

# Free and Reduced Meal Application FAQs

## Application Completion Tips

### What measures can I take to expedite my applications approval?

- Use **BLACK** or **BLUE** ink
- **Print Clearly**
- Use your student's name as it appears on their Birth Certificate
- List all Other Household Members (related or unrelated)
- Fill in the last 4 digits of the Social Security Number for the signer or write "NONE"
- **SIGNATURE IS REQUIRED**
- Foster Child may be completed on separate form, however, regulations now state that Foster children may be included in the household application as part of the household size.

### Do I need to fill out an application for each child?

No. Complete one application for all students in your household. We cannot approve an application that is not complete, so be sure to fill out all required information. Return the completed application to the Nutrition Office, the School Office or the School Cafeteria Manager.

### Who can receive free meals?

There are several ways that your children may be eligible for meals free of charge: Your child can get free meals if your household income is within the limits on the Federal Income Guidelines.

Another way is through "categorically eligibility". If one member of your household is currently receiving assistance (benefits) from one of the following programs: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Minnesota Family Investment Income (MFIP) or FDPIR, **all** children in the household are eligible for free meals.

Foster children who are the legal responsibility of a foster care agency or court are categorically eligible for free meal benefits regardless of household income. Complete an application identifying the children who are in foster care. Foster children may be included in the household application as part of the household size.

### Have the eligibility guidelines changed from last school year?

Yes, the eligibility guidelines have changed from last year. You need to fill out a new application if you feel you still qualify for the meal benefits.

### **Can homeless, runaway and migrant children get free meals?**

Yes. Other categorically eligible children are those who meet the definition of “migrant, homeless, or runaway”, or who are enrolled in a federally-funded Head Start Program. If you are/have a homeless, migrant or runaway child, contact the Nutrition Office for assistance in completing an application.

### **I received a letter saying my children are approved for free meals for this school year. Should I fill out an application?**

All applications **MUST** be renewed every new school year. Please carefully read the letter you received and follow the instructions. Call the Nutrition Office if you have questions. If you received a letter for the *current* school year, then *no*, you do not have to fill out a new application. (Just make sure that all of your children are listed on the letter as being eligible to receive free meals.)

### **I receive WIC (Women, Infants and Children) benefits. Can my child get free meals?**

Children in households participating in WIC are not categorically eligible. You must complete an application.

### **Will the information I give be checked?**

Yes, we may ask you to send written proof of the information you give.

### **If I don't qualify now, may I apply later?**

You may apply at any time during the school year.

### **What if I disagree with the school's decision about my application?**

You should talk to the Nutrition Office. You also may ask for a hearing by writing Mr. Lawrence Martini, Director of Business Services, 6100 North 210<sup>th</sup> St., Forest Lake, MN 55025.

### **May I apply if someone in my household is not a U.S. citizen?**

You or your children do not have to be a U.S. citizen to qualify for reduced price or free meals.

### **Who should I include as members of my household?**

Include yourself, all children who live with you and all other people living in your household, related or not (such as grandparents, other relatives, or friends).

### **What if my income is not always the same?**

You should list the amount that you *normally* receive BEFORE deductions. For example, if you normally receive \$1,000 each month, but you missed some work last month and only received \$900, put down \$1,000 per month. If you are normally paid for overtime, include it.

### **Why is it necessary to use the same name as it appears on the birth certificate?**

Since the School District uses the birth date and name information from the birth certificate for all school records, the only way the application can be validated is by using the same information. Clearly, nicknames and family abbreviations will slow down the application process.

### **Why do you list all other household members?**

The consideration for approval of an application is based income and the number of household members. Therefore, it is required to list all members of the household.

### **Why do I need to fill out the social security number (last 4 digits) and sign the application?**

These two sections are required fields and it is very important that these sections be completed. If this information is not completed, **the application will be returned to the applicant.** If you do not have a social security number you must check the box stating I don't have a social security number.

### **If I have more than one student going to school in the school district do I need to fill out more than one application?**

No, only complete ONE APPLICATION PER FAMILY.

### **If I have a student living at home that goes to a private school, charter school, or pre-k school, should I include them on the application?**

Yes, include them as children in the household under section 2 of the form. You may also include household members who are temporarily away from home, such as a student away at college.

### **What is direct certification?**

Under direct certification, school districts use information from the State Social Services Department to certify children to receive free meals. To qualify, the children's families must receive assistance from Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) or Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)

### **How do I know if my student is directly certified?**

Direct certification letters are sent to the households of pre-approved students.

### **If one student is directly certified in a household are the remaining students also directly certified?**

Yes, all students in a household are considered directly certified. If your direct certification letter does not list all students in your household, please contact the Nutrition Office.