

- After the initial application is sent out, send reminders to parents by letters, robocalls, texts, or memos from the principal or child nutrition director. Focus follow-up efforts on families with more than one child in the district.
- Explain the confidentiality protections for the application. Promote confidentiality by sending return envelopes with “confidential” stamped on the front with the application.
 - Include language that the school meals program does not apply to the “public charge” rule and that a social security number is not required on the application.
- Work with trusted messengers in the community, like faith-based organizations, to encourage families to submit application and assist in the completion of applications.
- Use face-to-face time with parents as opportunities to explain the application and encourage families to return the forms. Examples of opportunities include parent-teacher conferences, back-to-school nights, and virtual meetings.
- Consider teaming up with community organizations, sports teams, or local businesses to offer raffle prizes or recruit local celebrities to promote collecting school meal applications.
- Offer rewards such as monetary stipends or school equipment to principals if a certain percentage of the forms is collected.
- Translate applications and resources in several languages depending on the community population.
- Help parents navigate the application process by having video tutorials on completing the online form and offering district “help centers” or “office hours” that assist parents with filling out paperwork and answering questions.
- Increase the availability of the application by sending it out with mandatory forms such as the health form, making it available online and at other places throughout the community.
- Use different community-based sites to emphasize the importance of returning the application. For example, use immunization clinics as a venue for completing and turning in meal applications while parents are waiting for immunization forms to be filled out.
- Remind parents and guardians about applications at grab and go meal pick-up sites. Flyers and follow-up information can be included in meal bags distributed to remote learners.
- Share information over district social media channels.

Partner Resources

- Hunger Free Colorado: [School Meal Application](#) Toolkit
- Hunger Free New Jersey: [Boosting School Meal Applications Critical During Pandemic](#)
- Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction: [It's More Than a Meal Application Toolkit](#)
- Maryland Hunger Solutions in collaboration with FRAC: [Best Practices in School Meal Application Collection](#) (2010)

School District Examples

- Tewksbury Public Schools: [Meal Application landing page](#)
- San Juan Unified School District: [Meal Application landing page](#)