

SDUHSD NUTRITION SERVICES

CALIFORNIA UNIVERSAL MEALS

2023-2024

FAQs- Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is the California Universal Meals Program?

A: Beginning in School Year (SY) 2023-24, *California Education Code* (EC 49501.5) requires school districts serving students in grades K-12 to provide two meals free of charge (breakfast and lunch) during each school day to students requesting a meal, regardless of their free or reduced-price meal (FRPM) eligibility. (1)

Q: What are the program goals?

A: The goals of the program are to prevent hunger and malnutrition among children.

Q: Why do Universal Meals matter?

A: According to the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), providing all students with two free nutritious meals per school day will lead to proper nourishment. Some benefits of proper nourishment include the following: higher academic performance, lower rates of obesity, fewer emotional-behavioral problems, and less hunger. Additionally, the universal free meals program aids in the mitigation of any stigma associated with low-income students receiving free or reduced-price school meals. (2)

Q: Does Universal Meals apply to students who do not attend campus in person (e.g. independent study or virtual)?

A: No, Universal Meals only applies when students are on campus.

Q: Can a student request more than one breakfast or lunch per day?

A: To comply with federal program and nutrition requirements, the district may only provide one breakfast and one lunch per student per day.

Q: Is there an application for Universal Meals?

A: No, there is not an application to participate in Universal Meals. All students attending school in person may request and receive one breakfast and one lunch each school day, regardless of a FRPM application.

Q: If meals are free, can I still submit an FRPM application?

A: Yes- the purpose of the *FRPM application* is to certify a student's eligibility for free or reduced-price meals for federal funding purposes and to establish a student's eligibility for additional educational and community discounts. Federal regulations require school districts participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) to collect FRPM applications, establish eligibility, and claim reimbursement based on each student's eligibility status (free, reduced, or paid). Although the school district is required to provide and collect FRPM applications, households/students are not required to submit a FRPM application. Completion of a FRPM application is encouraged to maximize the funding to the district's nonprofit child nutrition program.

Q: Why is the district collecting alternate income forms?

A: The purpose of the *alternate income form* is to identify that a student's household meets the income eligibility to be included in the district's pupil count to receive additional funds to be spent for educational purposes in accordance with the district's Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP). (3) Alternate income forms are not required, but participation is highly encouraged to maximize the benefits of educational funding to students in the district.

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SDUHSD Nutrition Services · www.SDUHSDnutrition.com · 760-753-6241, ext. 3426

References:

- (1) <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/nu/univmealsqandapart2.asp>
- (2) <https://frac.org/programs/national-school-lunch-program/benefits-school-lunch>
- (3) <https://www.sduhsd.net/Departments/Educational-Services/Accountability/Local-Control-and-Accountability-Plan-LCAP/index.html>