

For Immediate Release:
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Sonora ISD Secondary School Transitions Back to Application Requirement for Free and Reduced-Price School Meals

Back to School and Back to Normal in the Cafeteria

Sonora, Texas— During the COVID-19 pandemic, Congress authorized spending that allowed schools to serve free meals for all students. Those funds are not authorized to continue for the 2022-2023 school year. As a result, Sonora ISD Secondary School must return to charging for school meals and offering free and reduced-price meals based on student eligibility. Starting on August 17, 2022, Sonora ISD will begin distributing letters and applications to the households of the children in the district about eligibility benefits. Families are encouraged to complete the Application for Free and Reduced-Price School Meals and return the completed form to the secondary school office.

The application will determine a child's eligibility for free and reduced-price meals and may assist in the determination of eligibility for other state or federal benefits. Only one application needs to be completed per household. Schools will notify the household of the child's eligibility. The Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) administers school nutrition programs in Texas and offers an eligibility calculator at www.SquareMeals.org/ProgramEligibility.

Decisions regarding payment for school meals are made at the national-government level, not by the school nutrition team or TDA. The dedicated staff at Sonora ISD is looking forward to serving healthy, balanced meals to students in the new school year. These meals, whether paid, free, or reduced-price, offer a good source of nutrition for children.

Criteria for Free and Reduced-Price Meal Benefits

The following criteria will be used to determine a child's eligibility for free or reduced-price meal benefits:

Income Eligibility

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 Eligibility

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 fill out the free and reduced-price meal application and return it to Jill Hazelton, Food Service Director (907 S. Concho) or Felicia Van Winkle, Secondary School Secretary (1717 Tayloe Avenue). Those 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 Participant Eligibility

Sonora ISD is working with local agencies to identify all children who are categorically and program eligible. Sonora ISD 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, can contact Jill Hazelton, Food Service Director, at 325/387-6940 Ext. 2009.

Any household that wishes to decline benefits should contact Jill Hazelton, Food Service Director, at 325/387-6940 Ext. 2009.

Applications may be submitted anytime during the school year. The information households provide on the application will be used for the purpose of determining 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, Jill Hazelton, Food Service Director, 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 Michael Kissire, Superintendent, at 325/387-6940 Ext. 1000.

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.

In the operation of child feeding programs, no child will be discriminated against because of race, sex, color, national origin, age, or disability. This institution is an equal opportunity provider.