



Strategies for Expanding School Breakfast Program Access

This section outlines various strategies that can be used to increase program participation. Ideas and resources are also included for improving meal quality and incorporating nutrition education into breakfast.

There are a variety of ways to expand participation in the School Breakfast Program.

PROVISION 2/PROVISION 3

How Does Provision 2/Provision 3 Work?

Provisions 2 and 3 allow schools to serve breakfast at no charge to any student who wants it that day, regardless of their household income. However, the school claims the federal reimbursement based on the eligibility category for that student. Schools make this determination using income information from household applications or Direct Certification lists. The special provisions are usually offered at schools that have a high percentage of students who qualify for free or reduced price meals. Because students don't need to bring cash, tickets or cards, Provisions 2 and 3 lend themselves to breakfast in the classroom, but they also work with other meal service options such as Grab 'N' Go, or a mid-morning nutrition break.

Many schools find that using Provision 2 or 3 at breakfast increases participation so drastically that they don't actually realize a loss from otherwise paying students. The special provisions also decrease paperwork burdens by allowing schools to use base year eligibility data at breakfast for subsequent years when certain conditions are met.

Why Use Provision 2/Provision 3 for the School Breakfast Program?

When breakfast is served at no charge, more students eat breakfast. If Provision 2/Provision 3 is adopted to provide free breakfasts to all children, it can reduce the stigma that may be attached to eating breakfast at school. Use of Provision 2/Provision 2 also eliminates the possible burden for students who would pay up to 30 cents for a reduced price breakfast. In addition, children who participate in school meal programs tend to have improved attendance, less tardiness, and increased test scores. The quality of their diets also improves. While serving breakfast to more students may increase labor costs, the overall cost per meal usually decreases using Provision 2 compared with traditional service methods.

When Does Use of Provision 2/Provision 3 at Breakfast Work Best?

Provision 2 or 3 at breakfast works well in schools with greater than 75% of students eligible for free and reduced price meals. However, schools with fewer eligible students have operated the program successfully. If the following situations are present at your school, employing a special counting and claiming provision at breakfast is likely to be a success for you:

- Stigma appears to be a factor in low participation rates
- The number of reduced -price eligible students who eat breakfast is much lower than the number who participate at lunch
- Teachers are supportive of breakfast and realize its importance to learning
- Cafeteria space can accommodate increased participation
- Breakfast in the classroom or other methods are options and having no payments needed makes these easier to operate

For more information on special counting and claiming provisions, visit:

http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/governance/prov-1-2-3/provision1_2_3.htm

Note: Another special counting and claiming provision exists (Community Eligibility), but it requires the participating school to include the National School Lunch Program under the same option. As such, beginning in SY 2014-15, Community Eligibility could also be used to achieve free, universal breakfast service, though Provisions 2 and 3 are highlighted specifically because they can be implemented for the School Breakfast Program only.

ELIMINATING THE REDUCED PRICE FEE FOR BREAKFAST

How Does the Elimination for Reduced Price Breakfast Work?

Schools that eliminate reduced price payment for breakfast only offer their students two prices for breakfast – free and full price. Students that qualify for reduced price meals receive their breakfast for free in this model. This works well in schools with a high percentage of students that qualify for free and reduced price meals, but have low participation of reduced price students.

The school serves reimbursable breakfasts as it normally does. The only difference is that a breakfast is offered at no charge to students who qualify for either free or reduced price meals. Even though the school only uses two categories for charging students, the school still receives Federal reimbursement at the correct income category for each student. No additional money is provided from the Federal government to cover the cost of the reduced price students that are provided free meals.

Schools that eliminate reduced price charges for breakfasts often see an increase in participation in the lunch program, too. Many schools find that Federal reimbursements are enough to cover the cost of serving free breakfast to this group of students.

Why Eliminate Reduced Price Breakfasts?

When you eliminate reduced price charges for breakfasts, more students eat breakfast. Offering breakfast for free to students that qualify for reduced price meals removes any financial barrier that these students may experience. The more students who eat breakfast the better their overall diet quality, attendance, tardiness, behavior and test scores. In addition, more revenue is generated from the federal government if more students eat breakfast.

When Does Eliminating Reduced Price for Breakfast Work Best?

Eliminating reduced price for breakfasts works well in schools with low breakfast participation from reduced price students. Here are some other qualities where eliminating reduced price breakfasts are likely to be successful:

- High free and reduced approval rate at school
- Additional staffing is not necessary to handle the increase in participation
- Staff are supportive of breakfast and realize its importance to learning
- Breakfast is easily accessible to students

DIRECT CERTIFICATION

How Does Direct Certification Work?

Children participating in Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly the Food Stamp Program), and the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) are automatically eligible for free meals. Direct certification allows school districts to qualify children for free meals without further application.

Why use Direct Certification?

Direct certification reduces the amount of staff time dedicated to processing and verifying applications. Meal participation counts can increase as direct certification captures new children, and studies show that direct certification can increase both free and reduced price participation. Direct certification benefits parents as well since they are not required to complete an application.