National School Lunch Program/School Breakfast Program
2026-27 Letter to Households (Bellingham Public Schools)

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Completing the Child Nutrition Eligibility & Education Benefit Application may qualify you for: free or reduced-price meals, SUN Bucks benefits, reduced fees for other programs and activities, and help secure funding for your school district.

Breakfast and lunch will be served at no cost to those children who qualify for free and reduced-price meals in grades K-12 at Columbia, Geneva, Lowell, Northern Heights, Silver Beach, and Wade King elementary schools; Fairhaven, Kulshan, and Whatcom middle schools; Bellingham, Sehome, and Squalicum high schools and to all students at Alderwood, Birchwood, Carl Cozier, Cordata, Happy Valley, Parkview, Roosevelt and Sunnyland elementary schools; Shuksan Middle School; and Options High School. All other students will be charged the rates shown below.

Grade Level	Breakfast	Lunch
K-5	$2.50	$4.00
6-8	$2.75	$4.25
9-12	$2.75	$4.25

Who should fill out an application?

Fill out the application if:

- Total household income is the SAME or LESS than the amount on the chart.
- You receive Basic Food, take part in the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR), or receive Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) for your children.
- You are applying for foster children that are under the legal responsibility of a foster care agency or court.

We encourage you to fill out the online version of the application in Skyward Family Access or you may turn in a paper application to Food Services at your child's school or the district office 1985 Barkley Blvd.

Be sure to submit ONLY ONE application per household. We will notify you if the application is approved or denied. Foster, migrant, homeless, and runaway children are categorically eligible for free meals. If you are completing an application for these children, contact 360-676-6456 to speak with a family support liaison for more information. Please note that a non-household member may be designated as the authorized representative for application processing purposes, if you have difficulty completing the application.

What counts as income? Who is considered a member of my household?

Look at the income chart below. Find your household size. Find your total household income. Households with incomes at or below the income limits may be eligible for free or reduced-price meals and SUN Bucks benefits. If members in the household are paid at different times during the month and you are unsure if your household is eligible, fill out an application and we will determine your income eligibility for you. The information provided on the application will be used to determine your child's eligibility for free or reduced-price meals and SUN Bucks benefits.

Foster children that are under the legal responsibility of a foster care agency or court are eligible for free meals regardless of personal use income. If you have questions about applying for meal benefits for foster children, please contact us at 360-676-6504.

USDA Child Nutrition Program Income Guidelines Effective July 1, 2026–June 30, 2027					
Household Size	Annual	Monthly	Twice Per Month	Every Two Weeks	Weekly
1	$29,526	$2,461	$1,231	$1,136	$568
2	$40,034	$3,337	$1,669	$1,540	$770
3	$50,542	$4,212	$2,106	$1,944	$972
4	$61,050	$5,088	$2,544	$2,349	$1,175
5	$71,558	$5,964	$2,982	$2,753	$1,377
6	$82,066	$6,839	$3,420	$3,157	$1,579
7	$92,574	$7,715	$3,858	$3,561	$1,781
8	$103,082	$8,591	$4,296	$3,965	$1,983
For each add'l family member, add:	$10,508	$876	$438	$405	$203

HOUSEHOLD is defined as all persons, including parents, children, grandparents, and all people related or unrelated who live in your home and share living expenses. If applying for a household with a foster child, you may include the foster child in the total household size.

HOUSEHOLD INCOME is considered to be the income each household member received before taxes. This includes wages, social security, pension, unemployment, welfare, child support, alimony, and any other cash income. If including a foster child as part of the household, you must also include the foster child's personal income. Do not report foster payments as income.

What must be on the application?

A. <u>For households not getting any assistance</u>:

- Student name(s)
- Names of <u>all</u> household members
- Income by source for <u>all</u> household members
- Adult household member's signature
- Last 4 digits of social security number of the adult household member who signs the application (or if the adult signing does not have a social security number, check the associated box).

Complete *Parts 1*, *2*, *3*, *4*, and *5*; *Part 6* is optional.

B. <u>For households with only foster child(ren)</u>

- Student's name
- Adult household member signature

Complete *Parts 1* and *5*; *Part 6* is optional. You may also send the school a copy of the court documentation showing the foster child(ren) was/were placed with you instead of filling out an application form.

Last 4 digits of SSN are not required for B.

What must be on the application? *continued*

C. For a family getting Basic Food/TANF/FDPIR:

- List all student names
- Enter a case number
- Adult household member's signature

Complete *Parts 1*, *2*, *4*, and *5*. *Part 6* is optional.
Last 4 digits of SSN are not required for C.

D. For household with a foster child(ren) and other children:

Apply as a household and include foster children. Follow the directions for "**A. For households not getting any assistance:**" and include the foster child's personal use income.

All information provided on the application must be true and correct. By completing the application, your household attests that they do not receive SUN Bucks benefits through a different State or Indian Tribal Organization (if applicable), you recognize that this information is given in connection with the receipt of federal or state benefits and that school officials may verify (check) the information. **Purposely providing false information may result in your children losing these benefits, and you may be prosecuted under applicable State and Federal criminal statutes.**

What if I'm not receiving basic food dollars?

If you have been approved for Basic Food but do not actually receive Basic Food dollars, you may be eligible for free or reduced-price meals. You must apply for meal benefits by filling out a meal application.

Do my children automatically qualify if they have a case number?

Yes. Children on TANF or Basic Food may get free meals and children receiving some Medicaid benefits may be eligible for free or reduced-price meals without the household having to complete an application. These children are identified by the district using a data matching process. This matched list is then made available to your child's school food service staff. The students on this list get free meals if their schools have the free and reduced-price breakfast and/or lunch program (not all schools do). Please contact us immediately if you feel your children should be receiving free meals and are not. If you do not want your child to participate in the free meal programs using this method, please notify the food services office at 360-676-6504.

If anyone in my household has a case number, will all children qualify for free meals?

Yes. If someone else in the household has a case number, other than a foster child, you must fill out an application and send it to your student's school. Please contact us immediately if you feel other children in your household should be receiving free meals and are not.

Basic Food - Can I qualify for assistance in buying food?

Basic Food is the state's food stamp program. It helps households make ends meet by providing monthly benefits to buy food. Getting Basic Food is easy! You can apply in person at the local DSHS Community Service Office, by mail, or online. There are other benefits too. You can learn about Basic Food by calling 1-877-501-2233 or by logging on to https://www.dshs.wa.gov/esa/community-services-offices/basic-food.

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.

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. You must send in a new application unless the school told you that your child is eligible for the new school year.

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.

Health Coverage

To inquire about or apply for health care coverage for kids in your family, please visit http://www.wahealthplanfinder.org or you may call Washington Health Plan Finder at 1-855-923-4633.

What if my child needs special foods?

If your child needs special foods, contact the district food service office at 360-676-6504.

Proof of Eligibility

The information you provide may be verified at any time. You may be asked to send additional information to prove your child is eligible to receive free and reduced-price meals.

Fair Hearing

If you do not agree with the decision on your child's application or the process used to prove income eligibility, you may talk with Lindsay Ahrens, the fair hearing official. You have the right to a fair hearing which may be arranged by calling 360-676-6504.

Reapplication

You may apply for benefits any time during the school year. If you should have a decrease in household income, an increase in household size, or become unemployed, or receive Basic Food, TANF, or FDPIR, you may be eligible for benefits and may fill out an application at that time.

USDA Non-Discrimination

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/ad-3027.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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