INFORMATION LETTER

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 cost **[$]**; lunch costs [$]. Your children may qualify for free meals/milk or for reduced price meals. Reduced price is **[$]** for breakfast and **[$]** for lunch. Return or mail the completed application to: **[school name & address].**

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 Food Assistance, the Family Investment Program (FIP) or a few specific Medicaid programs are eligible for free or reduced price 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 at or below the limits on the Federal Income Eligibility Guidelines below. (Requires submitting an Application for Free and Reduced Price Meals/Milk.)

FEDERAL INCOME ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES for School Year 2020-2021

Household Size	Yearly	Monthly	Twice per Month	Every Two Weeks	Weekly
1	23,606	1,968	984	908	454
2	31,894	2,658	1,329	1,227	614
3	40,182	3,349	1,675	1,546	773
4	48,470	4,040	2,020	1,865	933
5	56,758	4,730	2,365	2,183	1,092
6	65,046	5,421	2,711	2,502	1,251
7	73,334	6,112	3,056	2,821	1,411
8	81,622	6,802	3,401	3,140	1,570
Each additional person:	8,288	691	346	319	160

2. SHOULD I FILL OUT AN APPLICATION IF I RECEIVED A LETTER THIS SCHOOL YEAR SAYING MY CHILDREN ARE ALREADY APPROVED FOR FREE OR REDUCED PRICE MEALS? No, but please read the letter carefully and follow the instructions. If any children in your household were missing from your notification, contact: **[name, address, phone number and e-mail]** immediately as eligibility for free or reduced price meals is extended to all school age children in a household. If you did not receive a letter from the school, but received a Free Lunch Notice from DHS, submit this letter to your children's school. You may add any students living in your household who are not listed on the letter. Also, if someone in your household receives food assistance and you did not receive either of these letters, you may complete an application listing the case number as this will qualify all school age children in your household for free meals. If you were informed that your children will get reduced price meals automatically, see the income guidelines above and if you feel you would qualify for free meal benefits, complete an application for free and reduced price meals.

3. WHAT IF WE HAVE FOSTER CHILDREN? Households with foster and non-foster children may choose to include the foster child as a household member, as this may help other children in the household qualify for benefits. If the foster family is not eligible for free or reduced price meal benefits, that does not prevent a foster child from receiving free meal benefits.

4. 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 contact: **[school, homeless liaison or migrant coordinator name, phone and email].**

5. 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 unless complete eligibility information is submitted, so be sure to complete all required information.

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. When the carry-over period ends, unless you are notified that your children will receive free meals or you submit an application that is approved, the children must pay full price for school meals. The school is not required to send a reminder or a notice of expired eligibility.

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. 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.

9. WILL THE INFORMATION I GIVE BE CHECKED? Yes. We may also ask you to send written proof of the household income you report. You are not required to provide proof with your application.

10. 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 or reduced price meals if the household income drops below the income limit, if your household size goes up, or if you start getting Food Assistance, FIP or other benefits.

11. 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 and e-mail]**.

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, or receive Family Subsistence Supplemental Allowance payments, 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. There are currently no active Military Housing Projects in Iowa as found on Active Military Housing Projects. Any additional combat pay resulting from deployment is also excluded from income.

15. DO I NEED TO PROVIDE MY SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER? Only the last four digits of the Social Security Number of the household's primary wage earner or another adult household member (or an indication of "none") is needed.

16. WHAT IF THERE ISN'T ENOUGH SPACE ON THE APPLICATION FOR MY FAMILY? List any additional household members on a Supplemental Worksheet, and attach it to your application. Contact **[name, address, phone number and e-mail]** to receive a Supplemental Worksheet.

17. WHO CAN GET FREE MILK? If your school participates in the Special Milk Program for half day kindergarteners, your kindergarten child may be eligible for free milk. Children who buy extra milk with a meal or if they eat breakfast or lunch and have an afternoon milk break, they are not eligible to receive free milk.

18. MY FAMILY NEEDS MORE HELP. ARE THERE OTHER PROGRAMS WE MIGHT APPLY FOR? To find out how to apply for Food Assistance or other assistance benefits, contact your local assistance office or call **1-877-347-5678.** Your children may be eligible for ***hawk-i*** (children's health insurance) or a waiver of school fees. Read the information on the back of the Application for ***hawk-i*** information. A school waiver form is available from your school.

19. CAN CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES GET FOOD SUBSTITUTIONS? If a child has a disability, as determined by a licensed medical professional, and the disability prevents the child from eating the regular school meal, the school will make substitutions prescribed by the licensed medical professional. If a substitution is needed, there will be no extra charge for the meal. Please note, however, that the school is not required to make a substitution for a food allergy, unless it meets the definition of disability. Please call the school for further information.

If you have other questions or need help, call ***[phone number and e-mail).***

Sincerely,

[Signature]