

INSTRUCTIONS FOR MEDIA RELEASE

For Free and Reduced Price Meals

1. Make appropriate changes as needed to the sample media release to reflect the programs operated by the school district. All information in **(parentheses)** should be replaced with district information.
2. The media release should be provided to the local informational media (newspaper), local unemployment office, and any major employers contemplating large layoffs in the area at the beginning of each school year. A list of the local media, employers, etc. that the media release was submitted to must be maintained for monitoring reviews. School districts should consider adding the Media Release to the school district website and other public locations that district households frequent (for example: Community Centers, Boys Club).

**SAMPLE MEDIA RELEASE – SY 2016-17
FOR FREE AND REDUCED PRICE MEALS**

Ouachita River School District today announces its policy for providing free and reduced price meals for children served under the **National School Lunch Program , and/or School Breakfast Program**. **Acorn and Oden Administration offices** have a copy of the policy, which may be reviewed by any interested party. The price charged for a paid student breakfast is **\$.75**; the price charged for a paid student lunch is **\$1.95**.

HOUSEHOLD APPLICATIONS

The household size and income criteria identified below will be used to determine eligibility for free and reduced price benefits for SY 2016-17. Children from households whose income is at or below the levels shown are eligible for free or reduced price meals.

Household Size	Federal Poverty Guidelines	FREE MEALS – 130%					REDUCED PRICE MEALS – 185%				
		Annual	Monthly	Twice per Month	Every Two Weeks	Weekly	Annual	Monthly	Twice per Month	Every Two Weeks	Weekly
1	11,880	15,444	1,287	644	594	297	21,978	1,832	916	846	423
2	16,020	20,826	1,736	868	801	401	29,637	2,470	1,235	1,140	570
3	20,160	26,208	2,184	1,092	1,008	504	37,296	3,108	1,554	1,435	718
4	24,300	31,590	2,633	1,317	1,215	608	44,955	3,747	1,874	1,730	865
5	28,440	36,972	3,081	1,541	1,422	711	52,614	4,385	2,193	2,024	1,012
6	32,580	42,354	3,530	1,765	1,629	815	60,273	5,023	2,512	2,319	1,160
7	36,730	47,749	3,980	1,990	1,837	919	67,951	5,663	2,832	2,614	1,307
8	40,890	53,157	4,430	2,215	2,045	1,023	75,647	6,304	3,152	2,910	1,455
Each Add'l person add	4,160	5,408	451	226	208	104	7,696	642	321	296	148

Household application forms are being distributed by the school with a letter informing households of the availability of free and reduced price meals for their children. **Only one application should be submitted for each household.** Applications are also available at the principal’s office in each school. To apply for free or reduced price meals, households must complete the application and return it to the school. Applications cannot be approved unless it contains complete information as described in the instructions provided with the application. Applications may be submitted at any time during the school year as circumstances change. The information households provide on the application will be used for the purpose of determining eligibility and verification of data.

Applications may be subject to verification at any time during the school year by school officials.

CATEGORICAL ELIGIBILITY

Children who are members of a Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly food stamps, household are categorically eligible for free meals. School officials will determine eligibility for free meals based on documentation obtained directly from the SNAP office. School officials will notify households of their eligibility. Households who are notified of their eligibility but who do not want their children to receive free meals must contact the school. SNAP households should complete an application if they are not notified of their eligibility by **August 15, 2016**.

Households with children who are members of currently approved Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, formerly food stamps, may submit an application with abbreviated information as described in the application instructions.

Children who are enrolled in Head Start / Even Start programs are categorically eligible for free meals. Contact **N/A** at **N/A** with questions regarding Head Start / Even Start meal benefits.

Children certified as migrant, homeless or runaway by the district are categorically eligible for free meals. Contact **Linda Heath** at **479-243-0396** with questions regarding migrant, homeless or runaway meal benefits.

Foster children who are the legal responsibility of a welfare agency or court are also eligible for benefits regardless of the income of the household with whom they reside. Eligibility for the foster child is based on the child being the legal responsibility of welfare agency or court. An application for a household that includes both foster children and non-foster must be completed for eligibility to be determined for the non-foster children. Contact **Linda Heath** at **479-243-0396** with questions regarding foster children.

Children in households that receive WIC may be eligible for benefits. An application must be completed for determination of eligibility.

If a household member becomes unemployed during the school year, the household **may** be eligible for free or reduced price meals PROVIDED that the loss of income causes the household income to be within the eligibility criteria. An application should be completed for determination of eligibility benefits.

Under the provisions of the free and reduced price meal policy Acorn Campus - Tammi Faught 479-394-2348, Oden Campus - Crystal Hill 870-326-4311, will review applications and determine eligibility.

Parents or guardians dissatisfied with the ruling of the determining official may wish to discuss the decision with the determining official on an informal basis. Parents wishing to make a formal appeal for a hearing on the decision may make a request either to:

<u>Jerry Strasner</u>	<u>479-394-2348</u>
Hearing Official	Phone Number

A household may SUBMIT an application ANYTIME DURING THE SCHOOL YEAR.

Nondiscrimination Statement:

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and United States 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

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