Nutrition Program is working with local agencies to identify all children who are categorically and program eligible. We will notify the households of these children that they do not need to complete an application. Any household that does not receive a letter and feels it should have, should contact to Susan German, CNP Manager at sgerman@dioshpt.org or (318) 219-7297.

Any household that wishes to decline benefits should contact Susan German, CNP Manager at sgerman@dioshpt.org or (318) 219-7297.

Applications may be submitted anytime during the school year. The information households provide on the application will be used to determine eligibility. Applications may also be verified by the school officials at any time during the school year.

Determining Eligibility

Under the provisions of the free and reduced-price meal policy, Susan German, CNP Manager, will review applications and determine eligibility. Households or guardians dissatisfied with the Reviewing Official's eligibility determination may wish to discuss the decision with the Reviewing Official on an informal basis. Households wishing to make a formal appeal for a hearing on the decision may make a request either orally or in writing to *Sr. Carol Shively, OSU, Superintendent, (318) 868-4441 or 3500 Fairfield Ave., Shreveport, LA 71104*

Unexpected Circumstances

If a household member becomes unemployed or if the household size increases, the household should contact the school. Such changes may make the children of the household eligible for benefits if the household's income falls at or below the attached current income eligibility guidelines.

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To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the [USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form](https://www.usda.gov/oascr/how-to-file-a-program-discrimination-complaint), (AD-3027) found online at: <https://www.usda.gov/oascr/how-to-file-a-program-discrimination-complaint>, and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter 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; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov. This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

