

# Free and Reduced-Price Meal Application FAQ's

## Application Completion Tips

What measures can I take to expedite my application processing?

- Use BLACK or BLUE ink
- Print Clearly
- Use your student's name as it appears on their Birth Certificate
- Use your student's ID number if you know it
- List all Other Household Members
- Fill in the last 4 digits of the Social Security Number of the person signing the application. If the signer has no SSN, indicate this by placing a checkmark in the box.
- A Parent or Guardian SIGNATURE IS REQUIRED
- Each Foster Child must be on a separate application

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

No, complete one application listing all students in your household. We cannot approve an application that is incomplete, so be sure to fill out all required information. Return the completed application to the Food and Nutrition Services, the school office, or your 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 is eligible for free meals if your household income is within the free limits of the Federal Income Eligibility Guidelines. An application must be submitted at the beginning of every school year.

Another way is through "categorical eligibility". If one member of the household is currently receiving assistance (benefits) from one of the following programs: Food Stamps, FDPIR, CalWORKS, or Kin-GAP, **all** children in the household are eligible for free meals. List all children in the household, fill out the case number, and sign the application.

My child receives Medi-Cal, is he/she eligible for free meals?

Medi-cal recipients are not categorically eligible, but your child may qualify based on your income, please complete an application.

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 Center. If you are a homeless, runaway or migrant child, please contact Food and Nutrition Services for assistance in completing an application.

I got a letter stating 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 Food and Nutrition Services if you have questions. If you received an eligibility letter for the **current** school year, then you do not have to complete an application until the beginning of the next school year.

My child has a negative meal account balance. Will eligibility for free meals affect this balance?

No, eligibility status is NOT retroactive. Any meal charges incurred before a change in status, or due to expired applications are the responsibility of the parent/guardian and will continue to roll over into each new school year until paid.

Who can receive Reduced Price meals?

Your child is eligible for Reduced Price meals if your household income is within the reduced price limits of the Federal Income Eligibility Guidelines. Please fill out an application.

Will the information I give be checked?

Yes, we may ask you to send verification of the information on the application.

If I don't qualify now, may I re-apply later?

You may apply at any time during the school year.

What if I disagree with the application decision?

You should talk to a school official. You may also request a hearing by calling or writing to the Food and Nutrition Services.

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

You and your child do not have to be U.S. citizens to qualify for Free or Reduced-Price Meals.

Are applications available in other languages?

Applications are available in English and Spanish.

Why is it necessary to use the same name as it appears on the Birth Certificate?

Since the School District uses the birth name information from the Birth Certificate for all school records, this is the best way for us to properly process the application and avoid errors. Nicknames and family abbreviations will slow down the application process.

Why do I need to list all household members?

The consideration and approval of an application is based on income and the number of household members. Therefore, it is required to list all members of the household, as well as their gross monthly income.

Why do I need to give my Social Security Number and sign the application?

These two sections are required fields and must not be left blank. If this information is not completed, **the application will be returned to the applicant**.

If I have more than one student attending New Haven schools do I need to fill out an application for each child?

No, please complete ONE APPLICATION PER FAMILY.

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

Yes, include all children in the household.

What is Direct Certification?

Under Direct Certification, school districts use information from state or county Social Services to certify children to receive free meals. To qualify, the children or their families must receive assistance from Food Stamps, CalWORKS, Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR), or Kin-GAP Programs.

How will I know if my children are Direct Certified?

Direct Certification Letters are mailed to the address on file at the beginning of the school year. If you have other children attending New Haven schools who are not listed, contact Food and Nutrition Services.

What if my child receives Food Stamps and I do not receive a Direct Certification letter?

Call Food and Nutrition Services. Sometimes the state or county data does not correctly match with student enrollment due to a name misspelling or other data error. In these instances you must complete an application and list your child's case number.