

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT FREE AND REDUCED PRICE SCHOOL MEALS

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Children need healthy meals to learn. **[Name of School/School District]** offers healthy meals every school day. Breakfast costs **[\$]**; lunch costs **[\$]**. **Your children may qualify for free meals or for reduced price meals.** Reduced price is **[\$]** for breakfast and **[\$]** for lunch. This packet includes an application for free or reduced price meal benefits, and a set of detailed instructions. Below are some common questions and answers to help you with the application process.

**1. WHO CAN GET FREE OR REDUCED PRICE MEALS?**

- All children in households receiving benefits from the supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP) or Ohio Works First (OWF) are eligible for free meals.
- **Foster children that are under the legal responsibility of a foster care agency or court are eligible for free meals.**
- **Children participating in their school's Head Start program are eligible for free meals.**
- Children who meet the definition of homeless, runaway, or migrant are eligible for free meals.
- Children may receive free or reduced price meals if your household's income is within the limits on the Federal Income Eligibility Guidelines. Your children may qualify for free or reduced price meals if your household income falls at or below the limits on this chart.

FEDERAL ELIGIBILITY INCOME CHART For School Year 2017-2018			
Household size	Yearly	Monthly	Weekly
1	\$22,311	\$1,860	\$430
2	30,044	2,504	578
3	37,777	3,149	727
4	45,510	3,793	876
5	53,243	4,437	1,024
6	60,976	5,082	1,173
7	68,709	5,726	1,322
8	76,442	6,371	1,471
Each additional person:	7,733	645	149

- 2. HOW DO I KNOW IF MY CHILDREN QUALIFY AS HOMELESS, MIGRANT, OR RUNAWAY?** Do the members of your household lack a permanent address? Are you staying together in a shelter, hotel, or other temporary housing arrangement? Does your family relocate on a seasonal basis? Are any children living with you who have chosen to leave their prior family or household? If you believe children in your household meet these descriptions and haven't been told your children will get free meals, please call or e-mail **[school, homeless liaison or migrant coordinator]**.
- 3. DO I NEED TO FILL OUT AN APPLICATION FOR EACH CHILD?** No. *Use one Free and Reduced Price School Meals 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: **[name, address, phone number]**.
- 4. SHOULD I FILL OUT AN APPLICATION IF I RECEIVED A LETTER THIS SCHOOL YEAR SAYING MY CHILDREN ARE ALREADY APPROVED FOR FREE MEALS?** No, but please read the letter you got carefully and follow the instructions. If any children in your household were missing from your eligibility notification, contact **[name, address, phone number, e-mail]** immediately.
- 5. CAN I APPLY ONLINE?** Yes! You are encouraged to complete an online application instead of a paper application if you are able. The online application has the same requirements and will ask you for the same information as the paper application. Visit **[website]** to begin or to learn more about the online application

process. Contact **[name, address, phone number, e-mail]** if you have any questions about the online application.

