



Lexington Public Schools

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Financial Assistance Program Overview for 2011-2012 School Year

In 2008, School Committee authorized a centralized application process to provide families with financial assistance for certain school related fees. The program provides a prorated subsidy for households earning less than 350% of the US Department of Health and Human Services poverty guidelines. The United States Department of Agriculture uses these guidelines to determine the Free and Reduced Lunch eligible income levels. The tables of income levels provided in this document are based on the United States Health and Human Services Poverty Guidelines posted at their website (<http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/index.shtml>).

The School Committee Financial Assistance program uses the US Department of Health and Human Services poverty guidelines and expands it by a multiplier to better match our community's income level and assist families that are above the Free and Reduced Lunch Guidelines with school fees that are assessed for a variety of activities. The School Committee has made the following determination for income eligibility for financial assistance.

Determination Status	Income Level over Poverty Guideline for Household Income
Approved for Free	<200%
Active Military Personnel	Up to \$25 Per Sport/Field Trip
75% Reduction of Fee	201% - 300%
50% Reduction of Fee	301% - 350%

* % above HHS Poverty Guidelines

FY12 Financial Assistance Program

There are three additional income levels used above the Free and Reduced Lunch Guidelines.

- 1) Households who earn less than 350% above the poverty level will pay 50% of the program fee
- 2) Households who earn less than 300% above the poverty level would pay 25% of the program fee (75% Fee Reduction).
- 3) Households who earn less than 200% above the poverty level would be free.

The income distribution is based on the statistics of the number of households who are on the margin of economic stability and recognition of the high housing costs and property tax in Lexington. A table is provided for the income levels that apply in each category for each household size.

2011 HHS Poverty Guidelines							
Persons in Family or Household	48 Contiguous States and D.C.	Free Lunch (130%)	Reduced Lunch (185%)	Lexington District Fee Waiver	Free Family Waiver (200%)	Reduced Fee to 25% of Fee (300%)	Reduced Fee to 50% of Fee (350%)
1	\$10,890	\$14,157	\$20,147		\$21,780	\$32,670	\$38,115
2	\$14,710	\$19,123	\$27,214		\$29,420	\$44,130	\$51,485
3	\$18,530	\$24,089	\$34,281		\$37,060	\$55,590	\$64,855
4	\$22,350	\$29,055	\$41,348		\$44,700	\$67,050	\$78,225
5	\$26,170	\$34,021	\$48,415		\$52,340	\$78,510	\$91,595
6	\$29,990	\$38,987	\$55,482		\$59,980	\$89,970	\$104,965
7	\$33,810	\$43,953	\$62,549		\$67,620	\$101,430	\$118,335
8	\$37,630	\$48,919	\$69,616		\$75,260	\$112,890	\$131,705
For each additional person, add	\$3,820	\$4,966	\$7,067		\$7,640	\$11,460	\$13,370
SOURCE: Federal Register, Vol. 76, No. 13, January 20, 2011, pp. 3737-3738							

Process for Applying

Financial Assistance Applications are available for each school year after May 1. The application is available online and copies are available from the Transportation Office or the Business Office. Applications are processed by the Business Office throughout the school year as they are submitted. Due to the volume of applications at registration periods and the information required, it can take up to four weeks or more to have an application processed from start to final notification of parents and the program for which they are seeking the waiver. Every effort is made to process these applications as quickly as possible.

Steps:

- 1) Complete the application and provide copies of documentation requested. Income and financial support must be documented (copies can be made for you at the Business Office);
- 2) Submit completed form to the Business Office;
- 3) Determination is made by the Business Office;
- 4) The Business Office completes notification by letter to the family, school principal, and programs.

Due to the nature of the applications process, we do not take into account mortgage payments, property value (unless zero income is reported), college tuitions, or household expenses.

Determination of Income

The Lexington Public Schools Financial Assistance Program determines income based on the income of ALL household residents. Anyone living in your household is required to submit income documentation including domestic partners, relatives, and any other individuals residing at the address. The district has a single application procedure applied for all **school** fees for the full school year with only school lunch being the exception. No employee, coach, or staff member has the authority to waive any fees or charges without the income determination letter provided by the Business Office.

Required documentation of household income includes but is not limited to the following:

- 1) Internal Revenue Service 1040 form page 1 & 2 of all adults residing in the household;
- 2) Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Disability Income;
- 3) Unemployment Compensation and Severance Pay;

- 4) Alimony and Child Support Agreements;
- 5) Transitional Assistance Letters and Benefits;
- 6) Lexington Housing Authority Income Determination Letter;
- 7) Section 8 Housing Voucher
- 8) Foster Children are handled as one household and are not included as a member of the family in which they are residing or in the household income of the custodial parent;
- 9) Non-Custodial Parent income is considered when one parent receives the tax deduction for the dependent and there is no record of child support.
- 10) Valid Employment Contract if not paying taxes

Verification of Income

The program will ask for and require documentation of income from parties who do not reside with the household that are providing financial support. Particularly if there is no documentation regarding the status of child support or death certificate or district knowledge of deceased parents. Guardianship and Foster Child status must also be provided if not already a matter of student record. Failure to provide documentation at the time of the application will delay the determination process. Your child will not be allowed to participate in any program until the documentation has been received by the Business Office.

