

**AVELLA AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT**  
**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT FREE AND REDUCED PRICE MEALS**  
**or THE SPECIAL MILK PROGRAM (SMP)**  
 Apply online at <https://www.schoolcafe.com>

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Children need healthy meals to learn. **Avella Area School District** offers healthy meals every school day. Breakfast is available at no charge to students. Lunch costs **\$2.55 (Elementary) and \$2.70 (JS/HS)**. Your child(ren) may qualify for free meals or for reduced price meals.

During the 2023-2024 School Year, all schools participating in the School Breakfast Program (SBP) are to provide free breakfasts for all enrolled students. Additionally, students identified as eligible for reduced-price lunches through the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) will not be charged for their meals.



If you have received a **Notice of Direct Certification** for free meals, **do not** complete the 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.

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

- All children in households receiving benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) (formerly the Food Stamp Program) or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) (cash assistance) are eligible for free meals.
- Foster children 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 within the limits on the Federal Income Eligibility Guidelines. Your children may qualify for free or reduced price meals if your household income falls at or below the limits on the following chart.

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
<b>For each additional family member add:</b>					
	9,509	793	397	366	183

2. **How do I know if my child(ren) 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 have not been told your children will get free meals, please call or e-mail **Cyril Walther, Superintendent**, [waltherc@avellasd.org](mailto:waltherc@avellasd.org), 724-356-2218.
3. **Do I need to fill out an application for each child?** No. Use one Household Application for Free and Reduced Price Meals for all students in your household. We cannot approve an application that is not complete, so be sure to fill out all required information.
4. **Should I fill out 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 you received carefully and follow the instructions. If any children in your household were missing from your eligibility notification, contact **Heather Poirier**, [poirierh@avellasd.org](mailto:poirierh@avellasd.org) or 724-356-2218 immediately.
5. **Can I apply online?** Yes! You are encouraged to complete an online application instead of a 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. Visit <https://www.schoolcafe.com> to begin or to learn more about the online application process. Contact **Heather Poirier** if you have any questions about the online application.
6. **My child's application was approved last year. Do I need to fill out a new application?** Yes. Your child's application is only good for last school year and for the first 30 operating days of this school year, through **October 4, 2023**. You must complete a new application unless the school told you that your child is eligible for free or reduced price meals for the new school year. If you do not complete 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 Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). Can my children get free meals?** Children in households participating in WIC may be eligible for free or reduced price meals. Please complete an application.
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 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 or 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: **Cyril Walther, Superintendent, 1000 Avella Road, Avella, PA 15312. 724-356-2218 or waltherc@avellasd.org.**

11. **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.
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, cash bonuses, allowances for off-base housing, food, and clothing, must be reported as income. Exclude combat pay, Family Subsistence Supplemental Allowance, and privatized housing allowances.
15. **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, visit <http://www.compass.state.pa.us>, contact your local county assistance office, or call the Department of Human Services at **1-800-692-7462**.

If you have other questions or need help, call **724-356-2218 ext. 3312**

Sincerely,

**Heather Poirier**

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, audiotope, 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](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov)

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

ATTENTION: If you speak Spanish, language assistance services, free of charge, are available to you. Contact your child's school.  
ATENCIÓN: Si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística. Comuníquese con la escuela de su niño.