

### **Media Release for Seamless Summer Option Free Meals in School Year 2021-2022**

*Ezzell ISD* announced its policy today that this school year, healthy meals will be offered every school day to all students at no cost. Typically, a student's household must meet income eligibility requirements to qualify for free or reduced-price meals. However, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) issued guidance that allows schools to offer meals to all students at no cost for the 2021-2022 school year.

While no application or eligibility determination is required for your student to receive free meals this school year, income eligibility requirements will likely resume in the 2022-2023 school year. As such, *Ezzell ISD* will process household applications during School Year 2021-2022 to ensure student eligibility for free or reduced-price meals during the first 30 days of the 2022-2023 school year while 2022-2023 applications are being processed. Each school/site or central office has a copy of the policy, which may be reviewed upon request.

Starting on *August 9, 2021*, *Ezzell ISD* will begin distributing letters to the households of the children in the district about these 2022-2023 eligibility benefits and actions households need to take to apply. Applications also are available at *20500 FM 531*, Hallettsville, Tx

### **Criteria for Free and Reduced-Price Meal Benefits to Start School Year 2022-2023**

The following criteria will be used to determine a child's eligibility for free or reduced-price meal benefits at the beginning of School Year 2022-2023:

#### **Income**

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**

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 complete the free and reduced-price meal application and return it to *Kelli Oliver/ Food manager, 361-798-4448* or *koliver@ezzellisid.org*.

. 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 Eligibility**

*Ezzell ISD* is working with local agencies to identify all children who are categorically and program eligible. *Ezzell 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 have should contact *Kelli Oliver/ Food manager, 361-798-4448* or *koliver@ezzellisid.org*.

Any household that wishes to decline benefits should contact *Kelli Oliver/ Food manager, 361-798-4448 or koliver@ezzellisd.org*.

Applications may be submitted anytime during the school year. The information households provide on the application will be used to determine 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, *Food manager/ Kelli Oliver* 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 *Lisa Berckenhoff/Superintendent, lberkenhoff@ezzellisd.org, 361-798-4448 or 20500 FM 531, Hallettsville, Tx 79604*

### **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.

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To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the *USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form*, (AD-3027) found online at: <https://www.usda.gov/oascr/how-to-file-a-program-discrimination-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](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

**Directions: Media Release for Seamless Summer Option Free Meals in School Year 2021-2022 Sample Form**

**Purpose**

This sample form provides a model for the media release the Contracting Entity (CE) must issue prior to or during the first week of school.

**Directions for Using Sample Form**

- Provide the appropriate information for each description in brackets.
- Add CE or site-specific information as needed.
- Attach a copy of the current income eligibility guidelines.
- Distribute widely through available media outlets.
- Retain a copy of the release onsite.

Use This Form	
<b>Frequency</b>	Yearly, prior to or during the first week of school
<b>Required Form Format</b>	Use this sample or a similar document. Attach the current income eligibility guidelines, application form, or sample letters as appropriate.
<b>Record Retention</b>	Releases kept on site and made available on request. Public and charter schools are required to keep documentation related to school nutrition programs for 5 years. Private schools, other nonprofit organizations, and residential child care institutions (RCCIs) are required to keep documentation for 3 years.