If these documents cannot be provided, the Business Office will not be able to process your application.

Background of the Program

The School Department undertook centralizing financial assistance applications for families seeking relief from various program fees. The program goals were as follows:

- 1) Implement an objective financial assistance program for all students and families;
- 2) Allow families a single point of contact and determination within the school district;
- 3) Adhere to a standard of confidentiality throughout the district;
- 4) Remove the Principal's Office and Guidance staff from making determinations of financial need using Free and Reduced Lunch applications, which violates the USDA School Lunch program.

Financial Assistance is offered system wide and includes Transportation, Athletics, School Lunch, Instrumental Music, and all other program and field trip fees. Other program fees include curriculum-based field trip expenses, Lexington Children's Center Tuition, and other fees the school department may charge that are as a result of curriculum requirements.

The Financial Assistance Program does not include optional field trips or student travel programs. There is typically no funding source for scholarship for these programs due to the nature of each participant paying their own way. The program leaders for these optional student trips may know of a funding source that will be providing scholarship. However, if there is no funding source for scholarship, the student is responsible for the full cost of the trip. The school department is not responsible for finding the scholarship funds for the student if there are none readily available.

Other Financial Assistance available in Massachusetts

Department of Transitional Assistance: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or SNAP is the new name for the Food Stamp Program. If you live in Massachusetts, you can apply for SNAP/Food Stamps online. <http://www.mass.gov/snap>. To get more information about SNAP/food stamp benefits and an application, call the Department of Transitional Assistance SNAP Benefits Hotline at 1-866-950-FOOD (3663). SNAP benefits are available for qualified Massachusetts residents.

USDA Free and Reduced Lunch Program: In August, Free and Reduced Lunch Applications will be mailed to all registered student households. In order to receive Free or Reduced Lunch meals, a Free and Reduced Lunch Application must be completed and returned to the Business Office. Parents should familiarize themselves with the School Committee Meal Charge Policy.¹

Important Information about Free and Reduced Lunch Status:

- Students are required to use PIN numbers that are assigned by the Food Service Program to make payment for meals.
- The published meal price is charged based on the status of the student on the date the meal is purchased. Please be aware that families who may qualify will have to pay full price until their application is approved. The effective date of the approved application establishes the status of the student. There is no retroactive credit applied to the account to remove any balance due unless it is directly tied to the approval date of the application. Please work with our Food Service staff if you would like more information about being able to put funds on account for your child. (781-861-2320 x1181)
- Free lunch status students will not be allowed to have a negative account balance. Free lunch status allows a child to receive a free meal everyday. A la Carte items are not part of the USDA program. Cash or a Credit Balance with Food Service must be used to pay for A la Carte items.
- Reduced lunch status students will be allowed to have a negative account balance up to a maximum dollar equivalent of six (6) reduced priced meals, which will be known as the "account cap." Reduced lunch status allows a child to receive reduced priced meals at \$0.40. Cash or a Credit Balance with Food Service must be used to pay for A la Carte items. Please work with our Food Service staff if you would like more information about being able to put funds on account for your child. (781-861-2320 x1181)
- Bag Lunches can be made available for students who are attending field trips when requested. Sometimes, teachers make arrangements for bag lunches for the entire classroom. At other times, the parent will need to contact Food Service to make arrangements two weeks ahead of time (781-861-2320 x1181). The field trip information packet from the school should indicate if lunches are being provided or not.

Other Financial Assistance available in Lexington

Lexington Senior Center & Human Services Department
1475 Massachusetts Avenue
Lexington, MA 02420
Telephone: (781) 861-0194
Fax: (781) 863-2271

<http://www.lexingtonma.gov/humanservices.cfm>

The Lexington Department of Human Services provides central access to information and referral, clinical and financial assessments, connection to resources and consultation services to all Lexington residents. Programs are tailored to meet the needs of youth, families, adults and seniors.

Town Of Lexington Community Resource Guide: Listing of various health and human service programs available in Lexington and surrounding area. The Social Services Department (781-861-0194) may also have knowledge of other financial assistance programs available to families for food, housing, and other assistance programs available through state agencies.

Lexington Human Services Fund: The Lexington Human Services Fund was established to provide one-time emergency financial assistance to Lexington residents. Applications are available through the Human Services Department.

² <http://lps.lexingtonma.org/about/mealchargepolicyJan10.pdf>