

Food & Nutrition Services Parent's Manual



Food and Nutrition Services
2024-2025

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An Overview

Statement

Food and Nutrition Services is committed to providing the opportunity for every child to eat a well-balanced and nutritious meal daily. In advocating student achievement, our aspiration is to develop life-long eating habits that promote health and wellness through proper nutrition.

By combining culinary and nutrition talents, our goals are to:

- Prevent hunger by providing attractive nourishing meals in a welcoming atmosphere
- Contribute to student success
- Offer nutrition education to students, employees and the community
- Maintain a safe and clean environment
- Attract, hire, support and retain a high-quality workforce
- Communicate and engage with students to build awareness and trust

Program Information

The School District of Indian River County offers a choice of healthy meals each school day. All meals served meet the nutritional standards set by the United States Department of Agriculture. All meals which are prepared in our kitchens are either baked or steamed. In order to reinforce healthy eating, we refrain from frying any food. All foods offered, including ala carte items, meet dietary restrictions and are Smart Snack compliant.

Meal Costs

The School District of Indian River County offers a choice of healthy meals each school day. All meals served meet the nutrition standards set by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The following is the meal prices set for the 2024-2025 school year.

Grade Level	Meal Offered	Cost
Elementary Schools	Breakfast – Full Pay	\$1.50
	Lunch – Full Pay	\$2.50
	Breakfast – Reduced Priced	\$0.30
	Lunch – Reduced Priced	\$0.40
Middle Schools	Breakfast – Full Pay	\$1.50
	Lunch – Full Pay	\$2.75
	Breakfast – Reduced Priced	\$0.30
	Lunch – Reduced Priced	\$0.40
High Schools	Breakfast – Full Pay	\$1.50
	Lunch – Full Pay	\$2.75
	Breakfast – Reduced Priced	\$0.30
	Lunch – Reduced Priced	\$0.40
Adults	Breakfast – Full Pay	\$3.00
	Lunch – Full Pay	\$4.50

Reimbursable Meals

Offer vs. Serve

OVS applies to menu planning and meal service and allows students to decline some of the food offered in a reimbursable meal. When students and cafeteria staff understand OVS, the serving lines move smoothly, allowing students to make the most of mealtime and enjoy the wholesome and appealing foods they are served. It also helps reduce overall food costs.

At the point of service, cashiers must be trained and informed on what constitutes a reimbursable meal. This includes understanding foods and/or beverages that are a la carte and/or extras, which do not count under OVS.

Breakfast

Under OVS at breakfast, schools must offer at least four food items from the three required food components (fruit, grains, and fluid milk). In order for a meal to be considered complete, or reimbursable, students MUST select three items from the four offered components, one of which MUST be a fruit.

Lunch

Under OVS at lunch, schools must offer all five food components (meats/meat alternates, grains, fruits, vegetables, and fluid milk) in at least the minimum required quantities. In order for a meal to be considered complete, or reimbursable, students MUST select three items from the five offered components, one of which MUST be a fruit.

*Water does not count as one of the three required food components and cannot be served as a substitute for milk.

Allergies

A food allergy is a condition in which the immune system reacts abnormally to a component of a food. Symptoms can range from mild reactions, such as hives or stomach cramps, to life-threatening anaphylaxis, characterized by difficulty breathing and fainting from low blood pressure. It's important to note that ninety percent of food allergies are caused by just eight foods: milk, egg, peanut, tree nuts, wheat, soy, fish and shellfish.

The food service department has implemented the following:

- Identify children with food allergies and have the allergen flagged/blocked on their account at the POS.
- Provide general training on food allergies for all staff and provide in-depth training for staff who have frequent contact with children with food allergies.

- Develop food-handling policies and procedures to prevent food allergens from unintentionally contacting another food. All employees must wear gloves when handling food; no bare hand contact.
- Sanitize and disinfect all tables/equipment/serving utensils between tasks to prevent cross-contamination.

Menu Modifications

If your child has an allergy or disability as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act and that disability prevents your child from eating the regular school meal, the school will make any substitution prescribed by a medical professional at no extra charge. The school is not required to make a substitution for a food allergy unless the allergy meets the definition of a disability. If you believe your child needs substitutions, please contact the cafeteria manager or the nutrition specialist.

Online Meal Payments

We offer an online Meal Payment Program, a state-of-the-art online service that offers you the convenience and information you need to manage your student's meal account. Parents who choose to make prepayments using Linq Connect will have a small program fee added to each family transaction based on the amount deposited. The fee is used to cover the credit card and other payment processing fees and is not collected by our district. The system has been overwhelmingly successful thus far, and we encourage all parents to utilize the Online Payment Center.

For those who do wish to prepay into their student's meal account, visit www.linqconnect.com .

Charge Limits

In the event that a student's balance drops below zero, students are allowed to charge meals up to \$30.00 in elementary schools, \$20.00 in middle schools, and \$10.00 in high schools. Once this limit is reached, the student will be served alternate meals until the amount owed is paid. Additionally, courtesy phone messages will go out to parents whose children's accounts have an outstanding balance.

