

National School Lunch Program

The **National School Lunch Program (NSLP)** is a federally assisted meal program established under the National School Lunch Act that provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free lunches to students each school day. It is administered at the federal level by the USDA and at the state level by ISBE.

Who Can Participate in the NSLP?

- Public Schools
- Non-Public School that are non-profit and registered with the ISBE
- RCCI's

Program Requirements

Nutritional Requirements

School lunches must meet meal requirements specific to the age/grade grouping being served. Please visit the ISBE website for detailed [Meal Pattern Information and Nutritional Requirements](#).

Service Requirements

The reimbursable meal must be priced as a unit and available to all children regardless of their ability to pay. Meal service for lunch must be available every school day (attendance day of 5 hours or more) between the hours of 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. with sufficient time for the meal to be served and eaten.

Additional Requirements

Local education agencies (LEAs) participating in the NSLP are required to develop a [Wellness Policy](#) with the objectives of improving the school nutrition environment, promoting student health, and reducing childhood obesity.

The [School Food Service Rules](#) (23 Illinois Administrative Code 305), established requirements for Illinois Free Lunch and Breakfast Program, covers the sale of competitive food in schools, student workers, and government-donated commodities.

Eligible Children

All children enrolled at a participating site may receive a meal through the NSLP. Children from families with incomes at or below 130 percent of the poverty level are eligible for free meals. Those with incomes between 130 and 185 percent of the poverty level are eligible for reduced-price meals, for which students can be charged no more than 40 cents for lunch. Meals are also available at the paid price for all children who do not qualify for free or reduced-price meals.

Local school food authorities (SFAs) set their prices for full-priced meals based on [Paid Lunch Equity \(PLE\)](#) requirements. Food service programs should operate as a non-profit program.