

Need meal benefits for your student?

Families may complete a Meal Benefits Application through SchoolCafe to determine eligibility for free or reduced-price meals. School registration does not replace the meal application.

GOOD NEWS!

Breakfast is FREE for every HISD student, every school day.

Apply online through SchoolCafe: schoolcafe.com/houstonisd

WHY COMPLETE AN APPLICATION?

- The application determines whether a student qualifies for Free, Reduced Price, or Paid meal benefits.
- Families may apply at any time during the school year.
- Even if a household believes income is too high, completing an application may support school funding and programs.

BEFORE FAMILIES APPLY

- Students must be enrolled before a meal application can be completed.
- The online application is the fastest way to receive a status.
- Online applications became available on July 22, 2026.

Student Eligibility & Accountability Department | Houston ISD Nutrition Services

Applications are processed within 10 operating days once received in the office.

ELIGIBILITY BASICS	PROCESSING TIMELINE
- Free or reduced-price meal eligibility is based on household size and income. - Please see Income Eligibility Guidelines below - Households receiving SNAP or TANF should include the EDG number on the application. - Questions related to Medicaid may be directed to Student Eligibility and Accountability.	- Paper applications are processed after they are submitted and received in the nutrition services office. - SchoolCafe applications will be processed within 10 operating days. - If SchoolCafe shows an expiration date while an application is pending, parents do not need to submit another application. - Parents may call Student Eligibility & Accountability for application status questions.

REGISTRATION IS SEPARATE	FOSTER AND ADOPTION REMINDER
- Information and documents submitted during school enrollment or registration do not automatically determine meal benefit eligibility. - A separate meal benefits application must be completed for the 2026-2027 school year for meal benefit eligibility. - Families can apply after the school year has already started.	- Once a child is legally adopted, the child is no longer considered a foster child for school meal eligibility purposes. - An adopted child is treated the same as any other child in the household. - Eligibility is determined by Direct Certification, if applicable, or by household size and income on the application.

For application status support: EligibilityInfo@houstonisd.org | (713) 491-5944

Income Eligibility Guidelines					
Household Size	Annual	Monthly	Twice-Monthly	Bi-Weekly	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. person, add	\$10,508	\$876	\$438	\$405	\$203

Returning students receive the same benefits they received the prior year for the first 30 operating days of school or until their application has been processed.

RETURNING STUDENTS	IF NO APPLICATION IS SUBMITTED
• Returning students receive the same meal benefits they received the prior year during the beginning-of-year grace period. • The grace period lasts for the first 30 operating days of school or until the Meal Benefits Application has been processed, whichever comes first. • Once the application is processed, the new eligibility status becomes effective.	• If the parent does not submit an application by the end of the grace period, the student will change to Paid status. • Families should submit the Meal Benefits Application as early as possible to avoid a change in meal status. • Outstanding balances that accrue must still be paid.
NEW STUDENTS IN THE DISTRICT	SCHOOLCAFE STATUS QUESTIONS
• New students in the district do not receive a grace period. • Families of new students should complete a Meal Benefits Application as soon as the student is enrolled. • Meal eligibility for new students is determined once the application or other eligibility information is processed.	• If SchoolCafe shows an expiration date while an application is pending, parents do not need to submit another application. • Parents may call Student Eligibility and Accountability to request the current status. • Duplicate applications may create confusion for families and school staff.

School staff may share this guide during registration, open house, or when parent questions arise.

Breakfast remains FREE for all HISD students.

SCHOOLCAFE ONLINE PAYMENTS

- SchoolCafe accepts Visa, Mastercard, Discover credit cards, and Visa or Mastercard debit cards.
- Gift cards and prepaid cards are not accepted.
- SchoolCafe charges a 5 percent processing fee each time an online payment is made.
- There is no limit on the positive balance a student meal account may have in SchoolCafe.

CAFETERIA PAYMENTS

- Debit and credit cards are not accepted in the cafeteria.
- Only cash is accepted in the cafeteria.
- The maximum cash payment in the cafeteria is \$200 per student per transaction.
- If cash is presented and there is an outstanding balance, the cash will be applied to the negative balance.

NEGATIVE BALANCES

- Balance letters are sent to parents by email or U.S. Postal Mail.
- Questions about balances may be sent to ParentOnline@houstonisd.org.
- If a student has an outstanding balance and brings cash, the cash will be applied to the negative balance first.

MEAL PURCHASES AND PRICES

Breakfast

- Free for all students
- Student second breakfast: \$3.00
- Adult breakfast: \$4.00

Lunch

- Student lunch: \$4.00
- Adult lunch: \$5.50
- Students who qualify for reduced-price meals receive lunch at no cost (\$0.00).

Meal Options

- Students receive the same meal listed on the menu. There is no separate meal option available to avoid accruing a meal account balance.
- You can find this policy on the [Square Meals Reduced-Price School Meals Now Free](#) page

For meal account balance questions: ParentOnline@houstonisd.org

STUDENT ID NUMBER

- Student ID numbers may be found on the student report card.
- Student ID numbers may also be found in ParentSquare under My Students, Dashboard, then Overview.
- Families may also obtain the student ID number from the child's school.

IMPORTANT REMINDER FOR FAMILIES

- School registration does not replace the meal application.
- Parents may apply at any time during the school year.
- The online application through SchoolCafe is the fastest way to receive a status.

APPLICATION STATUS OR MEDICAID QUESTIONS

Student Eligibility & Accountability
EligibilityInfo@houstonisd.org
(713) 491-5944

MEAL ACCOUNT BALANCE QUESTIONS

ParentOnline@houstonisd.org

WHERE TO FIND THE STUDENT ID

Report card
ParentSquare
Child's school

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