

Prekindergarten Eligibility – Educationally Disadvantaged

Overview

Statute: [TEC §29.153 \(b\)\(2\)](#), [TEC §5.001\(4\)](#), & [42 USC, §1758](#)

Resources:

- [Student Attendance and Accounting Handbook \(SAAH\) Section 7.2.3](#)
- [Texas Department of Agriculture: Administrator’s Reference Manual](#)
 - [ARM’s section description chart](#) (table of contents)
 - [Section 4 Eligibility Determination](#)
 - [Section 6 Verification](#)
- [USDA Food and Nutrition Services Eligibility Manual for School Meals: Determining and Verifying Eligibility](#)

Contact: District Food and Nutrition Specialist -or-

- Texas Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Division - [\(877\) TEX-MEAL](#) (*Se habla Español*)

Definitions

Educationally Disadvantaged: Any student considered educationally disadvantaged is eligible to receive free pre-k. The [TEC, §5.001\(4\)](#), defines “educationally disadvantaged” as “eligible to participate in the national free or reduced-price lunch program.”

Household: A household is defined as a group of related or unrelated individuals who are not residents of an institution or boarding house but who are living as one economic unit. This means they generally reside in the same house and share expenses such as rent, utilities and food.

Income: Gross income to be reported is any money received on a recurring basis. Specifically, it means all money earned before any deductions (i.e. income taxes, social security taxes, insurance premiums, bonds, & charitable contributions).

For further explanation of definitions (and examples) please review the Administrator’s Reference Manual found at the bottom of this [webpage](#) or visit the Texas Department of Agriculture’s School Nutrition [FAQs page](#).

Eligibility Options

Income Level

Eligibility may be based on total income and size (i.e., number of household members) of a participant’s household. Children from households whose incomes are at or below the levels shown in the appropriate table are eligible for the national school lunch program. The table can also be found on [this web page](#).

Effective July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022

Household Size	Total Income									
	Annual		Monthly		Twice-Monthly		Bi-Weekly		Weekly	
No. of Household Members	Free	Reduced	Free	Reduced	Free	Reduced	Free	Reduced	Free	Reduced
1	\$16,744	\$23,828	\$1,396	\$1,986	\$698	\$993	\$644	\$917	\$322	\$459
2	\$22,646	\$32,227	\$1,888	\$2,686	\$944	\$1,343	\$871	\$1,240	\$436	\$620
3	\$28,548	\$40,626	\$2,379	\$3,386	\$1,190	\$1,693	\$1,098	\$1,563	\$549	\$782
4	\$34,450	\$49,025	\$2,871	\$4,086	\$1,436	\$2,043	\$1,325	\$1,886	\$663	\$943
5	\$40,352	\$57,424	\$3,363	\$4,786	\$1,682	\$2,393	\$1,552	\$2,209	\$776	\$1,105
6	\$46,254	\$65,823	\$3,855	\$5,486	\$1,928	\$2,743	\$1,779	\$2,532	\$890	\$1,266
7	\$52,156	\$74,222	\$4,347	\$6,186	\$2,174	\$3,093	\$2,006	\$2,855	\$1,003	\$1,428
8	\$58,058	\$82,621	\$4,839	\$6,886	\$2,420	\$3,443	\$2,233	\$3,178	\$1,117	\$1,589
For each additional family member, add	+\$5,902	+\$8,399	+\$492	+\$700	+\$246	+\$350	+\$227	+\$324	+\$114	+\$162

These guidelines are based on 130% (free) and 185% (reduced) of the federal poverty guidelines and are effective July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022.

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The Texas Department of Agriculture provides a tool for households to enter income information and determine if the household qualifies for meals before applying. That tool is available at: [SquareMeals.org/AmIEligible](https://squaremeals.org/AmIEligible)

For information about determining a student’s eligibility based on income, please view the [Administrator’s Reference Manual \(ARM\), Section 4 Eligibility Determination](#).

Automatic Eligibility

Children who are automatically eligible for the NSLP under criteria in federal law [42 USC, §1758](#) include the following:

- a child who is a member of a household receiving benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program, Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations, State Medicaid programs, or similar income-tested programs or other source of information, as determined by the Secretary of Agriculture ([42 USC, §1758f](#))
- a child who is an eligible participant in Head Start or Even Start
- a child who is considered a migrant child
- a child who is considered homeless
- a child who is considered a runaway
- a child who is a foster child

For exact definitions of the terms used in the previous paragraph see [42 USC, §1758](#).

Documentation

A district must verify and document that a student is considered “educationally disadvantaged” either because the student’s family income level meets requirements for participation in the NSLP or because of automatic eligibility for the NSLP.

For information about the appropriate documentation necessary for both eligibility options, please view the *Administrator’s Reference Manual (ARM)*, [Section 6 Verification of Eligibility](#)

Key Points

- A student remains eligible for an entire school year. For example, a student who qualifies for prekindergarten because the student is eligible to participate in the National School Lunch Program (educationally disadvantaged) remains eligible even if the family's annual income increases above the qualifying level during the school year.
- Qualifying for prekindergarten on the basis of being educationally disadvantaged means that a student is eligible to participate in the NSLP, even if the family opts not to participate.
- Many districts pre-register pre-k students to determine and plan for the size of the next school year’s pre-k program. Since income level documentation must be current, your district must verify income level documentation on or after April 1 of each school year. **When verifying income, districts should correlate the eligible school year with the qualifying NSLP year.**
- If a student qualifies for pre-k on the basis of being eligible to participate in the NSLP, and the student then moves to a new district, the new district should review the previous district’s determination for accuracy. If the determination was accurate, the student does not need to requalify for the pre-k program in the new district. If an error was made, the student must requalify for the pre-k program in the new district.