6. **MY CHILD'S APPLICATION WAS APPROVED LAST YEAR. DO I NEED TO FILL OUT A NEW ONE?** Yes. Your child's application is only good for that school year and for the first few days of this school year, through **[date]**. You must send in a new application unless the school told you that your child is eligible for the new school year. If you do not send in a new application that is approved by the school or you have not been notified that your child is eligible for free meals, your child will be charged the full price for meals.
7. **I GET WIC. CAN MY CHILDREN GET FREE MEALS?** Children in households participating in WIC may be eligible for free or reduced price meals. Please send in an application.
8. **WILL THE INFORMATION I GIVE BE CHECKED?** Yes. We may also ask you to send written proof of the household income you report.
9. **IF I DON'T QUALIFY NOW, MAY I APPLY LATER?** Yes, you may apply at any time during the school year. For example, children with a parent or guardian who becomes unemployed may become eligible for free and reduced price meals if the household income drops below the income limit.
10. **WHAT IF I DISAGREE WITH THE SCHOOL'S DECISION ABOUT MY APPLICATION?** You should talk to school officials. You also may ask for a hearing by calling or writing to: **[name, address, phone number, e-mail]**.
11. **MAY I APPLY IF SOMEONE IN MY HOUSEHOLD IS NOT A U.S. CITIZEN?** Yes. You, your children, or other household members do not have to be U.S. citizens to apply for free or reduced price meals.
12. **WHAT IF MY INCOME IS NOT ALWAYS THE SAME?** List the amount that you normally receive. For example, if you normally make \$1000 each month, but you missed some work last month and only made \$900, put down that you made \$1000 per month. If you normally get overtime, include it, but do not include it if you only work overtime sometimes. If you have lost a job or had your hours or wages reduced, use your current income.
13. **WHAT IF SOME HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS HAVE NO INCOME TO REPORT?** Household members may not receive some types of income we ask you to report on the application, or may not receive income at all. Whenever this happens, please write a 0 in the field. However, if any income fields are left empty or blank, those will also be counted as zeroes. Please be careful when leaving income fields blank, as we will assume you meant to do so.
14. **WE ARE IN THE MILITARY. DO WE REPORT OUR INCOME DIFFERENTLY?** Your basic pay and cash bonuses must be reported as income. If you get any cash value allowances for off-base housing, food, or clothing, it must also be included as income. However, if your housing is part of the Military Housing Privatization Initiative, do not include your housing allowance as income. Any additional combat pay resulting from deployment is also excluded from income.
15. **WHAT IF THERE ISN'T ENOUGH SPACE ON THE APPLICATION FOR MY FAMILY?** List any additional household members on a separate piece of paper, and attach it to your application. Contact **[name, address, phone number, e-mail]** to receive a second application.
16. **Why am I being asked about giving my consent for an instructional fee waiver?** Ohio public schools are required to waive the school instructional fees for children who qualify for free meal benefits. School Food Service personnel must have parent consent to share student meal application if your child(ren) qualify for a fee waiver. If you agree to allow your child(ren)'s meal application to be shared with school officials to see if he/she/they qualifies for a fee waiver then check "yes" in part 5. If you do not wish for that information to be shared, then check "no" in part 5. Answering no to this question will mean your child will not be able to be considered for a fee waiver. Answering this question either way will not change whether your child(ren) will get free or reduced price meals.
17. **MY FAMILY NEEDS MORE HELP. ARE THERE OTHER PROGRAMS WE MIGHT APPLY FOR?** To find out how to apply for Ohio SNAP or other assistance benefits, contact your local assistance office or call 877-852-0010.

If you have other questions or need help, call **[phone number]**.

Sincerely,

**[signature]**

# INSTRUCTIONS FOR APPLYING

## ***A HOUSEHOLD MEMBER IS ANY CHILD OR ADULT LIVING WITH YOU***

### **IF YOUR HOUSEHOLD RECEIVES BENEFITS FROM THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SNAP) OR OHIO WORKS FIRST (OWF), FOLLOW THESE INSTRUCTIONS:**

**Part 1:** List all household members and the school name and school grade level for each child.

**Part 2:** List the 10-digit case number for any household member (including adults) receiving SNAP or OWF benefits.

**Part 3:** Skip this part.

**Part 4:** Skip this part.

**Part 5:** Answer yes or no and sign your name if you would like the application to be checked by school officials to determine if the child(ren) qualifies for a school instructional fee waiver.

**Part 6:** Sign the form. The last four digits of a Social Security Number are **not** necessary.

**Part 7:** Answer this question if you choose to.

### **IF NO ONE IN YOUR HOUSEHOLD GETS SNAP OR OWF BENEFITS AND IF ANY CHILD IN YOUR HOUSEHOLD IS HOMELESS, A MIGRANT OR RUNAWAY, FOLLOW THESE INSTRUCTIONS:**

**Part 1:** List all household members and the school name and school grade level for each child.

**Part 2:** Skip this part.

**Part 3:** If any child you are applying for is homeless, migrant, or a runaway, check the appropriate box and call [your school, homeless liaison, migrant coordinator].

**Part 4:** Complete only if a child in your household isn't eligible under Part 3. See Instruction for All Other Households.

**Part 5:** Answer yes or no and sign your name if you would like the application to be checked by school officials to determine if the child(ren) qualifies for a school instructional fee waiver.

**Part 6:** Sign the form. The last four digits of a Social Security Number are **not** necessary if you didn't need to fill in part 4.

**Part 7:** Answer this question if you choose to.

### **IF YOU ARE APPLYING FOR A FOSTER CHILD, FOLLOW THESE INSTRUCTIONS:**

#### **If all children in the household are foster children:**

**Part 1:** List all foster children and the school name and school grade level for each child. Check the box indicating the child is a foster child.

**Part 2:** Skip this part.

**Part 3:** Skip this part.

**Part 4:** Skip this part.

**Part 5:** Answer yes or no and sign your name if you would like the application to be checked by school officials to determine if the child(ren) qualifies for a school instructional fee waiver.

**Part 6:** Sign the form. The last four digits of a Social Security Number are **not** necessary.

**Part 7:** Answer this question if you choose to.

#### **If some of the children in the household are foster children:**

**Part 1:** List all household members and the school name and school grade level for each child. For any person, including children, with no income, you must check the "No Income" box. Check the box if the child is a foster child.