Payments can be made by sending cash or a check to your child's school. We also offer the convenience of paying online by visiting www.linqconnect.com .

Return Check Notice

The School District of Indian River County has entered into an agreement with Payliance for the collection of all returned checks issued to all Indian River County schools. The district requires that you make sure the following information is on all checks written:

- Full Name
- Street Address
- Home Phone Number

If your check is returned by your bank, it will be automatically forwarded by the Indian River County school district's bank directly to Payliance after the first presentation. Payliance will contact you in order to collect the face amount of the worthless check plus the state allowed collection fee. If you do not properly respond to Payliance or Payliance is unable to contact you, Payliance may re-present your check to the bank electronically along with applicable collection fees.

Grace Period

If your child was receiving free or reduced-price meals in June at an Indian River County Public School or Sebastian Charter Jr. High, his/her benefits will carryover for up to 30 days into the new school year or until your new application is processed. The application meal status takes precedence over the carryover benefits. If your child is not processed as eligible by the end of the 30 days, he/she loses the benefits and must pay for meals. Remember, a new meal application must be submitted every school year.

Applications for Free or Reduced Priced Meals

The National School Lunch & Breakfast Program is subsidized for low-income families. Children who qualify under the Federal Income Eligibility Guidelines may get meals free or for the reduced price of 30 cents for breakfast and 40 cents for lunch.

How to Apply for Free or Reduced Priced Meals

Apply online using the website www.lingconnect.com . Meal applications will be available for the upcoming school year July 19, 2024.

If you have any questions about the application, please call 772-564-4982.

Who Can Receive Free or Reduced Priced Meals?

If you now receive WIC, SNAP or TANF for your child, if you are unemployed, or if are applying for a foster child, your child(ren) may be eligible for free meals. Also, if your household income is within the limits on the Federal Income Guidelines, your child(ren) can may qualify for free or reduced price meals.

Do I Need an Application each year?

Yes, you must submit a new application each school year.

What Happens While I'm Waiting For My Application to Be Processed?

Until our office approves your meal application, your children must pay full price for meals. You will need to pack lunches for your children or give them money to purchase school meals.

How Long Will It take to Process My Application?

Completed meal applications will be processed within 10 business days. Incomplete applications may take longer to process and will be returned for additional information.

Verification

Once a year, all applications that have been submitted are subject to verification. If your application has been randomly selected for verification, you will be sent a notice indicating such. You will be asked to submit pay stubs as well as other documentation to verify the data entered on the application. Once the information has been verified and is deemed accurate, you will receive a notice stating your child's meal benefits will remain unchanged.

Should a discrepancy be identified during the verification process, information submitted will be used to resubmit the application. Meal benefits may be reduced or denied upon completion of the verification. A notification will be sent to you indicating the new status of your child's meal benefits.

Refunds

Should a child withdraw or graduate from a school in the district, a parent may request a refund of any funds remaining on the student's account. Please complete the refund form on the Food and Nutrition Services website at https://www.indianriverschools.org/departments/food_nutrition_services . Once completed, the form can be

mailed to the Food and Nutrition Serviced Department, Support Services Complex, 6055 62nd Avenue, Vero Beach, FL 32967. Please allow at least 2 weeks for the refund, once the form is received by the department.

Wellness Policy

District Wellness Policy 8510

As required by law, the School Board establishes the following wellness policy for the School District.

The Board recognizes that good nutrition and regular physical activity affect the health and well-being of the District's students. Furthermore, research suggests that there is a positive correlation between a student's health and well-being and his/her ability to learn. Moreover, schools can play an important role in the developmental process by which students establish their health and nutrition habits by providing nutritious meals and snacks through the schools' meal programs, by supporting the development of good eating habits, and by promoting increased physical activity both in and out of school.

The Board, however, believes this effort to support the students' development of healthy behaviors and habits with regard to eating and exercise cannot be accomplished by the schools alone. It will be necessary for not only the staff, but also parents and the public at large to be involved in a community-wide effort to promote, support, and model such healthy behaviors and habits.

The Board sets the following goals in an effort to enable students to establish good health and nutrition habits:

A. Nutrition Education

1. Nutrition education shall be included in the sequential, comprehensive Health curriculum in accordance with the curriculum standards and benchmarks established by the State.
2. Nutrition education shall extend beyond the classroom by engaging and involving the school's food service staff and community-based services.
3. Nutrition education posters, such as the New Meal Pattern Basics, will be displayed in the cafeteria.
4. The school cafeteria shall serve as a learning lab by allowing students to apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills taught in the classroom when making choices at mealtime.

B. Physical Activity

1. Physical Education

A sequential, comprehensive physical education program (including physical activities) shall be provided for students including those with disabilities, special health care needs, and in alternative educational settings (to the extent consistent with students' IEPs), in accordance with the standards and benchmarks established by the State.

2. Physical Activity

Physical activity and movement shall be integrated, when possible, across the curricula and throughout the school day.

C. Other School-Based Activities

1. The schools shall schedule mealtimes so there is minimum disruption by bus schedules, recess, and other special programs or events.
2. The school shall provide attractive, clean environments in which the students eat.
3. Schools in our system utilize electronic identification and payment systems, therefore, eliminating any stigma or identification of students eligible to receive free and/or reduced meals.
4. A wellness committee shall exist at each work site to research and implement best practices for student and staff wellness at that location.

