

Frequently Asked Questions

1. DO I NEED TO FILL OUT AN APPLICATION FOR EACH CHILD?

No. Complete one Application for Free and Reduced Price School Meals/Milk to apply for free or reduced price meals for all students in your household attending this School Food Authority. We cannot approve an application that is not complete, so be sure to fill out all required information as indicated on the application and application instructions.

Return the completed application to:

Belgrade Food Service 312 North Weaver Street, Belgrade, Montana 59714

2. WHO CAN GET FREE MEALS?

- All children in households receiving benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) or Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), are eligible for free meals. Categorical eligibility for free meal benefits is extended to all children in a household when the application lists an Assistance Program's case number for any household member.
- 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. Households with children who meet the definition of homeless, runaway or migrant should contact the SFA for assistance in receiving benefits.
- Children may receive free meals if your household's gross income is within the free or reduced price limits on the Federal Income Eligibility Guidelines.
- **NEW!** Medicaid by direct certification or eligible income families may qualify for Free or Reduced Meals. Please contact Belgrade Food Service or check your eligibility on Infinite Campus.

Your children may qualify for free or reduced price meals if your household income falls at or below the limits on this chart: Income Eligibility Guidelines are attached (Page 4).

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. Foster children may also 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 non-foster children in a foster family are not eligible for free or reduced price meal benefits, an eligible foster child will still receive free 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 email Courtney Ozanne, District Family Liaison cozanne@bsd44.org 406-924-2014 or contact Belgrade Food Service to see if they qualify.

5. 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. Contact the Belgrade Food Service if you have questions.

6. 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 carried over for the first 30 operating days of this school year (or until a new eligibility determination is made, whichever comes first). 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

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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 WOMEN, INFANTS AND CHILDREN (WIC) BENEFITS. 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 for Free and Reduced Price School Meals/Milk.

8. WILL THE INFORMATION I GIVE BE CHECKED?

Yes. We may also ask you to send written proof of the household income you report.

9. 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 or who experiences financial hardship mid-year may become eligible for free and reduced price meals if the household income drops below the income limit.

10. 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: Rebecca Ankney, Food Service Clerk, 406-924-2596 rankney@bsd44.org.

11. MAY I APPLY IF SOMEONE IN MY HOUSEHOLD IS NOT A U.S. CITIZEN?

Yes. You, your child(ren), or other household members do not have to be U.S. citizens to qualify for free or reduced price meals.

12. 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 prorated share of expenses), do not include them.

13. 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.

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, clothing, 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. MY FAMILY NEEDS MORE HELP. ARE THERE OTHER PROGRAMS WE MIGHT APPLY FOR?

To find out how to apply for Montana SNAP or other assistance benefits, contact your local assistance office or call (888) 706-1535 or apply online at apply.mt.gov.

16. CAN I APPLY ONLINE?

Yes, you are encouraged to complete an online application instead of the paper application if you are able. The online application has the same requirements and will ask you for the same information as the paper application. Infinite Campus and Office Public Instruction has online applications. Visit the Belgrade Food Service website or contact us.

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Reporting Changes: The benefits that you are approved for at the time of application are effective for the entire school year and up to 30 operating days into the new school year (or until a new eligibility determination is made, whichever comes first). You no longer need to report changes for an increase in income or decrease in household size, or if you no longer receive SNAP.

Meal Service to Children with Disabilities: Federal regulations require schools and institutions to serve meals at no extra charge to children with a disability which may restrict their diet. A student with a disability is defined in 7CFR Part 15b.3 of Federal regulations, as one who has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities of such an individual, a record of such an impairment or being regarded as having such an impairment. Major life activities include but are not limited to: functions such as caring for one's self, performing manual tasks, seeing, hearing, eating, sleeping, walking, standing, lifting, bending, speaking, breathing, learning, reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating, and working. You must request meal modifications from the school and provide the school with a medical statement from a State licensed healthcare professional. **If you believe your child needs substitutions because of a disability, please get in touch with us for further information, as there is specific information that the medical statement must contain.**

Confidentiality: The United States Department of Agriculture has approved the release of students names and eligibility status, without parent/guardian consent, to persons directly connected with the administration or enforcement of federal education programs such as Title I and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), which are United States Department of Education programs used to determine areas such as the allocation of funds to schools, to evaluate socioeconomic status of the school's attendance area, and to assess educational progress. Information may also be released to State health or State education programs administered by the State agency or local education agency, provided the State or local education agency administers the program, and federal State or local nutrition programs similar to the National School Lunch Program. Additionally, all information contained in the free and reduced price application may be released to persons directly connected with the administration or enforcement of programs authorized under the National School Lunch Act (NSLA) or Child Nutrition Act (CNA); including the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs, the Special Milk Program, the Child and Adult Care Food Program, Summer Food Service Program and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women Infants and Children (WIC); the Comptroller General of the United States for audit purposes, and federal, State or local law enforcement officials investigating alleged violation of the programs under the NSLA or CNA. The disclosure of eligibility information not specifically authorized by the NSLA requires a written consent statement from the parent/guardian.

In the operation of child feeding programs, no child will be discriminated against because of race, sex, color, national origin, age, disability or limited English proficiency.

If you have other questions or need help, please contact the Belgrade Food Service.

Debe Honibah Brady, District Food Service Director

dbrady@bsd44.org 406-924-2516

Rebecca Ankney, District Food Service Clerk

rankney@bsd44.org 406-924-2496

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