**Part 2:** If the household does not have a 10-digit SNAP or OWF case number, skip this part.

**Part 3:** If any child you are applying for is homeless, migrant, or a runaway check the appropriate box and call [your school, homeless liaison, migrant coordinator]. If not, skip this part.

**Part 4:** Follow these instructions to report total household income from this month or last month.

- **Box 1—Name:** List all household members with income.
- **Box 2 —Gross Income and How Often It Was Received:** For each household member, list each type of income received for the month. Check the box to tell us how often the person receives the income—weekly, every other week, twice a month, or monthly. For earnings, be sure to list the **gross income**, not the take-home pay. Gross income is the amount earned *before* taxes and other deductions. You should be able to find it on your pay stub or your boss can tell you. For other income, list the amount and check the box to tell us how often each person got for the month from welfare, child support, alimony, pensions, retirement, Social Security, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Veteran's benefits (VA benefits), and disability benefits. Under *All Other Income*, list Worker's Compensation, unemployment or strike benefits, regular contributions from people who do not live in your household, and any other income. Do not include income from SNAP, FDPIR, WIC, Federal education benefits and foster payments received by the family from the placing agency. For **ONLY** the self-employed, under *Earnings from Work*, report income after expenses. This is for your business, farm, or rental property. If you are in the Military Privatized Housing Initiative or get combat pay, do not include these allowances as income.

**Part 5:** Answer yes or no and sign your name if you would like the application to be checked by school officials to determine if the child(ren) qualifies for a school instructional fee waiver.

**Part 6:** Adult household member must sign the form and list the last four digits of their Social Security Number (or mark the box if s/he doesn't have one).

**Part 7:** Answer this question, if you choose.

**ALL OTHER HOUSEHOLDS, INCLUDING WIC HOUSEHOLDS, FOLLOW THESE INSTRUCTIONS:**

**Part 1:** List all household members and the school name and school grade level for each child. For any person, including children, with no income, you must check the "No Income Box".

**Part 2:** If the household does not have a 10-digit SNAP or OWF case number, skip this part.

**Part 3:** If any child you are applying for is homeless, migrant, or a runaway check the appropriate box and call [your school, homeless liaison, migrant coordinator]. If not, skip this part.

**Part 4:** Follow these instructions to report total household income from this month or last month.

- **Box 1–Name:** List all household members with income.
- **Box 2 –Gross Income and How Often It Was Received:** For each household member, list each type of income received for the month. Check the box to tell us how often the person receives the income—weekly, every other week, twice a month, or monthly. For earnings, be sure to list the **gross income**, not the take-home pay. Gross income is the amount earned *before* taxes and other deductions. You should be able to find it on your pay stub or your boss can tell you. For other income, list the amount and check the box to tell us how often each person got for the month from welfare, child support, alimony, pensions, retirement, Social Security, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Veteran's benefits (VA benefits), and disability benefits. Under *All Other Income*, list Worker's Compensation, unemployment or strike benefits, regular contributions from people who do not live in your household, and any other income. Do not include income from SNAP, FDPIR, WIC, Federal education benefits and foster payments received by the family from the placing agency. For **ONLY** the self-employed, under *Earnings from Work*, report income after expenses. This is for your business, farm, or rental property. If you are in the Military Privatized Housing Initiative or get combat pay, do not include these allowances as income.

**Part 5:** Answer yes or no and sign your name if you would like the application to be checked by school officials to determine if the child(ren) qualifies for a school instructional fee waiver.

**Part 6:** An adult household member must sign the form and list the last four digits of his or her Social Security Number (or mark the box if s/he doesn't have one).

**Part 7:** Answer this question if you choose to.



Your children may qualify for free or reduced-price meals if your household income falls at or below the limits on this chart.

INCOME ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES 2017-2018			
Household size	Yearly	Monthly	Weekly
1	\$22,311	\$1,860	\$430
2	30,044	2,504	578
3	37,777	3,149	727
4	45,510	3,793	876
5	53,243	4,437	1,024
6	60,976	5,082	1,173
7	68,709	5,726	1,322
8	76,442	6,371	1,471
Each additional person:	7,733	645	149

**Privacy Act Statement: This explains how we will use the information you give us.**

The Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act requires the information on this application. You do not have to give the information, but if you do not, we cannot approve your child for free or reduced price meals. You must include the last four digits of the social security number of the adult household member who signs the application. The last four digits of the social security number is not required when you apply on behalf of a foster child or you list a Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Ohio Works First (OWF) case number or other identifier for your child or when you indicate that the adult household member signing the application does not have a social security number. We will use your information to determine if your child is eligible for free or reduced price meals, and for administration and enforcement of the lunch and breakfast programs. We MAY share your eligibility information with education, health, and nutrition programs to help them evaluate, fund, or determine benefits for their programs, auditors for program reviews, and law enforcement officials to help them look into violations of program rules.

