

**POLICY STATEMENT
FOR FREE AND REDUCED PRICE MEALS, AFTER SCHOOL SNACKS, AND/OR FREE MILK**

The East Windsor Board of Education has agreed to participate in the:
(Name of Local Education Agency)

- National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and/or
- School Breakfast Program (SBP) and/or
- Special Milk Program (SMP) “split-session” kindergarten or
- Special Milk Program (only schools **not** participating in the National School Lunch or School Breakfast Programs are eligible to participate in the Special Milk Program).
- After School Snack Program

and accepts responsibility for providing either:

- Free and reduced price meals and/or
- Free milk to eligible children in “split session” kindergarten or
- Free milk to eligible children in “milk only” schools or
- Free or reduced price after school snacks.

The Local Education Agency (LEA) assures the Connecticut State Department of Education that the LEA will uniformly implement the following policy to determine children’s eligibility for free and reduced price meals and free milk for kindergarten and free and reduced price snacks in all schools that participate in the NSLP and/or SBP and/or After School Snack Program. The LEA also determines children’s eligibility for free milk in schools with pricing programs participating in the SMP only. In fulfilling its responsibilities, the LEA agrees to all conditions outlined in this “Policy.”

In fulfilling its responsibilities, the LEA agrees:

- A. To serve meals and/or after school snacks (or milk in those schools which offer the free milk option under the SMP) free to children from families who provide a Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) case number or a Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) case number on the application, or whose income is at or below the free scale of the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Income Eligibility Guidelines (IEGs).
- B. To serve meals and/or after school snacks at a reduced price to children from households whose income is at or below the reduced price scale of the USDA’s IEGs.
- C. To ensure there are no barriers for participation in the Child Nutrition Programs for Limited English Proficient (LEP) families and to communicate with parents and guardians in a language they can understand throughout the certification and verification processes.

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- D. To ensure that no physical segregation of, nor any other discrimination against, any child will occur because of his/her inability to pay the full price of the meal or milk. The names of the children eligible to receive free or reduced price meals and/or after school snacks or free milk shall not be published, posted, or announced in any manner, and there shall be no overt identification of any such children by use of special tokens, tickets or any other means. Further assurance is given that children eligible for free or reduced price meals and/or after school snacks or free milk shall not be required to:
1. Work for their meals or milk.
 2. Use a separate lunchroom or milk service area.
 3. Go through a separate serving line.
 4. Enter the lunchroom through a separate entrance.
 5. Eat meals or drink milk at a different time.
 6. Eat a meal different from the one sold to children paying the full price or drink milk different from that sold to children paying the full price.
- E. To set reduced price charges for lunch, breakfast or after school snacks at or below the maximum reduced price allowed by regulations and below the full price of the lunch or breakfast. **(The reduced price is as follows: 40 cents per lunch; 30 cents per breakfast; and 15 cents for after school snacks).**
- F. To follow the USDA discrimination policy: *U.S. Department of Agriculture prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the bases of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department.*
- G. To **verify** in accordance with program regulations, complete the FNS 742 Verification Collection Report and maintain records as follows:
1. A summary of the verification efforts;
 2. The total number of applications on file **on October 1**; and
 3. The percentage or number of applications verified.
- Compliance with these requirements will be monitored by the State agency as part of its supervisory assistance monitoring and verification efforts.*
- H. To establish and use a fair hearing procedure under which:
1. A family can appeal a decision made by the LEA with respect to the family's free milk or free and reduced price meal application; and
 2. The LEA can challenge the continued eligibility of any child for free or reduced price meals and/or after school snack or free milk.

During the appeal and hearing, the child who was determined to be eligible based on the original application submitted will continue to receive free or reduced price meals or free milk. Prior to initiating the hearing procedure, the school official, the

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parent/guardian may request a conference to provide an opportunity for the parent/guardian and school officials to discuss the situation, present information, obtain an explanation of data submitted in the application and the decisions rendered. Such a conference shall not in any way prejudice or diminish the right to a fair hearing.

The hearing procedure shall provide the following for both the family and the LEA:

- (a) A publicly announced, simple method for making an oral or written request for a hearing.
- (b) An opportunity to be assisted or represented by an attorney or other person.
- (c) An opportunity to examine, prior to and during the hearing, the documents and records presented to support the decision under appeal.
- (d) Reasonable promptness and convenience in scheduling a hearing, and adequate notice as to its time and place.
- (e) An opportunity to present oral or documentary evidence and arguments supporting a position without undue interference.
- (f) An opportunity to question or refute any testimony or other evidence and to confront and cross-examine any adverse witnesses.
- (g) That the hearing be conducted and the decision be made by an official who did not participate in the decision under appeal or any previous conference.
- (h) That the decision of the hearing official be based on the oral and documentary evidence presented at the hearing and entered into the hearing record.
- (i) That the parties concerned and any designated representative thereof be notified in writing of the decision.
- (j) That for each hearing a written record be prepared, including the decision under appeal, any documentary evidence and a summary of any oral testimony presented at the hearing, the decision of the hearing official and the reasons therefore, and a copy of the notification to the parties concerned, of the hearing.
- (k) That such written records shall be retained for a period of 3 years after the date of the final Claim for Reimbursement for the fiscal year to which they pertain, except that if audit findings have not been resolved, the records shall be retained beyond the 3 year period as long as required for resolution of the issues raised by the audit. These records must be made available for examination by the parties concerned or their designees at any reasonable time and place during the period.

