



FRAC Facts: Categorical Eligibility of Foster Children

The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act expanded automatic eligibility to foster children for free meals through the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs and the Child and Adult Care Food Program.

How it Works

- Foster children may be certified for free meals without an application through documentation from the appropriate State or local agency.
- Only foster children who are formally placed by a State child welfare agency or a court are considered automatically eligible; it doesn't apply to children in informal foster care arrangements.
- Foster children are now eligible for free meals regardless of personal income. Previously, a separate application for free and reduced price meals was required for a foster child (who was considered a household of one) and any personal income for the child was reported on the application.
- Guardians with foster and non-foster children may include the foster child as a household member on their household application to streamline the application process and help the foster family's non-foster children qualify for free or reduced price meals based on household size and income.
- All household applications and supporting materials must be updated to reflect these changes no later than the beginning of SY 2011-2012 materials.
- FNS has provided updated prototype applications and supporting materials at www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/frp/frp.process.htm.

Benefits

- Foster families no longer have to complete paperwork to obtain free school lunch for their foster children.
- Foster families can include all the children in the household on their school meal application which will help them get school meal benefits for non-foster children.
- When school districts revise their applications, additional changes can be made to make it easier for all families to apply. For suggestions see FRAC's guide at http://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/09/guide_qualifying_students_schoolmeals_2010