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, (AD-3027) found online at: [http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint\\_filing\\_cust.html](http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html), and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights 1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410  
fax: (202) 690-7442; or  
email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

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**National School Lunch Program/ Prototype Notification Letter**  
(Put on Sponsor Letterhead)

**NOTICE TO HOUSEHOLDS OF APPROVAL/DENIAL OF BENEFITS**  
**For the 2017-2018 Program Year**

Dear Parent/Guardian:

You applied for free or reduced-meals for the following child(ren):


Your application was:

Approved for free meals.

Approved for reduced-price meals at \$\_\_\_\_\_ for lunch, \$\_\_\_\_\_ for breakfast, and \$\_\_\_\_\_ for snacks.

Denied for the following reason(s):

( ) Income over the allowable amount.

( ) Incomplete application because \_\_\_\_\_

( ) Other \_\_\_\_\_

If you do not agree with the decision, you may discuss it with the [School official's name] at [phone number].

If you wish to review the decision further, you have a right to a fair hearing. This can be done by calling or writing the following official:

Name (School Hearing Official's name) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

If you are not eligible now but have a decrease in household income, become unemployed, have an increase in household size or become eligible to receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or Ohio Works First (OWF) funds, fill out an application at that time.

Sincerely,  
[signature]

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Name	Title	Date
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**SHARING INFORMATION WITH MEDICAID/*Healthy Start, Healthy Families***

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Dear Parent/Guardian:

If your children get free or reduced price school meals, they may also be able to get free or low-cost health insurance through Medicaid or the State of Ohio Healthy Start, Healthy Families Program. Children with health insurance are more likely to get regular health care and are less likely to miss school because of sickness.

Because health insurance is so important to children's well-being, **the law allows us to tell Medicaid and *Healthy Start, Healthy Families* that your children are eligible for free or reduced price meals, unless you tell us not to.** Medicaid and *Healthy Start, Healthy Families* only use the information to identify children who may be eligible for their programs. Program officials may contact you to offer to enroll your children. Filling out the Free and Reduced Price School Meals Application does not automatically enroll your children in health insurance.

If you do not want us to share your information with Medicaid or *Healthy Start, Healthy Families*, fill out the form below and send in (Sending in this form will not change whether your children get free or reduced price meals).

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**No! I DO NOT** want information from my Free and Reduced Price School Meals Application shared with Medicaid or the *Healthy Start, Healthy Families*.

**If you checked no, fill out the form below.**

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Parent/Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_

For more information, you may call [name] at [phone].

**Return this form to: [address] by [date].**

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## SHARING INFORMATION WITH OTHER PROGRAMS

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Dear Parent/Guardian:

To save you time and effort, the information you gave on your Free and Reduced Price School Meals Application may be shared with other programs for which your children may qualify. **For the following programs, we must have your permission to share your information. Sending in this form will not change whether your children get free or reduced price meals.**

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No! I **DO NOT** want information from my Free and Reduced Price School Meals Application shared with any of these programs.

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Yes! I **DO** want school officials to share information from my Free and Reduced Price School Meals Application with **[name of program specific to your school]**.

Yes! I **DO** want school officials to share information from my Free and Reduced Price School Meals Application with **[name of program specific to your school]**.

Yes! I **DO** want school officials to share information from my Free and Reduced Price School Meals Application with **[name of program specific to your school]**.

**If you checked yes to any or all of the boxes above, fill out the form below. Your information will be shared only with the programs you checked.**

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Parent/Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

For more information, you may call **[name]** at **[phone]**.  
**Return this form to: [address] by [date].**

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# Healthy Start & Healthy Families

Does your child qualify for the School Meals Program?  
If so, your family may qualify for free health coverage!



## Healthy Start & Healthy Families

*Healthy Start* offers free health care coverage  
for kids (birth to age 19) and pregnant women.

*Healthy Families* offers free health care coverage for the  
entire family - parents AND kids.

Healthy Start & Healthy Families Covers:

Doctor Visits  
Hospital Care  
Immunizations  
Substance Abuse

Prescriptions  
Vision Services  
Dental Care  
Mental Health

And Much More!

For more information or an application, call:  
**1-800-324-8680 (a free call!)**

TDD 1-800-292-3572

Monday - Friday 7 am to 8 pm  
Saturday - Sunday 12 pm to 5 pm



Your family's size and income determines if you and your family are eligible for Healthy Start or Healthy Families.  
Healthy Start & Healthy Families are Medicaid Programs administered by The Ohio Department of Job & Family Services.