



# Lexington Public Schools

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## Financial Assistance Program Overview for 2008-2009 School Year

The School Committee has authorized the centralized application process to provide families with financial assistance for school related fees. The program provides a prorated subsidy for households earning less than 350% of the US Department of Health and Human Services poverty guidelines. The United States Department of Agriculture uses these guidelines to determine the Free and Reduced Lunch eligible income levels. The tables of income levels provided in this document are based on the United States Health and Human Services Poverty Guidelines posted at their website (<http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/index.shtml>).

The School Committee has taken the poverty level and expanded it by a multiplier to better match our community's income level and assist families that are above the Free and Reduced Lunch Guidelines with school fees that are assessed for a variety of activities. The School Committee has made the following determination for income eligibility for financial assistance.

Determination Status	Income Level over Poverty Guideline for Household Income
Approved for Free	<200%
\$25 Per Family/Sport	
75% Reduction of Fee	201% - 300%
50% Reduction of Fee	301% - 350%

\* % above HHS Poverty Guidelines

### **FY09 Financial Assistance Program**

The United States Department of Health and Human Services on January 23, 2008 published in the Federal Register the FY09 Income Guidelines. There are three additional income levels used above the Free and Reduced Lunch Guidelines.

1. Households who earn less than 350% above the poverty level will pay 50% of the program fee
2. Households who earn less than 300% above the poverty level would pay 25% of the program fee (75% Fee Reduction).
3. Households who earn less than 200% above the poverty level would be free.

The income distribution is based on the statistics of the number of households who are on the margin of economic stability and recognition of the high housing costs and property tax in Lexington. A table is provided for the income levels that apply in each category for each household size.

2008 HHS Poverty Guidelines							
Persons in Family or Household	48 Contiguous States and D.C.	Free Lunch (130%)	Reduced Lunch (185%)	Lexington District Fee Waiver	Free Family Waiver (200%)	Reduced Fee to 25% of Fee (300%)	Reduced Fee to 50% of Fee (350%)
1	\$10,400	\$13,520	\$19,240		\$20,800	\$31,200	\$36,400
2	14,000	\$18,200	\$25,900		\$28,000	\$42,000	\$49,000
3	17,600	\$22,880	\$32,560		\$35,200	\$52,800	\$61,600
4	21,200	\$27,560	\$39,220		\$42,400	\$63,600	\$74,200
5	24,800	\$32,240	\$45,880		\$49,600	\$74,400	\$86,800
6	28,400	\$36,920	\$52,540		\$56,800	\$85,200	\$99,400
7	32,000	\$41,600	\$59,200		\$64,000	\$96,000	\$112,000
8	35,600	\$46,280	\$65,860		\$71,200	\$106,800	\$124,600
For each additional person, add	3600	\$4,680	\$6,660		\$7,200	\$10,800	\$12,600

**SOURCE:** *Federal Register*, Vol. 73, No. 15, January 23, 2008, pp. 3971-3972

### **Process for Applying**

The Business Office throughout the school year processes applications as they are submitted. Financial Assistance Applications are available for each school year after May 1. The application is available on line and copies are available from the Transportation Office and the Athletics Department. Due to the volume of applications at registration periods and the information required, it can take up to two week to have an application processed from start to final notification of parents and the program for which they are seeking the waiver. Every effort is made to process these applications as quickly as possible.

1. Complete the application and provide copies of documentation requested;
2. Submit completed form to the Business Office
3. Determination is made by the Business Office
4. The Business Office completes notification by letter to the family, school principal, and programs.

Due to the nature of the applications process, we do not take into account mortgage payments, property value (unless zero income is reported), college tuitions, or household expenses.

### **Determination of Income**

Free and Reduced Lunch and the Lexington Financial Assistance Program income determinations are based solely on household income. The Free and Reduced Lunch determination is prohibited from being used without permission of the parent for other programs. The Financial Assistance application considers this and includes all school based programs and the Free and Reduced Lunch application as part of our process. Our goal is to have a single application procedure applied for all fees for the full school year.

Documentation of household income includes but is not limited to the following:

1. Internal Revenue Service 1040 form page 1 & 2 of all adults residing in the household;
2. Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Disability Income;
3. Unemployment Compensation and Severance Pay;
4. Alimony and Child Support Agreements;
5. Transitional Assistance Letters and Benefits;
6. Foster Children are handled as one household and are not included as a member of the family in which they are residing or in the household income of the custodial parent;

7. Non-Custodial Parent income is considered when that parent receives the tax deduction for the dependent and there is no record of child support.
8. Pay stubs if there has been a decline in income from the previous tax year.

### **Verification of Income**

The program will ask for and require documentation of income from parties who do not reside with the household that are providing financial support. Particularly if there is no documentation regarding the status of child support or death certificate or district knowledge of deceased parent. Guardianship and Foster Child status must also be provided if not already a matter of student record.

### **Background of the Program**

The School Department undertook centralizing financial assistance applications for families seeking relief from various program fees. The program goals were as follows:

1. Implement an objective financial assistance program for all students and families;
2. Allow families a single point of contact and determination within the school district;
3. Adhere to a standard of confidentiality throughout the district;
4. Remove the Principal's Office and Guidance staff from making determinations of financial need using Free and Reduced Lunch applications, which violates the USDA School Lunch program.

Financial Assistance is offered system wide and includes Transportation, Athletics, School Lunch, Instrumental Music, and all other program and field trip fees. Other program fees include curriculum-based field trip expenses, Lexington Children's Center Tuition, and other fees the school department may charge that are as a result of curriculum requirements.

The Financial Assistance Program does not include optional field trips or student travel programs. There is typically no funding source for scholarship for these programs due to the nature of each participant paying their own way. The program leaders for these optional student trips may know of a funding source that will be providing scholarship. However, if there is no funding source for scholarship, the student is responsible for the full cost of the trip. The school department is not responsible for finding the scholarship funds for the student if there are none readily available.

### **Other Financial Assistance available in Lexington**

Social Services Coordinator  
Town of Lexington  
Lexington Senior Center  
1475 Massachusetts Avenue  
Lexington, MA 02420  
Telephone: (781) 861-0194  
Fax: (781) 863-2271

**Lexington Human Services Fund:** The Lexington Human Services Fund was established to provide one-time emergency financial assistance to Lexington residents.

**Energy Assistance:** State run program to provide households with heating and utility assistance based on income level

The Social Services Department may also have knowledge of other financial assistance programs available to families for food, housing and other assistance programs available through state agencies.