
ST. MARY'S COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

LETTER TO HOUSEHOLDS NATIONAL SCHOOL BREAKFAST AND LUNCH PROGRAMS SCHOOL YEAR 2026-2027

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Children need healthy meals to learn. St. Mary's County Public Schools offers healthy meals every school day. **Breakfast costs \$1.75 for elementary, middle, and high school levels. Lunch costs \$3.00 for the elementary level and \$3.25 for middle and high school levels.** Your children may qualify for free meals or for reduced-price meals. (Beginning in school year 2023, children in the reduced-price category will not be charged the cost of a reduced-price meal.) Below are common questions and answers to assist you with the application process.

If you have received a NOTICE OF ELIGIBILITY FOR FREE MEALS, do NOT complete the application, but let the school know if any children in your household are NOT listed on the NOTICE OF ELIGIBILITY FOR FREE MEALS letter you received, or if you have questions, call 301-475-4256 x 5.

1. **DO I NEED TO FILL OUT AN APPLICATION FOR EACH CHILD?** No. Use one Meal Benefit Application for all children in your household. We cannot approve an application that is not complete, so be sure to fill out all required information. Return the completed application to your children's school.
2. **WHO CAN GET FREE MEALS?** All children in households receiving benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), or Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA), foster children, children certified as homeless, runaway, migrant, or children who have been Medicaid matched through the Maryland Direct Certification System, will receive free meals regardless of their 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.
3. **I COMPLETED AN APPLICATION LAST YEAR. DO I NEED TO FILL OUT A NEW ONE?** Yes. Your children's application is only good for that school year and for the first few days of this school year.
4. **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.
5. **WILL THE INFORMATION I GIVE BE VERIFIED?** Yes, and we may also ask you to send written proof.
6. **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 or reduced-price meals if the household income drops below the income limit.
7. **WHAT IF I DISAGREE WITH THE SCHOOL'S DECISION ABOUT MY APPLICATION?** You should talk to school officials. You may also ask for a hearing by calling or writing to: Mrs. Tammy McCourt, Deputy Superintendent of Supporting and Fiscal Services, 301-475-4256 ext. 34136 or 27190 Pt. Lookout Rd., Loveville, MD 20656 or email: tsmccourt@smcps.org.
8. **MAY I APPLY IF SOMEONE IN MY HOUSEHOLD IS NOT A U.S. CITIZEN?** Yes. You or your children do not need to be U.S. citizens to qualify for free or reduced-price meals.
9. **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, foster children, or friends) who share income

and expenses. You must include yourself and all the 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 pro-rated share of expenses), do not include them.

10. WHAT IF MY INCOME IS NOT ALWAYS THE SAME? List the amount that you normally receive. For example, if you normally make \$1,000 each month, but you missed some work last month and only made \$900, put down that you made \$1,000 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.

11. 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, 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.

12. MY FAMILY NEEDS MORE HELP. ARE THERE OTHER PROGRAMS WE MIGHT APPLY FOR? To find out how to apply for **SNAP, TCA, and medical assistance programs** or other assistance benefits, contact your local assistance office or call 1-800-332-6347.

FEDERAL INCOME ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES

Household Size	Year	Month	Week
1	29,526	2,461	568
2	40,034	3,337	770
3	50,542	4,212	972
4	61,050	5,088	1,175
5	71,558	5,964	1,377
6	82,066	6,839	1,579
7	92,574	7,715	1,781
8	103,082	8,591	1,983
For each additional family member, add:	\$10,508	\$876	\$203

If you have other questions or need help, call 301-475-4256 EXT. 5

Sincerely,

Megan Doran
Director of Food and Nutrition Services