

Guidance for schools to ensure equity meals are available to students who need them:

The purpose of this document is to develop a consistent approach to equity meals across the province.

As you know, this October, we are launching phase one of the Nova Scotia School Lunch Program in all schools with elementary grades. In these schools, students will have access to lunch regardless of circumstance outside of school. Students in all schools will also continue to have access to Nova Scotia's free breakfast program.

While we are making great progress in ensuring all students have access to nutritious meals as we rollout the phases of the new School Lunch Program, there is still a need to ensure a consistent, thoughtful approach to providing equity meals to students in need.

Equity meals ensure all students have access to nutritious food. Examples of providing equity meals include:

1. In higher-grade schools not in phase one of the School Lunch Program, schools identify students in need and use school funds to discreetly provide meals
2. In schools in phase one of the School Lunch Program, schools ensure proxy ordering for students in need

In schools in phase one of the School Lunch Program, schools identify students in need with dietary restrictions not accommodated by the program and use school funds to discreetly provide meals.

You are responsible for the consistent, reliable provision of equity meals to students in need:

1. Identify Students in Need

Work with school counselors, Schools Plus, teachers, and support staff to confidentially identify students who may be experiencing food insecurity. Communication to offer assistance with students and their families must be discreet and without stigma.

2. Access Funding

Identify funding sources to support equity.

Existing funding includes (but is not limited to) Student Support Grants and Healthy Schools Grants. Foster community partnerships and work with Schools Plus staff to find community and other sources of funds.

3. Maintain Confidentiality

Distribute meals discreetly without singling out or otherwise stigmatizing students. This also includes maintaining the confidentiality of students receiving assistance to protect their privacy.

4. Educate and Involve the School Community

Raise awareness about food insecurity and the importance of equity in ensuring every student who needs food gets it. Schools should regularly review their work related to providing equity meals and make necessary adjustments based on feedback and changing needs.