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I. To designate a determining official(s):

<u>Pierrette Kokofsky</u> (Name)	<u>Food Service Director</u> (Title)
<u>East Windsor Public Schools</u> <u>70 South Main Street</u> (Address)	<u>East Windsor, CT 06088</u> (City, State, Zip)

to **review applications and make determinations of eligibility**. Such official(s) will use the criteria outlined in this policy to determine which individual children are eligible for free and reduced price meals or free milk.

J. To develop and distribute to each child’s parents or guardian a letter as provided in sample on-line materials. In addition, an application form for free and reduced price meals or free milk shall be distributed with the parent letter at or about the beginning of each school year or whenever there is a change in eligibility criteria. The letter to parents with the free and reduced price meal application attachment shall have **only the income eligibility guidelines for reduced price meals** with an explanation that households with incomes at or below the reduced price guidelines may be eligible for either free or reduced price meals. **The letter to parents with the free milk application form shall list the income eligibility guidelines for free milk.**

Interested parents or guardians are responsible for filling out the application and returning it to the school for review. Such applications and documentation of determinations made will be maintained for a period of 3 years following the end of the school year to which they pertain.

Applications may be filed at any time during the year. Parents or guardians enrolling a child in a school for the first time shall be supplied with appropriate meal or milk application materials regardless of the time of year the child is registered. If a child transfers from one school to another under the jurisdiction of the same LEA, his/her eligibility for free or reduced price meals or free milk will be transferred to and honored by the receiving school. Parents or guardians will be promptly notified of the acceptance or denial of their application. Children will be served meals or milk immediately upon the establishment of their eligibility.

It is recognized that in certain cases foster children are also eligible for these benefits. If a household has a child living with them who is a legal ward of the state of Connecticut, that child is considered a family of one, and monthly income from the State should be listed on the free and reduced price meal application. A *foster child* is categorically eligible for free meals and may be included as a member of the foster family if the foster family chooses to also apply for benefits for other children. Including children in foster care as household members can help other children in the household qualify for free or reduced price meals. 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.

The LEA will include an explanation on the free and reduced price meal application and

instructions that households with children who are categorically eligible under Other Source Categorically Eligible Programs (e.g., homeless, runaway, Head Start, Even Start) should complete the free and reduced price meal application checking the appropriate box or contact the school for assistance in receiving benefits.

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When an application is rejected, parents or guardians will be provided written notification, which shall include:

1. The reason for the denial of benefits, e.g., income in excess of allowable limits or incomplete application;
2. Notification of the right to appeal;
3. Instructions on how to appeal; and
4. A statement reminding parents that they may reapply for free and reduced price benefits or free milk at any time during the school year.

The reasons for ineligibility shall be properly documented and retained on file at the LEA level.

The designated **hearing official** is:

<u>Theresa M. Kane, Ed.D</u>	<u>Superintendent of Schools</u>
(Name)	(Title)
<u>East Windsor Public Schools</u>	
<u>70 South Main Street</u>	<u>East Windsor, CT 06088</u>
(Address)	(City, State, Zip)

Note: *The hearing official must be someone **not** involved in the original eligibility determination. It is suggested that he/she hold a position at a higher administrative level than that of the determining official.*

- K. To annually **submit a public/press release** containing both the free and reduced price eligibility guidelines and all other information outlined in the parent letter, to the local news media, local unemployment offices and major employers contemplating or experiencing large layoffs.
- L. To agree to prevent disclosure of confidential free and reduced price eligibility information as required under 7 CFR 245.6(f-k).
- M. To establish a procedure to collect money from children who pay for their meals, after school snacks and milk and to account for the number of free, reduced price and full price meals and/or after school snacks served or the number of half-pints of free and full price milk served. This collection procedure will be used so that no other child in the school will consciously be made aware by such procedure of the identity of the children receiving free or reduced price meals or free milk.

Note: *Describe in detail the payment collection method(s) used in **each** school or group of schools.*

- N. To amend its policy statement for any substantive changes to its free and reduced price policy and include a description of the change (e.g., changes that accurately describes its current free and reduced price policies.) Amendments must be submitted for approval by the State agency **by October 15** and the amendments must be approved by the State agency **prior** to implementation. All changes in eligibility criteria must be publicly announced in the same manner used at the beginning of the school year.

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The amendments must reflect:

1. Changes made necessary by law/regulations;
2. Changes made by the LEA (e.g., changes in collection procedures, designation of new approving/hearing official(s), changes in procedures for accepting applications, revisions in the letter to households or application for free and reduced price meals/free milk);
3. Additional information specified by the State agency.