



Information on the Meal Benefit Application:

Why it's important, confidentiality, and how to communicate with parents.

A Resource for Classroom Teachers and School Staff

What is the Meal Benefit Application?

- A confidential form collected at the beginning of the school year which determines a student's eligibility for free/reduced price lunch.
- School meals are now free for all students (regardless of income eligibility), but this application is still used for family income data—which informs key funding for Maine schools and for connecting families to other benefits (like the Pandemic-EBT program).

Why is it important?

- The family income data provided by the application informs key funding for academic resources, including state funding, Title 1 funding, classroom resources, and even teacher student loan forgiveness.
- Eligible families can be connected to other important benefits. The Pandemic-EBT program connects families who would qualify for free/reduced price lunch to additional nutrition assistance.
- When all families return an application, stigma and embarrassment is reduced.
- **By encouraging parents/guardians to complete the Meal Benefit Application, you are investing in your school community and your students' fullest potential!**

How do parents/guardians complete the application and what do I do with completed applications?

- Your district may have the application available online, however, it is required to make a paper copy available. This will likely be with your beginning of the school year paperwork.
- The Meal Benefit Application is a CONFIDENTIAL document. When receiving completed applications, file them accordingly/give to appropriate administration to review. If parents express concern about the confidentiality of the form, ensure them that the information shared will only be used for eligibility and data collection purposes.