SAMPLE PUBLIC RELEASE

Use District/School Letterhead

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. All sponsors of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP) and Special Milk Programs (SMP) **are required** to send out a Public Release at the beginning of the school year. **SMP sponsors should only include the free milk Income Eligibility Guidelines and should adapt the wording accordingly.**
2. Use the following as a guide and complete your own copy with specific information where needed.
3. Retain one copy of your version for audit purposes.

The **[insert local educational agency]** announced today its policy for determining eligibility of children may receive free or reduced-price meals served under the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP), or free milk served under the Special Milk Program (SMP).

Local school officials have adopted the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Income Eligibility Guidelines (IEGs) for family size and income criteria for determining eligibility.

The following income guidelines will be used in Connecticut from **July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017** for determining eligibility of participants for free and reduced-price meals and free milk in the Child Nutrition Programs.

Income Guidelines for Free and Reduced-price Meals in Child Nutrition Programs											
FREE MEALS/MILK						REDUCED-PRICE MEALS					
Number in Family	Annual Gross Income	Monthly Gross Income	Twice Per Month Gross Income	Every Two Weeks Gross Income	Weekly Gross Income	Number in Family	Annual Gross Income	Monthly Gross Income	Twice Per Month Gross Income	Every Two Weeks Gross Income	Weekly Gross Income
1	$15,444	$1,287	$644	$594	$297	**1**	$21,978	$1,832	$916	$846	$423
2	20,826	1,736	868	801	401	**2**	29,637	2,470	1,235	1,140	570
3	26,208	2,184	1,092	1,008	504	**3**	37,296	3,108	1,554	1,435	718
4	31,590	2,633	1,317	1,215	608	**4**	44,955	3,747	1,874	1,730	865
5	36,972	3,081	1,541	1,422	711	**5**	52,614	4,385	2,193	2,024	1,012
6	42,354	3,530	1,765	1,629	815	**6**	60,273	5,023	2,512	2,319	1,160
7	47,749	3,980	1,990	1,837	919	**7**	67,951	5,663	2,832	2,614	1,307
8	53,157	4,430	2,215	2,045	1,023	**8**	75,647	6,304	3,152	2,910	1,455
Each Additional Family Member	+5,408	+451	+226	+208	+104	**Each Additional Family Member**	+7,696	+642	+321	+296	+148

The above income calculations are made based on the following formulas: Monthly income is calculated by dividing the annual income by 12; twice monthly income is computed by dividing annual income by 24; income received every two weeks is calculated by dividing annual income by 26;

and weekly income is computed by dividing annual income by 52. All numbers are rounded upward to the next whole dollar.

Children from families whose income is at or below the levels shown are eligible for free or reduced-price meals or free milk. **[Insert specific information on how application is distributed, e.g., Application forms are being sent to all homes with a letter to parents.]** To apply for free or reduced-price meals or free milk, households should fill out the application and return it to the school. **[Insert specific information on where application is available, e.g., Additional copies are available at the principal's office at each school.]** Only one application is required per household and an application for free or reduced- price benefits cannot be approved unless it contains complete eligibility information as indicated on the application and instructions. The information provided on the application is confidential and will be used only for the purposes of determining eligibility and for administration and enforcement of the lunch, breakfast and milk programs. Note that the district MAY share your eligibility information with education, health, and nutrition programs to help them evaluate, fund, or determine benefits for their programs, auditors for program reviews, and law enforcement officials to help them look into violations of program rules. This information may also be verified at any time during the school year by school or other program officials. Applications may be submitted at any time during the year.

For up to 30 operating days into the new school year, eligibility from the previous year will continue within the same local educational agency (LEA). When the carry-over period ends, unless the household is notified that their children are directly certified or the household submits an application that is approved, the children must pay full price for school meals and the school will not send a reminder or a notice of expired eligibility.

No application is required if the district directly certifies a child based on a household member receiving assistance from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or the Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) program. All children in these households are eligible for free meal benefits. Households receiving assistance under the SNAP/TFA programs will be notified of their eligibility and their children will be provided free benefits unless the household notifies the determining official that it chooses to decline benefits. If any children were not listed on the eligibility notice, the household should contact the district or school to have free meal benefits extended to those children. Households receiving SNAP or TFA benefits for their children should only submit an application if they are **not** notified of their eligibility by **[insert date and year]**.

If a child is not directly certified, the household should complete a free and reduced-price meal application form. The application for the SNAP or TFA households require the SNAP or TFA case number. The signature of an adult household member is also required.

Children in households participating in WIC may be eligible for free or reduced-price meals. Please send in an application or contact the determining official for more information.

When known to the district/school, households will be notified of any child's eligibility for free meals if the individual child is Other Source Categorically Eligible because the child is categorized as either: Homeless; runaway as defined by law and determined by the district's or school's homeless liaison; or enrolled in an eligible Head Start or pre-kindergarten class as defined by law. Households with children who are categorically eligible under Other Source Categorically Eligible Programs should complete an application and check-off the relevant box. Questions should be directed to the determining official. For any child not listed on the eligibility notice, the households should contact the school or determining official about any child also eligible under one of these programs or should submit an income application for the other children.

Households notified of their children's eligibility must contact the determining official or school if it chooses to decline the free meal benefits. If households/children are **not** notified by the district/school of their free meal benefits and they receive benefits under Assistance Programs or under Other Source Categorically Eligible Programs, the parent/guardian should contact the determining official or their school.

Foster children that are under the legal responsibility of a foster care agency or court, are categorically eligible for free meals. A foster parent does not have to complete a free/reduced meal application if they can submit a copy of the legal document or legal court order showing that the child is a foster child. Additionally, a foster child may be included as a member of the foster family if the foster family chooses to also apply for benefits. If the foster family is not eligible for free or reduced-price meal benefits, it does not prevent a foster child from receiving free meal benefits. Note however, that a foster child's free eligibility does not automatically extend to all students in the household.

Application forms for all other households require a statement of total household income, household size and names of all household members. The last four digits of the social security number of an adult household member must be included or a statement that the household member does not have one. The adult household member must also sign the application certifying that the information provided is correct.

Under the provisions of the policy for determining eligibility for free and reduced-price meals, the by **[insert title and phone number and/or email of determining official]** will review applications and determine eligibility. If a parent is dissatisfied with the ruling of the determining official, he/she may wish to discuss the decision with the determining official on an informal basis. If he/she wishes to make a formal appeal, a request either orally or in writing, may be made to **[insert name, address and phone number of hearing official]** for a hearing to appeal the decision.

The policy contains an outline of the hearing procedure. Each school and the central office of the school district has a copy of the policy, which may be reviewed by an interested party.

If a household member becomes unemployed or if household size changes at any time, the family should contact the school to file a new application. Such changes may make the children of the household eligible for reduced-price meals, free meals, or free milk, if the family income falls at or below the levels shown in the Income Guidelines.

Questions regarding the application process may be directed to the determining official at **[insert telephone number]**.

This is the Public Release we will send on **[insert date]** to the following news media outlets, the local unemployment office, major employers contemplating layoffs, etc.

1. _____ 3. _____
2. _____ 4. _____

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, (AD-3027) found online at: http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

(1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
(2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
(3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.