

Frequently Asked Questions about Free and Reduced-Price Meals

How do I apply? Application can be made on-line at <https://nutrition.ccboe.net/fma/Default.aspx>. You can also receive an application from your child's school.

Do I need to fill out an application for each of my children? No, you only need one application for all students in your household.

Who can get free meals? All children in households receiving benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (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.

NOTE: If you have received a *NOTICE OF DIRECT CERTIFICATION* for free meals, do not complete an application, but do let the school know if any children in your household are not listed on the Notice of Direct Certification letter you received.

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.

Can homeless, runaway, Head Start, and migrant children get free meals? Yes, children who meet the definition of homeless, runaway, or migrant are eligible for free meals. If you believe children in your household meet these descriptions and you haven't been told your children will get free meals, please call or e-mail your child's school.

Who can get reduced-price meals? Your children can get reduced-price meals if your household is within the reduced price limits on the Federal Income Eligibility Chart.

Should I fill out an application if I get a letter this school year saying my children are approved for free or reduced-price meals? No, but please read the letter carefully and follow the instructions, or call your local School Nutrition Program Director if you have questions.

My child's application was approved last year. Do I need to fill out another one? Yes, a new application is required each school year. Your child's application last year was only good for the last school year and for the first few days of this school year.

I get WIC. Can my children get free meals? Yes, children in households participating in WIC may be eligible free or reduced-price meals. Please send in an application.

Will the information I give be checked? Yes, and we may also ask you to send written proof.

If I do not 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.

What if I disagree with the school's decision about my application? You should speak with school officials. You also may ask for a hearing to have the decision reviewed.

May I apply if someone in my household is not a U. S. citizen? Yes, you or your children do not have to be U.S. citizens to qualify for free or reduced-price meals.

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 who are living with you. If you live with other people who are economically independent (for example, people whom you do not support, whom do not share income with you or your children, and whom pay a pro-rated share of expenses), do not include them.

What if my income is not always the same? List the amount that you consistently receive. For instance, if you consistently make \$1000 each month, but you only made \$900 last month due to an unexpected reduction in hours, please include the normal amount of \$1000 per month. If you consistently get overtime, please also include it. If you have lost a job or had your hours or wages reduced, please use your current income.

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.

My spouse is deployed to a combat zone. Is their combat pay counted as income? No, if the combat pay is received in addition to basic pay and it was not received before he/she was deployed, combat pay is not counted as income.

Who can I call in Columbia County for help with the application? Contact Kristi Brown at 706-541-9402 ext. 5373