

Kinship Care Families and School Meals:

Important information for Caregivers



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

Students are automatically eligible for FREE school meals if they receive one of the following benefits:

- MassHealth (or Medicaid) and the child's income* is less than 133% of the federal poverty level. This includes children receiving SSI benefits or other benefits who also get automatic MassHealth.
- TAFDC cash assistance benefits for any child.
- SNAP (food stamp) benefits for the household.
- Foster care payments. (Homeless or migrant children are also free meal eligible too).

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

In 2014, Massachusetts was approved for a special U.S. Dept of Agriculture pilot to “directly certify” children for free meals if they receive MassHealth with income below 133% FPL.*

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 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.