

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT FREE AND REDUCED-PRICE SCHOOL MEALS

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Children need healthy meals to learn. **Norwalk Community Schools** offers healthy meals every school day. Breakfast costs **\$2.15**; lunch costs **\$3.20** for secondary (High School and Middle School) and **\$3.10** for elementary level. Your child(ren) may qualify for free meals or for reduced-price meals. Reduced price is **\$0.30** for breakfast and **\$0.40** for lunch. This packet includes an application for free or reduced-price meal benefits, and a set of detailed instructions. Below are some common questions and answers to help you with the application process. Return or mail the completed application to: Nutrition Department, 1130 W. North Avenue, Norwalk, IA 50211.

1. Who can get free or reduced-price meals?

- All children in households receiving benefits from Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), 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 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 or Reduced Price Meals.)

Income Eligibility Reduced-Price Guidelines—July 1, 2023–June 30, 2024					
Family Size	Annually	Monthly	Twice Per Month	Every Two Weeks	Weekly
1	\$26,973	2,248	1,124	1,038	519
2	36,482	3,041	1,521	1,404	702
3	45,991	3,833	1,917	1,769	885
4	55,500	4,625	2,313	2,135	1,068
5	65,009	5,418	2,709	2,501	1,251
6	74,518	6,210	3,105	2,867	1,434
7	84,027	7,003	3,502	3,232	1,616
8	93,536	7,795	3,898	3,598	1,799
For each additional family member add:					
	9,509	793	397	366	183

2. Should I complete an application if I received a letter this school year saying my children are already approved for free meals? No, but please read the letter carefully and follow the instructions. If any children in your household were missing from your notification, contact: DeeAnna Serres, 1130 W. North Avenue, Norwalk, IA 50211, by telephone at 515-981-9876 or via email at deeanna.serres@norwalkschools.org 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 DHHS, 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 SNAP (previously called 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 reduce-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 call or e-mail **Aimee Rhode at 515-981-0676 or by email to: aimee.rhode@norwalkschools.org**

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 that is not complete, so be sure to fill out all required information. Return or mail the completed application to: Nutrition Department, 1130 W. North Avenue, Norwalk, IA 50211.

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 **10/4/2023**. You must send in a new application unless the school told you that your child is eligible for the new school year. If you do not send in a new application that is approved by the school or you have not been notified that your child is eligible for free meals, your child will be charged the full price for meals.

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 web-based 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 and reduced-price meals if the household income drops below the income limit, if your household size goes up, or you start getting SNAP, 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: **Dr. Jody Ratigan at 380 Wright Road, Norwalk, IA 50211, 515-981-0676 or via email jody.ratigan@norwalkschools.org.**

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. 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. My family needs more help. Are there other programs we might apply for? To find out how to apply for SNAP or other assistance benefits, contact your local assistance office or call **1-877-347-5678**. Your children may be eligible for **hawk** (children's health insurance) or a waiver of school fees. Read the information included in the web-based application for **hawk** information. A school waiver box is part of the web-based application or available from the Nutrition Department and must be submitted to the Nutrition Department no later than September 30, 2023.

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, are not eligible to receive free milk.
18. **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.
19. **Do I need to report my race and ethnicity?** It is optional to complete the racial/ethnic portion of the application. However, if you do not select race or ethnicity, one will be selected for you based on visual observation.
20. **If you decide you do not want to complete an application electronically, you can obtain a paper application by contacting DeeAnna Serres, 515-981-9876 or email: deeanna.serres@norwalkschools.org. Paper applications are also available on the district website under the Nutrition tab.**
21. **Translated applications are available at: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/translated-applications>.**

If you have other questions or need help, call 515-981-9876.

Sincerely,

DeeAnna Serres
Nutrition Program Director

Privacy Act Statement: This explains how we will use the information you give us.

The Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act requires the information on this application. You do not have to give the information, but if you do not, we cannot approve your child for free or reduced-price meals. You must include the last four digits of the social security number of the adult household member who signs the application. The last four digits of the social security number is not required when you apply on behalf of a foster child or you list a Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Family Investment Program (FIP), Program or Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) case number or other FDPIR identifier for your child or when you indicate that the adult household member signing the application does not have a social security number. We will use your information to determine if your child is eligible for free or reduced-price meals, and for administration and enforcement of the lunch and breakfast programs. We MAY share your eligibility information with education, health, and nutrition programs to help them evaluate, fund, or determine benefits for their programs, auditors for program reviews, and law enforcement officials to help them look into violations of program rules.

USDA Nondiscrimination Statement

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/USDA-OASCR%20P-Complaint-Form-0508-0002-508-11-28-17Fax2Mail.pdf>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted 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; or
2. **fax:** (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
3. **email:** program.intake@usda.gov

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