



Guidance for Determining Free and Reduced Price Meals* Eligibility Percentage

This document outlines the method all RIF coordinators should use when reporting their program's free and reduced price (F/RP) meal data upon program renewal. We recognize that your program may not participate in the National School Lunch Program*; therefore, we have tried our best to provide additional guidance and informational sources found on the Web. Please read this document carefully before proceeding.

1. School Based Programs

- a) If your program operates in or serves children from *one* school, please indicate the school's percentage of eligibility for free and reduced price meals. Please consult with your school principal for the most current statistics.
- b) If your program operates in or serves children from *multiple* schools, please enter each school's percentage of eligibility for free and reduced price meals. Please consult with your school principal or superintendent for the most current statistics.

2. Non-School Based Programs that Serve Free and Reduced Price Meals

If you are a non-school based program that participates in the National School Lunch Program (e.g., Head Start programs), please indicate the percentage of children served who are eligible for free and reduced-price meals. If multiple locations are served, please indicate the average percentage of eligibility across locations. See example in 1.b. above.

3. Non-School Based Programs, No Free and Reduced Price Meals Served

If your program is *not* school based and does *not* participate in the National School Lunch Program, but your agency maintains records on individual household income, please indicate the percentage of children living at or below 185 percent of the federal poverty guidelines for their family size. This data can be found at <http://aspe.hhs.gov/POVERTY/09poverty.shtml>. If multiple locations are served, please indicate the percentage of eligibility across locations. See example in 1.b. above.

*The National School Lunch Program is a federally assisted meal program operating in public and nonprofit private schools and residential childcare institutions. It provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free lunches to children each school day. The program is administered by the Food and Nutrition Service of the United States Department of Agriculture. Free and Reduced Price meal statistics are widely used as a proxy measure of poverty among children and families in the United States.

4. Citywide or Regional Programs

If your program serves an entire city or region and cannot maintain records on individual household income, indicate the figure your agency currently uses as public record when reporting the percentage of children served who live in poverty in your community. The [Annie E. Casey Foundation](#) funds a nationwide network of state-level KIDS COUNT projects that provide a more detailed, community-by-community picture of the condition of children. Visit the [KIDS COUNT State Network](#) to find your state's contact person.

5. Other sources of reliable information that can be found on the Web:

- a. The [U.S. Census Bureau's Poverty statistics website](#) provides helpful links and information.
- b. The [American Community Survey](#) provides socioeconomic data for selected states, counties, and other jurisdictions.
- c. The Annie E. Casey Foundation [KIDS COUNT Data Center](#) provides state, county, city, and community level indicators of children's well-being.
- d. Your state department of education may be able to provide up-to-date information on your program's eligibility for F/RP meals. If you cannot locate the information via the Web try calling them for assistance.

If you believe the federal poverty guidelines and F/RP meal eligibility do not adequately describe the needs of the children you serve, contact your program support representative who will advise you on how to submit a petition with your renewal proposal describing the needs of your children. Petitions are reviewed on a case-by-case basis and will be judged against the risk factors outlined in the National Literacy Act of 1991.