The **Hamden Public Schools** announced today its policy for determining eligibility of children who 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, 2020, to June 30, 2021,** for determining eligibility of participants for free and reduced-price meals and free milk in the Child Nutrition Programs.

| 2020-21 Income Guidelines for Child Nutrition Programs | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 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** | 16,588 | 1,383 | 692 | 638 | 319 | **1** | 23,606 | 1,968 | 984 | 908 | 454 |
| **2** | 22,412 | 1,868 | 934 | 862 | 431 | **2** | 31,894 | 2,658 | 1,329 | 1,227 | 614 |
| **3** | 28,236 | 2,353 | 1,177 | 1,086 | 543 | **3** | 40,182 | 3,349 | 1,675 | 1,546 | 773 |
| **4** | 34,060 | 2,839 | 1,420 | 1,310 | 655 | **4** | 48,470 | 4,040 | 2,020 | 1,865 | 933 |
| **5** | 39,884 | 3,324 | 1,662 | 1,534 | 767 | **5** | 56,758 | 4,730 | 2,365 | 2,183 | 1,092 |
| **6** | 45,708 | 3,809 | 1,905 | 1,758 | 879 | **6** | 65,046 | 5,421 | 2,711 | 2,502 | 1,251 |
| **7** | 51,532 | 4,295 | 2,148 | 1,982 | 991 | **7** | 73,334 | 6,112 | 3,056 | 2,821 | 1,411 |
| **8** | 57,356 | 4,780 | 2,390 | 2,206 | 1,103 | **8** | 81,622 | 6,802 | 3,401 | 3,140 | 1,570 |
| **Each additional family member** | + 5,824 | + 486 | + 243 | + 224 | + 112 | **Each additional family member** | + 8,288 | + 691 | + 346 | + 319 | + 160 |

The income calculations above are 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. Applications and instructions are being distributed to all households along with letter to parents by mail or home with students. To apply for free or reduced-price meals or free milk, households should fill out the application and return it to the school. Applications are available at the principal's office in each school and on the Hamden Public Schools' website at https://www.hamden.org/district-information/lunchmenu-clone. 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 September 30, 2020.

Some children *may* be directly certified for free or reduced-price meals based on Medicaid (HUSKY). No application is required if the district directly certifies a child based on Medicaid (HUSKY). All children in these households are eligible for free or reduced-priced meal benefits. Households receiving assistance under Medicaid (HUSKY) 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 and the households may be asked to provide proof of 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, Dawn Albizu (Contact info: 203-407-2423 / dalbizu@hamden.org) 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 officer, Chris Melillo (Contact info: phone 203-407-2092 or address 60 Putnam Avenue, Hamden, CT 06517) 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 203-407-2423.

This is the Public Release we will send on **09/21/2020** to the following news media outlets, the local unemployment office, major employers contemplating layoffs, etc.

1. New Haven Register
2. Hamden Times / Hamden Patch
3. Keefe Community Center - Hamden
4. Unemployment Office - Hamden

# Sample Public Media Release for Connecticut School Nutrition Programs

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To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, (AD-3027) found online at: How to File a 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.

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