

Schools Starting – Free School Meals!

Important information for Grandparents & Caregivers



- Are you raising your grand-child, niece, nephew or godchild in your home?
- Do they receive MassHealth (Medicaid coverage)?
- Are they approved to get free school meals?

Children are automatically eligible for FREE school meals if they either a) receive one of the following benefits or b) live with a sibling/another child who receives these benefits:

- MassHealth (or Medicaid) and the child's income* is less than 133% of the federal poverty level. This also includes children receiving SSI benefits or special Adoption Assistance with auto MassHealth.
- TAFDC (cash assistance) benefits
- SNAP (food stamp) benefits.

Children who meet any of the above should be “directly certified” for free school meals by the school. This means caregivers do not need to file a paper application for school meals.

Under a special federal option, Massachusetts is one of the states that can “directly certify” children for free meals if they receive Medicaid and have income below 133% FPL.* This also includes children who receive automatic Medicaid through SSI and special Adoption Assistance. Foster care, homeless and migrant children are also free meal eligible.

If the child you are raising is NOT getting free meals at the local school, you can:

1. Speak immediately with the school nutrition director or principal to ask them to check the school data base to confirm the child's Medicaid/MassHealth status and then approve free meal status if eligible.
2. If problems or questions, contact Kerry Bickford at the Cape Cod Neighborhood Support Coalition (508/771-4336 x 3), email: grandparents@capecoalition.com OR Pat Baker at Mass Law Reform Institute (617/357-0700 x 328), email pbaker@mlri.org



*A caregiver's income does NOT count for MassHealth unless you have legally adopted the child. Only the income of the biological or adoptive parents who live with the minor child counts for MassHealth or TAFDC benefits. For SNAP benefits, the income of all members of a household living together and sharing a majority of the food counts, even if child not adopted.