

Philip Qualman

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USDA extends free lunches for all students through the end of the year

*Parents still encouraged to apply for Free and Reduced Lunch
to keep benefits when the current plan expires*

Eagle, CO – The Eagle County School District announced today that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has extended its plan to serve free meals to all children into the fall months to ensure all children have access to nutritious food as the country recovers from the pandemic. There will be no lunch or breakfast costs for any student under this program. However, it is critically important for families to still apply for Free and Reduced Lunches to ensure they continue receiving benefits after the current program expires.

“This is very good news for our community,” said Superintendent Philip Qualman. “The Free and Reduced Lunch program is federally funded and confidential, so our students receive safe, healthy, and nutritious food. We believe that to develop a student’s mind, you first have to reach their heart. It’s hard to reach the heart when their stomach is grumbling, so making sure children are not hungry is foundational.”

The new program is available to all students, not just those in financial need. Students learning remotely, online, or who are out on quarantine can all receive a nutritious lunch. Parents are asked to work with their individual schools to arrange for safe pick up of meals if their student is not attending that day.

The program also includes breakfast served at Avon Elementary, Edwards Elementary, Gypsum Elementary, and Homestake Peak School.

Not a Public Charge

Importantly, the Federal Free and Reduced Lunch program is NOT a public charge that would show up on a future application for citizenship. In addition, the program does not ask immigration status and does not share data with other agencies.

“We want everyone in our community to know that providing nutritious meals to children comes before any concerns of immigration status,” Qualman continued. “Anyone struggling financially, including those newly impacted by the pandemic caused recession, can and should privately apply for this benefit.”

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The application is available on the school district's website at <https://www.eagleschools.net/lunches>. Parents can also ask for assistance in applying, including access to a computer and internet service, by calling their school's office. In addition, Eagle County's MIRA bus travels to neighborhoods and can assist with enrollment in this plan.

Families who qualify for Free and Reduced Lunch also receive other important benefits through schools. Activity fees, AP test fees, and athletic fees are also waived. Waiving these fees provides equal and equitable access to the full educational experience schools offer.

School districts receive targeted financial support based on the percentage of students who qualify for Free and Reduced Lunch. This financial support funds programs designed to further assist the learning needs of students living in need.

This benefit is a continuation of the summer meal program and is effective immediately at our schools. The school district keeps a count of meals served and submits this information to the USDA for reimbursement to cover the cost of the meals. No names or identifiable information are submitted as part of this information.

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