

## **Income Declaration: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for PARENTS**

The purpose of *Income Declaration* data is to more accurately report Economically Disadvantaged Student (EDS) data for the purposes of meeting Alaska Public School Accountability requirements. EDS is a state-required data element and is NOT related to your student receiving free or reduced-price meals.

### **1) What is an *Income Declaration*?**

The Income Declaration Form enables ASD to determine which students are economically disadvantaged. All public schools that do not offer lunch programs or that are Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) schools must use an *Income Declaration* annually to determine which students are economically disadvantaged (EDS) that have not already been identified through other approved methods. The form collects family household size and annual income information.

### **2) Why collect household and annual income data?**

Household and annual income data is needed to determine which students are considered economically disadvantaged for several purposes:

- Determining students who are members of the economically disadvantaged subgroup for school and district accountability as required by Alaska regulations 4 AAC 06.830 and 06.899(5).
- Determining a school's percentage of economically disadvantaged (or "low income") students for identifying schools eligible for Title I, Part A funding and services.
- Determining a school's eligibility for funding under the federal E-Rate program that supports school internet access.

### **3) When will ASD begin collecting this data?**

The household and yearly income data on the *Income Declaration* will be collected for the 2015-16 academic year at CEP and No-Meal-Program sites beginning on May 4, 2015 as part of online registration. The form will also be integrated into in-person registration processes. This data will be collected annually.

### **4) How were the annual income cut offs determined?**

Income Guidelines for 2015-16 found on the United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service website (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/income-eligibility-guidelines>) are used as part of the *Income Declaration* and are updated every year on July 1.

### **5) What happens to the household and annual income data I provide?**

The data is used to determine whether ASD staff check an above or below check box for income cutoff in Zangle, the ASD student information system. The number of family members needed to qualify as EDS and the associated annual income cutoff is listed on the declaration form. The above or below box is automatically checked for students registered online. For students registering in-person, enrollment staff at the school enter the data you provide and check a box for below or above the income cutoff. The number of family members needed to qualify based on the annual income is 1 for the lowest level (\$27,232 or less) to 17 for the highest level (\$181,152).

If the number of family members reported matches the income level on the income guidelines for free or reduced lunch, the children in that family meet the criteria for economically disadvantaged under Alaska regulation 4 AAC 06.899(5) and must be reported in that subgroup in state data collections and assessments.

**6) How will Economically Disadvantaged Status be reported to the State of Alaska?**

Students that are eligible for free or reduced-price school meals under the department's Alaska Income Eligibility Guidelines for Free and Reduced Meals program, adopted by reference in 4 AAC 06.899(5) are identified as economically disadvantaged (or low-income). These students must be identified in all OASIS data collections. The Alaska Department of Education and Early Development requires the district submit three OASIS data collections every year.

**7) How can I be sure the data will be kept confidential?**

ASD enrollment staff use the *Income Declaration* to determine if a student is Economically Disadvantaged (EDS). Staff participate annually in mandatory FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) training. FERPA training and a state-required "educational need to know" *Income Declaration* data are the basis for approving ASD staff access to input and view *Income Declaration* data. Data, whether collected online or in-person, is safeguarded through approved records management handling processes. ASD follows State of Alaska records retention requirements.

**8) Is this data used for any other purpose (e.g. eligibility for free and reduced lunch)?**

No. The *Income Declaration* is used only for determining EDS status at CEP Schools and Non-Meal-Program Sites. The data collected is not used to determine eligibility for the Free and Reduced Lunch Program. Eligibility for that program is determined through the Household application or through Direct Certification lists provided monthly by Health and Social Services that identify eligible students based on participation in programs such as the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), SNAP (Food Stamps), or Foster Care.

**9) When completing the *Income Declaration*, is it required to check both the household size and annual income above/below boxes?**

Yes, it is required to provide an answer for both the household size and annual income above/below boxes in order to enter the data.

**10) How will schools/districts collect the income declaration information if parents choose not to provide the information?**

The Alaska Department of Education and Early Development encourages completion of the *Income Declaration* because of the benefits mentioned above that may be realized by the schools and for a more accurate representation of EDS students versus Non-EDS students in our accountability measures. However, parents may choose not to submit the information. The completion or non-completion of the *Income Declaration* will not prevent any child from enrolling for school.