

Iowa School Nutrition Overview



Program Overview

The USDA Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 authorized federal funding and established policy for USDA Child Nutrition Programs to provide nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free meals to students each school day.

To receive federal reimbursements, school meal programs must offer “reimbursable” meals that meet federal nutrition standards that include a balance of fruits, vegetables, fat-free or low-fat milk, whole grains and meat/meat alternate.



Benefits of School Meals

Academic Benefits

- Improved cognitive function
- Higher test scores
- Better attention spans

Behavior benefits

- Fewer classroom disruptions
- Fewer absences
- Improved mood

Nutritional benefits

- Reduces food insecurity
- Improves dietary intake
- Positively impacts health



Meal Reimbursement Rates for School Year 2024-25

Breakfast

- Free: \$2.37
- Reduced: 2.07
- Paid: \$0.39

Lunch

- Free: \$4.43
- Reduced: \$4.03
- Paid: \$0.42

Participating schools receive cash subsidies for each reimbursable meal they serve. Meal reimbursement rates are adjusted annually. Additional funding is available for nutrition standards compliance, “severe need schools” and state reimbursement.



School Food Authorities

444 participating organizations
 326 public schools
 91 nonpublic schools
 18 residential child care institutions
 9 camps



Total Meals Served in School Year 2023-24

19.6 million breakfast meals
 57.6 million lunch meals



Average Daily Lunch Participation

Overall: 67%
 Free: 90%
 Reduced: 74%
 Paid: 53%



Average Daily Breakfast Participation

Overall: 23%
 Free: 44%
 Reduced: 25%
 Paid: 10%



Student Eligibility

% Free and Reduced: 40%
 % Paid: 60%



Total Meal Reimbursements for School Year 2023-24

Breakfast: \$40.3 million
 Lunch: \$145 million

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

October 2024