

EASTHAMPTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

PUBLIC RELEASE FOR FREE & REDUCED PRICED MEALS

Every student needs healthy, nutritious meals to learn. The Easthampton Public Schools offer breakfast and lunch to students every school day, and at a free or reduced price for those who qualify. Easthampton schools participate in the National School Lunch and Breakfast program (NSLBP), a federally funded program that ensures students who qualify receive free or reduced price meals.

Does my family qualify?

APPLICATIONS: Application forms are available at www.epsd.us, in the School Department office at 50 Payson Avenue, or in the main office of each Easthampton school. Applications are distributed from each school at the beginning of each school year. To apply for free or reduced price meals, families should complete one application for all children in their household and return it to their student's school. Incomplete applications cannot be processed and will be returned to the mailing address provided on the application. Benefits commence only when an approved, completed application is on file. The information provided on the application will be used for determining eligibility and may be verified at any time during the school year by school officials. Once approved, a student is eligible to receive meals benefits for the entire school year and for up to 30 operating days into the subsequent school year. At that time, either a new application will need to be on file or the student will be qualified as a result of direct certification.

Households that receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits (SNAP, formerly the food stamp program) or Temporary Assistance to Needy Families benefits (TANF) will receive a letter automatically qualifying individual children for free breakfast and lunch through the Direct Certification Program. If your family benefits from either of these programs and you have not received notice that your student has qualified for free school meals, please contact your student's school. If you do not wish your student(s) to receive free meals, please notify your student's school in writing.

Student meal accounts are private and confidential with personal identification numbers. Our point of sale systems allows all students' meals to be charged to their individual account according to their qualifying status (paid, reduced, or free.) No cash is needed because payment can be credited to a student's account by way of a My School Bucks account or by check sent to the school. As a result of this system, there is no way to distinguish between students based on their family's ability to pay.

When known to the district, families will be notified of a student's eligibility for free or reduced meals based on an application reporting income or categorical eligibility status. A homeless, foster, migrant, or a runaway student as defined by law is categorically eligible for free meals. A foster child may be included as a member of the foster household if the family chooses to apply for benefits for their other children. By including children in foster care as household members, it may serve to qualify other children in the household for meal benefits.

Categorical eligibility for free meals is extended to all children in a household when the application lists an Assistance Programs case number for any household number. Households with any member who is currently certified to receive Assistance Program benefits may submit any application for their students with the abbreviated information as indicated on the application and instructions. Households with children who are categorically eligible as a result of Other Source Categorically Eligible Programs should contact their student's school for assistance in receiving benefits and must mark the relevant box on the application. In addition, Special Supplemental Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) participants may be eligible for free or reduced price meals.

A household may appeal the eligibility decision of the Easthampton Public Schools by following the appeal procedure outlined in the policy statement. An application only requires the last four digits of the social security number of the adult member signing the application. The completed application should be returned to the school the eldest student attends.

If you have trouble completing the application or have additional questions, do not hesitate to contact your student's school for assistance.

USDA NONDISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form (AD-3027) found online at: http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, and at any USDA office, or write a letter address 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 Assistance Secretary of Civil Rights

1400 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, D.C. 20250-7442

2 – fax: (202)690-7442; or

3 – email : programintake@usda.gov

Easthampton Public Schools is an equal opportunity provider.