D. Nutrition Promotion

1. encourage students to increase their consumption of healthful foods during the school day;
2. create an environment that reinforces the development of healthy eating habits, including offering the following healthy foods that comply with the USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the USDA Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards:
 - a. a variety of fresh produce to include those prepared without added fats, sugars, refined sugars, and sodium;
 - b. a variety of vegetables daily to include specific subgroups as defined by dark green, red/orange, legumes, and starchy;
 - c. whole grain products – half of all grains need to be whole grain-rich upon initial implementation and all grains must be whole grain-rich;
 - d. fluid milk that is fat-free (unflavored and flavored) and low-fat (unflavored);
 - e. meals designed to meet specific calorie ranges for age/grade groups;
 - f. eliminate trans-fat from school meals;
 - g. require students to select a fruit or vegetable as part of a complete reimbursable meal;
 - h. designate wellness champions at each school that will promote resources through the District’s website for wellness for students, families and the community;
 - i. provide opportunities for students to develop the knowledge and skills for consuming healthful foods.

E. The District nutrition department will promote and encourage Farm to School efforts in order to provide the healthy foods identified above.

F. All foods and beverages sold to students as fund-raisers outside of the school meals program during the regular and extended school day for consumption on the school campus shall meet the USDA Competitive Food regulations, the Alliance for A Healthier Generation’s Competitive Foods and Beverages Guidelines, and the USDA Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards.

G. Rewarding children in the classroom should not involve candy and other foods that can undermine children's diets and health and reinforce unhealthy eating habits. A wide variety of alternative rewards can be used to provide positive reinforcement for children's behavior and academic performance.

H. Promotions/Partnerships

1. Through partnership with Girls On The Run and Cross Country Track Meet each school has the opportunity to start and implement a mileage or running club.
2. Through USTA partnerships, each K-12 school has the opportunity to work with Vero Beach Tennis Club to teach and implement tennis curriculum appropriate to grade level.
3. Through grants from Department of Health and local businesses, each elementary school has the opportunity to implement a bike safety program.

Furthermore, with the objectives of enhancing student health and well-being, and reducing childhood obesity, the following guidelines are established:

A. In accordance with Policy 8500, entitled Food Service, the food service program shall comply with Federal and State regulations pertaining to the selection, preparation, consumption, and disposal of food and beverages as well as to the fiscal management of the program.

B. The sale of foods of minimal nutritional value in the food service area during the lunch period is prohibited.

C. As set forth in Policy 8531, entitled Free and Reduced Price Meals, the guidelines for reimbursable school meals are not less restrictive than the guidelines issued by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

D. All foods offered on the school campus during the school day shall comply with the current USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans, including competitive foods that are available to students a la carte in the dining area, as classroom snacks, or from vending machines, for classroom parties, or at holiday celebrations.

E. All food and beverages that are provided, other than through sale, on the school campus during the school day (which may include for classroom parties and at holiday celebrations) shall comply with the current USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

F. The food service program will strive to be financially self-supporting; however, if it is necessary to subsidize the operation, it will not be through the sale of foods with minimal nutritious value.

G. The food service program will provide all students affordable access to the varied and nutritious foods they need to be healthy and to learn well.

H. All food items and beverages available for sale to students for consumption on campus between midnight and sixty (60) minutes after the close of the regular school day shall comply with the current USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans, including, but not limited to, competitive foods that are available to students a la carte in the dining area, as well as food items and beverages from vending machines, from school stores, or as fund-raisers by student clubs and organizations, parent groups, or boosters clubs.

- I. The school food service program may involve students, parents, staff, and/or school officials in the selection of competitive food items to be sold in the schools.
- J. The school shall prepare and distribute to staff, parents, and after-school program personnel a list of snack items that comply with the current USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans.
- K. The food service program shall be administered by a director who is properly qualified, certificated, licensed, or credentialed, according to current professional standards.
- L. All food service personnel shall receive pre-service training in food service operations.
- M. Continuing professional development shall be provided for all staff of the food service program. The Superintendent has the operational responsibility for measuring and evaluating the District's implementation and progress under this policy.

The superintendent shall assign members of an ad hoc committee to review this policy annually and recommend changes to the superintendent. The committee shall include representatives of the administration, the food and nutritional services department, parents, students, health and physical education teachers, mental health and social services staff, and the public. In its review, the committee shall consider evidence-based strategies in determining its recommendations.

After measuring and evaluating the progress toward achieving the goals set forth herein and reviewing the changes from the committee, the superintendent shall submit to the board on an annual basis a summary of the evaluation and any recommended changes to this policy.

USDA Nondiscrimination Statement

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online, at <https://www.ascr.usda.gov/sites/default/files/USDA-OASCR%20P-Complaint-Form-0508-0002-508-11-28-17Fax2Mail.pdf>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged

discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

mail:

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or

fax:

(833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or

email:

Program.Intake@usda.gov

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.