
Universal Meals Policy 3-200

Scope:

In compliance with the State's Universal Meal Program, this policy requires the District to provide two free meals per day to every student, regardless of income status.

1. Universal Meal Provision

The District shall provide two free meals per school day (one breakfast and one lunch) to every student enrolled in a district-operated school.

2. Program Eligibility and Participation

- All students shall be eligible to receive free meals regardless of family income.
- The District may participate in a federal meal reimbursement program such as the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) or School Breakfast Program (SBP), in alignment with California Department of Education (CDE) requirements and in accordance with state and federal law.

3. Nutrition Standards

Meals shall meet or exceed nutrition standards set by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the CDE. This includes:

- Calorie limits appropriate by grade level
- Limits on saturated fat, sodium, and added sugar
- Provision of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat dairy

Purpose

The District is committed to ensuring all students have access to nutritious meals that support their health, well-being, and academic success. In compliance with state and federal laws, the District shall implement California's Universal Meals Program, which provides two free meals per day to every student, regardless of income status.

4. Safe and Accessible Meal Service

The District shall:

- Serve meals in a clean, safe, and inclusive environment
- Accommodate students with dietary needs or disabilities consistent with USDA guidelines
- Provide sufficient time to eat and ensure non-stigmatizing practices

5. Meal Time Scheduling

The Superintendent or designee shall ensure:

- Breakfast and lunch are scheduled at appropriate times
- Students have adequate time to eat each meal (at least 20 minutes for lunch)

6. Family Income Data Collection

- To maximize funding and support educational programs, the District may collect household income data using alternative forms, such as the Alternative Income Form (AIF), when not using the traditional free/reduced-price meal application process.

7. Community Engagement

The District shall inform families annually about the meal program, menus, and how it supports student wellness. Translation and outreach will be provided as needed.

Administrative Regulations

1. Program Implementation and Oversight

- The Superintendent or designee shall oversee compliance with the Universal Meals Program and applicable USDA regulations.
- The District shall file meal claims for reimbursement in accordance with federal and state requirements.
- Staff shall be trained on program requirements, food safety, and civil rights.

2. Meal Counting and Claiming

- Meals must be counted at the point of service using an approved method.
- Records must be maintained for all reimbursed meals, in accordance with USDA record retention policies.

3. Health and Safety Standards

- All food preparation and storage shall comply with local and state health department standards.
- Food service staff shall hold valid food handler permits.

4. Non-Discrimination and Civil Rights

- No student shall be denied a meal or treated differently based on race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, or any other characteristic protected by state or federal law.
- Meal service practices shall be free from stigma and ensure confidentiality.

5. Student and Family Communication

- Schools shall communicate weekly or monthly menus to families.
- Nutrition education may be provided as part of health or physical education programs.

6. Monitoring and Evaluation

- The Superintendent or designee shall evaluate participation rates, nutritional quality, and student feedback to improve meal services.

7. Civil Rights Compliance and Non-Discrimination

Complaints regarding the District's child nutrition programs shall be processed or referred in accordance with applicable federal regulations, 5 CCR sections 15580-15584, and current USDA/CDE directives. Allegations of discrimination in a child nutrition program shall be referred or processed as required by applicable federal and state child nutrition civil-rights requirements.