

VISTA CHARTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

601 North Fairview Street
Santa Ana, CA 92703
T: (714) 881-7407 | F: (714) 988-2747
www.vistacharterpublicschools.org

Collin Felch, Ed.D., Superintendent
Karen Amaya, Assistant Superintendent



UNIVERSAL MEALS PROGRAM POLICY

Vista Charter Public Schools (“VCPS” or the “Charter School”) Governing Board (the “Board”) recognizes that adequate nutrition is essential to the development, health, and learning of all students. The Superintendent or designee shall facilitate and encourage the participation of students from low-income families in the Charter School’s food service program.

Definitions

“School day” means any day that pupils in kindergarten or any of grades 1 to 12, inclusive, are present at a school site or school facility for purposes of instruction or educational activities, as defined in Section 49010, including, but not limited to, pupil attendance at minimum days, state-funded preschool, transitional kindergarten, summer school including incoming kindergarten pupils, extended school year days, school-sponsored field trips, independent study when a pupil is onsite during the school day, and Saturday school sessions.

“Nutritionally adequate breakfast” is one that qualifies for reimbursement under the most current meal pattern for the federal School Breakfast Program (“SBP”), as defined in Section 220.8 of Title 7 of the Code of Federal Regulations.

“Nutritionally adequate lunch” is one that qualifies for reimbursement under the most current meal pattern for the federal National School Lunch Program (“NSLP”), as defined in Section 210.10 of Title 7 of the Code of Federal Regulations.

Universal Free Meals

Each VCPS school site shall make available a nutritionally adequate breakfast and a nutritionally adequate lunch free of charge and with adequate time to eat, to any student who requests a meal without consideration of the student’s eligibility for a federally funded free or reduced-price meal, with a maximum of one (1) free breakfast meal per and one (1) free lunch each school day. This shall apply to all pupils in kindergarten through grade twelve (12).

Alternative Household Income Forms & Notification (CEP Status)

The Charter School operates under the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and/or School Breakfast Program (SBP). The Charter School is not required to collect individual meal applications to determine meal eligibility. Regardless of individual household income or federal eligibility, ALL students who request meals will receive a nutritionally adequate breakfast and lunch free of charge every school day, consistent with this Policy and California Education Code Section 49501.5.

To maintain proper local and state funding data (such as Local Control Funding Formula requirements), the Charter School may collect Household Income Data Forms (Alternative Income Forms) in lieu of traditional meal applications.

The Superintendent or designee shall ensure that any Household Income Data forms, notification packets, or related materials include the following statements and protections:

- Universal Meal Availability: A clear statement that regardless of federal eligibility or household income,

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ALL students who request a meal will receive meals free of charge.

- No Overt Identification or Shaming: Children will not be overtly identified, shamed, or treated differently by the use of special tokens, special tickets, special serving lines, separate entrances, separate dining areas, or by any other means.
- Medi-Cal and Health Coverage Information: The information packet shall include simple and culturally appropriate language providing:
 - Notification that the child may qualify for free or reduced-cost health coverage.
 - A request for the parent/guardian's consent to share household income information with Medi-Cal/DHCS for accelerated eligibility determination.
 - Explicit notification that household information will NOT be forwarded to health agencies without explicit parent/guardian consent.
- Confidentiality Safeguards: A notification that household income data is strictly confidential and will not be shared with any non-designated governmental agency, including the federal Department of Homeland Security and the Social Security Administration.
- Medi-Cal Program Details: Information regarding the Medi-Cal program, including available services, rights and responsibilities, and privacy protections.

If VCPS elects to post its household income collection forms or meal program information online, it will include:

1. A link to translated forms and instructions in primary household languages.
2. Questions limited strictly to those necessary for state/local funding determination.
3. A clear statement that ALL students receive meals free of charge regardless of form submission or income status.
4. Clear instructions for families experiencing homelessness or migratory status.
5. Compliance with privacy and disclosure protections under Public Laws 113-79 and 105-277.

Student Protections and Discipline

- VCPS shall ensure that a pupil is not denied an available reimbursable meal of their choice due to eligibility status or form submission. This does not prohibit VCPS from serving an alternative reimbursable meal to a pupil who needs one for dietary, medical, or religious reasons.
- If VCPS is required to submit a meal charge policy to the California Department of Education or USDA pursuant to USDA Memorandum SP 46-2016, VCPS shall make that policy public.
- VCPS personnel and volunteers shall not allow any disciplinary action taken against a pupil to result in the denial, delay, or withholding of a nutritionally adequate breakfast or lunch during the instructional day (EC Section 49553).

Direct Certification

Although every family should submit an application for school meals, in certain circumstances, VCPS may be able to determine student eligibility without further application. VCPS shall directly certify as eligible the following students:

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1. Any child who is a member of a household receiving assistance under the supplemental nutrition assistance program as eligible for free lunches and/or free breakfasts under the Child Nutrition Act of 1966.
2. Any child who is a member of a household that receives CalWORKs (also known as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families or "TANF") or CalFresh aid.
3. Any child who is a member of a household that receives the assistance of a Food Distribution program on Indian Reservations.
4. Any child identified as a foster, migrant, homeless or runaway youth, as defined by the California Education Code.

This Policy prohibits the Charter School from disciplining a student which would result in the denial or delay of a nutritionally adequate meal to that student.

Confidentiality/Release of Records

All applications and records related to the universal school meals program shall be confidential and may not be released except as provided by law and authorized by the Board or pursuant to a court order.

The Board authorizes designated employees to use individual records pertaining to the universal meals program for the following purposes:

1. Disaggregation of academic achievement data
2. Identification of students eligible for alternative supports in any school identified as a Title 1 program improvement school

If a student transfers from the Charter School to another charter school, district, county office of education program, or private school, the Superintendent or designee may share the student's meal eligibility information to the other educational agency to assist in the continuation of the student's meal benefits.

The Superintendent or designee may release the name and eligibility status of a student participating in the free or reduced-price meal program to another charter school, school district, or county office of education that is serving a student living in the same household as an enrolled student for purposes related to program eligibility and data used in local control funding formula calculations.

The Superintendent or designee may release the name and eligibility status of a student participating in the free or reduced-price meal program to the Superintendent of Public Instruction for purposes of determining funding allocations under the local control funding formula and for assessing accountability of that funding.

The Superintendent or designee may release information on the school lunch program application to the local agency that determines eligibility for participation in the Medi-Cal program if the student has been approved for free meals and if the applicant consents to the sharing of this information.

The Superintendent or designee may also release information on the school lunch application to the local agency that determines eligibility for CalFresh or to an agency that determines eligibility for nutrition assistance programs if

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the student has been approved for free or reduced-price meals and if the applicant consents to the sharing of this information.

This information released shall adhere to the following requirements:

1. Individual indicators of participation in a free or reduced-price meal program shall not be maintained in the permanent record of any student, unless otherwise authorized by law.
2. The public release of information regarding individual student participation in a free or reduced-price meal program is not permitted.
3. All other confidentiality requirements imposed by law or regulation are met.

Nondiscrimination Statement

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, Charter School is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ad-3027.pdf>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

mail:

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or

fax:

(833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or

email:

Program.Intake@usda.gov

Charter School is an equal opportunity provider.

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