

Free and Reduced Meals Applications Frequently Asked Questions

Helpful Hints in Completing the School Lunch Application

- Submit a new application every school year
- Print clearly
- Use an ink pen
- List everyone living in the household
- Either check the No social security number box or list the last four digits of your social security number
- Include current phone number so you can be contacted with any questions regarding the application
- **Sign Application- the Application is not complete without a Signature**

1. 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.

2. WHO CAN GET FREE MEALS? All children in households receiving benefits from [State SNAP], [the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations] or [State TANF], can get free meals regardless of your income. Also, your children can get free meals if your household's gross income is within the free limits on the Federal Income Eligibility Guidelines.

3. CAN FOSTER CHILDREN GET FREE MEALS? Yes, foster children that are under the legal responsibility of a foster care agency or court, are eligible for free meals. Any foster child in the household is eligible for free meals regardless of income.

4. CAN HOMELESS, RUNAWAY, AND MIGRANT CHILDREN GET FREE MEALS? Yes, children who meet the definition of homeless, runaway, or migrant qualify for free meals. If you haven't been told your children will get free meals, please call Jeanne Johnson at 781-326-7872 or email Jeannej@Dedham.k12.ma.us to see if they qualify.

5. WHO CAN GET REDUCED PRICE MEALS? Your children can get low cost meals if your household income is within the reduced price limits on the Federal Eligibility Income Chart, shown on this application.

6. SHOULD I FILL OUT AN APPLICATION IF I RECEIVED A LETTER THIS SCHOOL YEAR SAYING MY CHILDREN ARE APPROVED FOR FREE MEALS? Please read the letter you got carefully and follow the instructions. Call the school at **781-326-7872** if you have questions.

7. MY CHILD'S APPLICATION WAS APPROVED LAST YEAR. DO I NEED TO FILL OUT ANOTHER ONE? Yes. Your child's application is only good for that school year and for the first few days of this school year. You must send in a new application unless the school told you that your child is eligible for the new school year.

8. I GET WIC. CAN MY CHILD (REN) GET FREE MEALS? Children in households participating in WIC may be eligible for free or reduced price meals. Please fill out an application.

9. WILL THE INFORMATION I GIVE BE CHECKED? Yes and we may also ask you to send written proof.

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 and reduced price meals if the household income drops below the income limit.

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 (781-326-7872) or writing to: Jeanne Johnson, 140 Whiting Ave, Dedham MA 02026.

12. MAY I APPLY IF SOMEONE IN MY HOUSEHOLD IS NOT A U.S. CITIZEN? Yes. You or your child(ren) do not have to be U.S. citizens to qualify for free or reduced price meals.

13. WHO SHOULD I INCLUDE AS MEMBERS OF MY HOUSEHOLD? You must include all people living in your household, related or not (such as grandparents, other relatives, or friends) who share income and expenses. You must include yourself and all children living with you. If you live with other people who are economically Independent (for example, people who you do not support, who do not share income with you or your children, and who pay a pro-rated share of expenses), do not include them.

14. 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.

15. WE ARE IN THE MILITARY. DO WE INCLUDE OUR HOUSING ALLOWANCE AS INCOME? If you get an off-base housing allowance, it must be included as income. However, if your housing is part of the Military Housing Privatization Initiative, do not include your housing allowance as income.

16. MY SPOUSE IS DEPLOYED TO A COMBAT ZONE. IS HER COMBAT PAY COUNTED AS INCOME? No, if the combat pay is received in addition to her basic pay because of her deployment and it wasn't received before she was deployed, combat pay is not counted as income. Contact your school for more information.

Direct Certification

What is Direct Certification?

Under direct certification, school districts use information from State welfare or food stamp offices to certify children to receive free meals. To qualify, the children's families must receive food stamps, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, or assistance from the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations.

How do you know if your student is direct certified?

Direct Certification Letters are sent to the homes of pre-approved students.

If one student is Direct Certified, in a household, are the remaining students also Direct Certified?

If you receive a direct certification letter for one student in the household, please fill out a free and reduced application for the remaining student(s). Remember to include the direct certified student in section #4 of the form entitled All Other House Hold Members. Please indicate which student has been notified of their Direct Certification Status.