Dear Family,

In 2025, the North Dakota legislation expanded income guidelines to 225% of the federal poverty line. To qualify for free meals, families must fill out the Student Fees Assistance and Benefits Applications (also known as Free and Reduced-Price Meal Application). If families qualify, households can receive free meals and other additional benefits such as:

- Waived (cancelled) fees for school related activities such as band rentals, activity fees, exam fees, and others.

- Increase funding to the district for educational programs through Title 1 funding, foundation aid, e-rate for technology grants, and others.

To make a complete meal, federal regulations require students to take at least 3 of the 5 meal components: Meat/Protein, Fruit, Vegetable, Grain and Milk. Any a la cart items or extra food items (items that are not part of the meal) need to be purchased with available funds either in the student's lunch account or with cash. These purchases cannot be charged.

Please see the chart below for income guidelines. Families may qualify for a reduced or state 225 category. The state is covering those expenses so all families who qualify for the program will receive free meals. Documents such as check stubs or tax forms do not need to be submitted with the application. Three percent of the eligible families will be contacted to provide income documentation in early October.

To submit an application, please complete the application online at EZmealapp.com or submit a completed paper application to any school or mail to Fargo Public Schools Nutrition, 3901 40th Ave S, Fargo ND 58104. A new application must be submitted each year. Notification of results will be sent out through EMAIL within 10 days of submission of your application.

**Frequently Asked Questions**

1. **Do I need to fill out an application for each child?** No. Use one 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. Applications can be completed online at EZMealApp.com.

2. **Who can qualify for free meals or get other benefits?** All children in households receiving benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) or the Temporary Assistance Program for Needy Families (**TANF)** can receive benefits regardless of your income. Also, your children can get benefits if your household income is within the limits on the Federal Income Chart.

3. **Can foster children get benefits?** Yes, foster children that are under the legal responsibility of a foster care agency or court are eligible. Any foster child in the household is eligible regardless of income.

**4. Can homeless or runaway children get free meals or other benefits? If** you haven't been told your children will get free meals, please feel free to fill out an application or call the school at 701-446-1153 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 and benefits?** Please read any letter you receive regarding benefits carefully and follow the instructions. If you have questions, contact nutrition services at 701-446-1153.

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 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.

7. **I get WIC. Can my child(ren) get Benefits?** Children in households participating in WIC may be eligible for benefits but an application is needed to determine eligibility. Receiving WIC benefits does not automatically qualify your family for benefits.

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

9. **If I don't qualify now, may I apply later?** Yes, you may apply at any time during the school year if your household size goes up, income goes down, or if you start receiving SNAP TANF or FDPIR. If you lose your job, your children may be able to get benefits during the time you are unemployed.

10. **What if I disagree with the school's decision about my application?** Please call nutrition services at 701-446-1153 to verify your information is correct. You also may ask for a hearing by calling or writing to Jackie Gapp, Business Manager 701-446-1032; Fargo Public Schools, 415 N 4th St, Fargo ND 58102.

11. **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 benefits.

12. **Whom 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). You must include yourself and all children living with you.

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.

14. **We are in the military. Do we include our housing allowance as income?** If you receive an off-base housing allowance, it must be included as income.

15. **My spouse is deployed to a combat zone. Is his/her combat pay counted as income?** No, if the combat pay is received in addition to their basic pay because of their deployment and it wasn't received before they were deployed, combat pay is not counted as income. Contact your school for more information.

**FEDERAL INCOME CHART**

For School Year 2026-2027

**Department of Public Instruction, Child Nutrition and Food Distribution Programs**
**Income Eligibility Guidelines**
**July 1, 2026 to June 30, 2027**

| Federal Reduced-Price Meal – 185 Percent | | | | | | State 225 - 225 Percent | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Household Size | Yearly | Monthly | 2x Month | Every 2 Weeks | Weekly | Household Size | Yearly | Monthly | 2x Month | Every 2 Weeks | Weekly |
| 1 | $29,526 | $2,461 | $1,231 | $1,136 | $568 | 1 | $35,910 | $2,993 | $1,496 | $1,381 | $691 |
| 2 | $40,034 | $3,337 | $1,669 | $1,540 | $770 | 2 | $48,690 | $4,058 | $2,029 | $1,873 | $936 |
| 3 | $50,542 | $4,212 | $2,106 | $1,944 | $972 | 3 | $61,470 | $5,123 | $2,561 | $2,364 | $1,182 |
| 4 | $61,050 | $5,088 | $2,544 | $2,349 | $1,175 | 4 | $74,250 | $6,188 | $3,094 | $2,856 | $1,428 |
| 5 | $71,558 | $5,964 | $2,982 | $2,753 | $1,377 | 5 | $87,030 | $7,253 | $3,626 | $3,347 | $1,674 |
| 6 | $82,066 | $6,839 | $3,420 | $3,157 | $1,579 | 6 | $99,810 | $8,318 | $4,159 | $3,839 | $1,919 |
| 7 | $92,574 | $7,715 | $3,858 | $3,561 | $1,781 | 7 | $112,590 | $9,383 | $4,691 | $4,330 | $2,165 |
| 8 | $103,082 | $8,591 | $4,296 | $3,965 | $1,983 | 8 | $125,370 | $10,448 | $5,224 | $4,822 | $2,411 |
| For each additional family member add | $10,508 | $876 | $438 | $405 | $233 | For each additional family member, add | $12,780 | $1,065 | $533 | $492 | $246 |

**NOTE: Do not allow hardship deductions from the above.**

Reminders
*Multiply the income that is received every 2 weeks (biweekly) by 26 to arrive at the annual income.
*Multiply weekly income by 52 to arrive at annual income.
*Gross or total income must be used in determining eligibility for wage earners.
*A net loss from a business or farm may not be used to offset other income. A negative income is denoted as $0.
Teams/general/4nslp/new year 2026

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

If you have other questions or need help, call the Nutrition Services Department at 701-446-1153.

Sincerely,

Cindy Hogenson, Director of Nutrition Services

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the State or local Agency that administers the program or contact USDA through the Telecommunications Relay Service at 711 (voice and TTY). Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to

USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Mail Stop 9410, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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