

Child Nutrition

SCHOOL BREAKFAST AND LUNCH

All low-income children qualify for school meals, regardless of immigration status. Children who eat regular meals learn better and are usually sick less than other children. All public schools and some private and parochial schools offer breakfast and lunch programs.

Some schools in Los Angeles County offer free meals to the entire student body based on the percentage of eligible students, regardless of family income.

Many schools offer breakfasts in the classroom, at recess, or on the bus. Ask your principal. In addition, you and your child can influence the menus served at the school by getting involved.

► 1. How to Apply

You should be given an application for the meal program in your own language at the beginning of the school year or whenever your child transfers. You can also ask for one at any time from the school office, because if your income goes down during the year, your child may become eligible.

If you receive CalWORKs, food stamps, or the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations, the only information you have to give is your case number, and your child automatically qualifies for free meals. If you do not receive CalWORKs or food stamps, you will have to list the total income of your household, the names of household members, and the Social Security number of the adult signing the application. If you do not have a number, just write "none". You are not required to apply for a number or give a reason for not having one.

In some cases, you must give the school some proof of your income (by showing your pay stubs to the school secretary, for example). All information gathered is confidential and cannot be given to other government agencies.

► 2. Income Limits

Your child qualifies for free or reduced-price meals if your gross family income per month (income before taxes or deductions) is below these levels:

Family Size	Free Meals	Reduced Price Meals
1	\$1037	\$1,476
2	\$1390	\$1,978
3	\$1744	\$2,481
4	\$2097	\$2,984
5	\$2450	\$3,486
6	\$2803	\$3,989
7	\$3509	\$4,491
8	\$3296	\$4,994
Each extra+\$354		+\$503
(Accurate to June 30 2006)		

If the information you give on the application shows that you qualify, your child can begin receiving free or reduced-price meals immediately.

Foster children are often eligible for free meals, regardless of the foster parents' income.

Reduced-prices are set by the school district, but the law states that breakfast cannot cost more than 30 cents and lunch not more than 40 cents for reduced price meals. The district can charge whatever it wants for full price meals.

Extra Food for Pregnant Students

At many schools, pregnant and breastfeeding students can get extra food at breakfast or lunch, or an extra snack. To be eligible, the student must provide some written verification that she is pregnant or breastfeeding from a doctor, nurse, midwife, clinic, WIC or Cal-Learn program.

SUMMER LUNCH PROGRAM

All children age 18 and under can eat free, nutritious meals during the summer or any time when school is out for more than 15 days through the

Summer Food Program. No application or other kind of paperwork is required. Meals and snacks are served at schools, parks, and recreation centers. Sometimes there are other activities including sports, games, and arts and crafts. Some sites serve lunch only, but others also serve breakfast or snacks.

Some parks operate year-round and can feed your children when they are "off-track" from year-round schools.

The Summer Food Program is located in areas where at least half the children qualify for free- or reduced price-meals in school. However, any child under 19 can eat there free regardless of where they live or their family's income. If the child is physically handicapped, the age limit is 21.

Some residential or day camps and homeless shelters offer the program, but you may have to fill out an application like the one required for school lunches.

To find out where your children can eat free when they are not in school, or if your local park, shelter, or recreational center does not sponsor a Summer Food Service Program and you are interested, call the California Food Policy Advocates at (213) 482-8200.

CHILD CARE & AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM

Family day care homes, homeless shelters, after-school programs and child care centers can receive government funds to help pay for meals and snacks for children. Children must be enrolled, under age 12, or under age 15 if they are handicapped. Snacks are served at many after-school programs. There the age limit is 18.

If you want you provide childcare and want your agency to participate in this program, call the Child Nutrition and Food Distribution Division, Department of Education (800) 952-5609.

WHAT ARE MY RIGHTS?

- The law says that children who get free or reduced-price meals cannot be treated differently than those who get full-price meals. No separate lines, different meals or meal tickets, required work, or other types of discrimination are allowed.
- Ask the school, child-care sponsor, or summer recreation program sponsor for a "fair hearing" if you apply and are unfairly denied. Also request the hearing if you receive notice that your benefits will be cut. By doing so within 10 days, your child's benefits will continue until the hearing takes place.

- Programs must meet certain standards for sanitation and for the amount, type, and appearance of the food served. You can complain if these standards are not met, and you and your child can also influence improvements in the menu.
- If you are interested in getting schools to offer more fresh fruits and vegetables and less "junk" food you can call the Healthy School Food Coalition at (323) 341-5097 or the California Food Policy Advocates at (213) 482-8200
Encourage your local schools, day

care homes and centers, and summer programs to offer these programs so that all our young people can learn and grow properly.

Food for Seniors and the Homebound

CONGREGATE MEALS

Anyone age 60 and over can participate in congregate meal programs, regardless of income. Spouses of participants can also get meals, no matter what their age.

There are about 200 sites for congregate meals throughout L.A. County. Most are located in churches, synagogues, and community centers, but you do not have to be a member of the sponsoring organization to participate. Some programs are able to provide transportation to the meal site or can send meals home for people who are temporarily ill or homebound.

Because participants can assist in menu planning, suggest contribution levels, and set hours for meals, these arrangements will differ from site to site. Your clergyperson or a social service worker may know of a center suited to your needs and preferences.

You can get help to locate a program by calling ((213) 738-4004 if you live anywhere in the City or County of Los Angeles. Participants cannot be required to pay for meals. However, a

contribution to help support the program is often suggested. Each participant decides what he or she can contribute, if anything, and collection of this money must be completely anonymous. Some group meal programs are authorized to accept food stamps.

Ask your congregate meal site if they have coupons for seniors over age 60 good for \$20 at participating Farmers' Markets.

BROWN BAG PROGRAM

If you are 60 years or older and low income you can participate in the Brown Bag program. Each month, you can get two bags of food (about 18 pounds of food) including canned and dry goods, frozen products, bread, and dairy products. You have to fill out an application. Some Brown Bag programs encourage a small membership fee, but this is not required for participation. You can also volunteer to help in the distribution. To find a Brown Bag program near you call the LA Regional Food Bank at (323) 234-3030. There are 23 sites spread through LA County.

MEALS ON WHEELS

There are groups who deliver meals regularly to those who are homebound. Each group sets its own rules about how many meals will be served and about the days and times that meals are available. Most programs require some evidence that participants need this service such as inability to cook or shop due to illness, frailty, or disability. Some programs can provide for special diets. You cannot be required to pay for meals if the program is federally funded, but sponsoring groups will ask for a small contribution. Some meals-on-wheels programs are authorized to accept food stamps. To find out about meals-on-wheels anywhere in Los Angeles County, call (213) 738-4004.

PROJECT ANGEL FOOD

Project Angel Food is a private agency that delivers free hot meals to homebound people with AIDS. They have same day service in these areas: Venice, East Los Angeles, Pasadena, North Hollywood, Silver Lake, and South Central. Call (323) 845-1800 for meals or (323) 845-1816 to volunteer.