

### **Media Release for Free and Reduced-Price Meals**

VENUS ISD announced its policy today for providing free and reduced-price meals for children served under the attached current income eligibility guidelines. Each school/site or the central office has a copy of the policy, which may be reviewed by anyone on request.

Starting on *July 1, 2020*, Venus ISD will begin distributing letters to the households of the children in the district about eligibility benefits and any actions households need to take to apply for these benefits. Applications also are available at all school campuses, 401 S. Hickory, and online at [venusisd.net/Parent/Family.TitanK12.com](http://venusisd.net/Parent/Family.TitanK12.com).

### **Criteria for Free and Reduced-Price Meal Benefits**

The following criteria will be used to determine a child's eligibility for free or reduced-price meal benefits:

#### ***Income***

1. Household income that is at or below the income eligibility levels

#### ***Categorical or Automatic Eligibility***

2. Household receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF); or Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)

#### ***Program Participant***

3. Child's status as a foster child, homeless, runaway, migrant, or displaced by a declared disaster
4. Child's enrollment in Head Start or Even Start

### **Income Eligibility**

For those households that qualify for free or reduced-price meals based on income, an adult in the household must fill out free and reduced-price meal application and return it to Tina McCormick, Venus ISD Child Nutrition Director at 401 S. Hickory, Venus TX 76084, email [tina.mccormick@venusisd.net](mailto:tina.mccormick@venusisd.net), phone (972)366-3642, fax (972)366-1938 or return to your student's school. Those individuals filling out the application will need to provide the following information:

1. Names of all household members
2. Amount, frequency, and source of current income for each household member
3. Last 4 digits of the Social Security number of the adult household member who signs the application or, if the adult does not have a social security number, check the box for "No Social Security number"
4. Signature of an adult household member attesting that the information provided is correct

### **Categorical or Program Eligibility**

Venus ISD is working with local agencies to identify all children who are categorically and program eligible. Venus ISD will notify the households of these children that they do not need to complete an application. Any household that does not receive a letter and feels it should have should contact Tina McCormick, Venus ISD Child Nutrition Director by email at [tina.mccormick@venusisd.net](mailto:tina.mccormick@venusisd.net) or phone (972)366-3642.

Any household that wishes to decline benefits should contact *Tina McCormick, Venus ISD Child Nutrition Director* by email at [tina.mccormick@venusisd.net](mailto:tina.mccormick@venusisd.net) or phone (972)366-3642.

Applications may be submitted anytime during the school year. The information households provide on the application will be used for the purpose of determining eligibility. Applications may also be verified by the school officials at any time during the school year.

### **Determining Eligibility**

Under the provisions of the free and reduced-price meal policy, *Tina McCormick, Venus ISD Child Nutrition Director* will review applications and determine eligibility. Households or guardians dissatisfied with the Reviewing Official's eligibility determination may wish to discuss the decision with the Reviewing Official on an informal basis. Households wishing to make a formal appeal for a hearing on the decision may make a request either orally or in writing to *James Hopper, Venus ISD Superintendent at 100 Student Dr., Venus TX 76084, email james.hopper@venusisd.net, or phone (972)366-3448.*

### **Unexpected Circumstances**

If a household member becomes unemployed or if the household size increases, the household should contact the school. Such changes may make the children of the household eligible for benefits if the household's income falls at or below the attached current income eligibility guidelines.

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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, audiotope, 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](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](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov). This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

**Directions: Media Release for Free and Reduced-Price Meals Sample Form**

**Purpose**

This sample form provides a model for the media release the Contracting Entity (CE) must issue prior to or during the first week of school.

**Directions for Using Sample Form**

- Provide the appropriate information for each description in brackets.
- Add CE or site specific information as needed.
- Attach a copy of the current income eligibility guidelines.
- Distribute widely through available media outlets.
- Retain a copy of the release onsite.

<b>Use This Form</b>	
<b>Frequency</b>	Yearly, prior to or during the first week of school
<b>Required Form Format</b>	Use this sample or a similar document.  Attach the current income eligibility guidelines, application form, or sample letters as appropriate.
<b>Record Retention</b>	Releases kept onsite and made available on request.  Public and charter schools are required to keep documentation related to school nutrition programs for 5 years.  Private schools, other nonprofit organizations, and residential child care institutions (RCCIs) are required to keep documentation for 3 years.