



## **The New Public Charge Rule Does Not Include Free and Reduced-Price School Meals**

The Trump Administration's new Department of Homeland Security public charge rule *does not include* receiving free or reduced-price school meals (or the other child nutrition programs that schools operate, like the Summer Food Service Program and the Child and Adult Care Food Program) in a public charge determination. The new rule directly impacts a relatively small group of people — some who will be applying for a green card (lawful permanent residence) or a visa to enter or stay in the U.S. — but it is expected to have a broader “chilling effect” that will reduce the number of immigrant families applying for benefits, including school meals.

Because of this “chilling effect,” the final rule may make it harder for school districts to get school meal applications back from immigrant families. Ensuring that all children who are eligible for free or reduced-price school meals are certified to receive them is critical to ensure that students have the nutrition they need to do well in school and to support school nutrition finances. It is important for schools to send a strong message that school meals are available to all children enrolled in their school, and that families can and should apply. Schools can share the following information with their families:

### ***Is participation in free or reduced-price school meals subject to public charge?***

**No.** Participation in free or reduced-price school breakfast and lunch will not be considered when making a public charge determination. Any child enrolled in a school that participates in the school breakfast and lunch programs can apply for and be certified to receive free or reduced-price school meals. Participation in school meals cannot be used as a factor in a public charge determination for the child or the child's parent or guardian.

### ***Will applying for free or reduced-price school meals impact public charge for immigrant parents?***

**No.** A parent or guardian submitting an application for a child to receive free or reduced-price school meals will not be deemed a public charge just because they submitted a school meals application to receive free or reduced-price school meals. All families in the United States have the same right to apply for and receive free or reduced-price school meals.

### ***Does public charge apply to the other child nutrition programs?***

**No.** Receiving afterschool snacks and meals or summer meals does not impact a public charge determination. None of the federal child nutrition programs — the School Breakfast Program, National School Lunch Program, Summer Food Service Program, Child and Adult Care Food Program, and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children — are considered when making a public charge determination.

There is a lot of misinformation about what the new rule means and who is impacted, but for school meals, the answer is easy: Families can apply for free or reduced-price school meals, and children can participate without concern about a public charge determination affecting them or their families.