

**Q. Can households of furloughed employees be approved for free or reduced price school meal benefits? Should they be removed from the program when the furlough is over?**

A. The income eligibility guidelines for free and reduced price school meals are based on annual income. While there is no prohibition on households with furloughed employees applying for benefits during a furlough, school food authorities (SFAs) should manage the application process in a manner which reflects their unique circumstances. During the furlough period, these households may not have information on the duration of the furlough or its ultimate impact on household income. Therefore, it is reasonable for SFAs to remind households that free or reduced price eligibility is intended to reflect actual annual income. School districts should urge any families who are approved for free or reduced-price meals based on their reduced income during a furlough period to terminate their free/reduced price status should the economic hardship they had anticipated due to the furlough be remedied by a return to work and/or restoration of pay for the furlough period.

In addition, families should be made aware that if they are selected for verification later in the school year, they will be required to produce documentation of *actual* income for the application month. School districts may choose to verify applications “for cause” if they have specific information indicating that the information on the application is not accurate.

[Apply for free and reduced meal benefits on FHSD's website.](#)