

## INFORMATION LETTER

## Frequently Asked Questions About Free And Reduced Price School Meals

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Children need healthy meals to learn. **West Bend – Mallard CSD** offers healthy meals every school day. Breakfast cost **\$1.40**; lunch costs **\$2.55**. Your children may qualify for free meals/milk or for reduced price meals. Reduced price is **.30** for breakfast and **.40** for lunch. Return the completed application to: **WBM, PO Box 247, West Bend, IA 50597**

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 another DHS assistance program 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 2017-2018

Household Size	Yearly	Monthly	Twice per Month	Every Two Weeks	Weekly
1	22,311	1,860	930	859	430
2	30,044	2,504	1,252	1,156	578
3	37,777	3,149	1,575	1,453	727
4	45,510	3,793	1,897	1,751	876
5	53,243	4,437	2,219	2,048	1,024
6	60,976	5,082	2,541	2,346	1,173
7	68,709	5,726	2,863	2,643	1,322
8	76,442	6,371	3,186	2,941	1,471
Each additional person:	7,733	645	323	298	149

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: **Carla Montag, 515-887-7821** 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: **Maria Sulentic, 515-887-7821**.
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 **May 31, 2018**. 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: **Carla Montag, 515-887-7821.**
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 **Carla Montag** 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 **515-887-7821**

*Sincerely,*

## Public Release

The Iowa Department of Education, Bureau of Nutrition and Health Services, today announced its policy for free and reduced price meals for children unable to pay the full price of meals served under the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program and the Afterschool Care Snack Program.

State and Local school officials have adopted the following family size and income criteria for determining eligibility:

**INCOME ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES**  
Effective 7-1-2017

<u>Household Size</u>	<u>Free Meals</u>					<u>Reduced Price Meals</u>				
	<u>Yearly</u>	<u>Monthly</u>	<u>Twice a Month</u>	<u>Every two weeks</u>	<u>Weekly</u>	<u>Yearly</u>	<u>Monthly</u>	<u>Twice a Month</u>	<u>Every two weeks</u>	<u>Weekly</u>
1	15,678	1,307	654	603	302	22,311	1,860	930	859	430
2	21,112	1,760	880	812	406	30,044	2,504	1,252	1,156	578
3	26,546	2,213	1,107	1,021	511	37,777	3,149	1,575	1,453	727
4	31,980	2,665	1,333	1,230	615	45,510	3,793	1,897	1,751	876
5	37,414	3,118	1,559	1,439	720	53,243	4,437	2,219	2,048	1,024
6	42,848	3,571	1,786	1,648	824	60,976	5,082	2,541	2,346	1,173
7	48,282	4,024	2,012	1,857	929	68,709	5,726	2,863	2,643	1,322
8	53,716	4,477	2,239	2,066	1,033	76,442	6,371	3,186	2,941	1,471
For each additional family member add:	5,434	453	227	209	105	7,733	645	323	298	149

Households may be eligible for free or reduced price meal benefits one of four ways listed below.

1. Households whose income is at or below the levels shown are eligible for reduced price meals or free meals, if they complete an Application for Free and Reduced Price School Meals/Milk. Households may complete one application listing all children and return it to your child's school. When completing an application, only the last four digits of the social security number of the household's primary wage earner or another adult household member is needed.
2. Food Assistance households, children receiving benefits under the Family Investment Program (FIP) and children in other specific DHS programs are eligible for free meals. Most children from Food Assistance and FIP households will be qualified for free meals automatically. These households will receive a letter from their children's schools notifying them of their benefits. Households that receive a letter from the school need to do nothing more for their children to receive free meals. No further application is necessary. If any children were not listed on the notice of eligibility, the household should contact the school to have free meal benefits extended to them. Households must contact the school if they choose to decline meal benefits.
3. Some Food Assistance and FIP households will receive a letter from the Department of Human Services (DHS) which will qualify the children listed on the letter for free meals. Parents must take this letter to the child's school to receive free meals.
4. Food Assistance or FIP households receiving benefits that do not receive a letter from DHS must complete an application with the abbreviated information as indicated on the application and instructions, for their children to receive free meals. When the application lists an Assistance Program's case number for any household member, eligibility for free benefits is extended to all children in a household.

Eligibility from the previous year will continue within the same school for up to 30 operating days into the new school year. When the carry-over period ends, unless the household is notified that their children are directly certified or the household submits an application that is approved, the children must pay full price for school meals and the school will not send a reminder or a notice of expired eligibility. An application cannot be approved unless complete eligibility information is submitted. Applications may be submitted at any time during the year. If a family member becomes unemployed the family should contact the school to complete an application. Households notified of their children's eligibility must contact the school if the household chooses to decline the free meal benefits.

Foster children are eligible for free meal benefits. Some foster children will be qualified for free meals automatically through the State Direct Certification process. Their host family will receive notification of these benefits. Families that receive this notification from the school need to do nothing more for their foster children to receive free meals. If a family has foster children living with them and does not receive notification and wishes to apply for such meals, instructions for making application for such children are contained on the application form. A foster child may be included as a member of the foster family if the foster family chooses to also apply for benefits for other children. Including children in foster care as household members may help other children in the household qualify for benefits. If the foster family is not eligible for free or reduced price meal benefits, it does not prevent a foster child from receiving benefits. Special Supplement Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) participants may be eligible for free or reduced price meals based on a completed application.

When known by the school, households will be notified of any child eligible for free meals if the children are enrolled in the Head Start/Even Start Program or are considered homeless, migrant or runaway. If any children are not listed on the notice of eligibility, contact the school for assistance in receiving benefits. If households are dissatisfied with the application approval done by the officials, they may make a formal appeal either orally or in writing to the school's designated hearing official. The Policy Statement on file at the school contains an outline of the hearing procedure. School officials may verify the information in the application, and that deliberate misrepresentation of information may subject the applicant to prosecution under applicable State and Federal criminal statutes. Households should contact their local school for additional information.

There will be no discrimination against individuals with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) in the school meal programs.

**Nondiscrimination Statement: This explains what to do if you believe you have been treated unfairly.**

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:

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

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