**[SCHOOL DISTRICT/SCHOOL] Offers Free Meals to All Children Regardless of Income Levels**

**[CITY, State, Month [DATE]], 2021 –** [School/District name]reminds families that any child 18 years of age or younger, regardless of a family’s income, can receive free meals through the end of the school year. Because of the way the federal government funds school meals, the [school OR district] will be financially better off if more students take school meals during COVID-19.

“It’s counterintuitive, but every child can help our school by taking free school meals,” said [Foodservice director’s name, title] of [School/District name]. “We don’t need to verify income for families to receive these meals – they are available to all kids, even those not enrolled at our school. We have plenty of meals to meet the needs of all the children in our area and the costs associated with producing more meals are more than recouped in federal reimbursements.”

Through the end of the 2020-21 school year, the federal government is allowing [School/District name] to provide free meals to all children 18 years old or younger, regardless of income levels. The more meals provided, the better off the [school OR district] will be this year and next.

During distance learning, we are providing [5 OR 7]-day meal packs, with [breakfast and lunch OR breakfast, lunch and snack] for weekly pick up. Children do not need to be students at the school where meals are picked up, nor do they need to be present when meals are picked up.

Picking up meals is easy and convenient. Meals are distributed one day a week for several hours via a no-contact drive-thru (see below). Parents simply pull up, state how many children under 18 are in their household and the school nutrition staff provides the appropriate number of meals.

FREE SCHOOL MEALS ARE AVAILABLE:

[INSERT PICK UP DAY, TIMES, LOCATIONS]

Free school meals can help families stretch their household food budget, save time and support the local economy through the school’s buy-local efforts and employment of local residents. School meals also help provide children with sound nutrition and a sense of normalcy in turbulent times.

**SCHOOL MEAL FUNDING**

School meal funding is complex and depends on the number of meals a school or district provides in multiple ways: schools receive subsidies for each breakfast, lunch and snack served, even those provided to students who pay for their meals. In addition, the school or district receives full or partial reimbursement for meals provided to students eligible for free or reduced-price meals. Further, a school or district receives a specified amount of no-cost USDA commodity foods based on the number of meals served the prior school year.

Distance learning has greatly affected the number of students and meals schools are serving this year, which negatively impacts foodservice budgets and the amount of “free” commodity food for which schools will be eligible in the 2021-22 school year. With less commodity foods, schools need to purchase more food, exacerbating the financial impact of lower participation this year.

Families’ participation in school meals is crucial to the financial solvency of [School/District Name] foodservice program and its ability to continue to provide meals to all children, especially those who need them most.

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