

Income Guidelines for School Nutrition Programs Frequently Asked Questions

1. WHO CAN GET FREE OR LOW-COST MEALS?

- Any child in a household that gets help from programs like Food Assistance Program (FAP), Family Independence Program (FIP), or Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR);
- Foster children under the care of a foster agency or court;
- Children enrolled in their school's Head Start program;
- Children who are homeless, runaway, or migrant;
- Any child in a household with income at or below the limits shown on the income chart below.

Federal Income Eligibility Chart for School Year 2026-2027

Total Household Size	Annually	Monthly	Weekly
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 person add:	\$10,508	\$876	\$203

2. **HOW DO I KNOW IF MY CHILDREN IS CONSIDERED HOMELESS, MIGRANT, OR RUNAWAY?** If any of the following apply to your family and you haven't been told your child gets free meals, please contact your child's school.
- Your family doesn't have a permanent place to live;
 - You're staying in a shelter, hotel, or other temporary housing;
 - Your family moves from place to place during certain seasons to work;
 - A child living with you has left their previous home or family of their own.
3. **DO I NEED TO FILL OUT A SEPERATE APPLICATION FOR EACH CHILD?** No. Use one application for all students in your household. Make sure that you complete all required sections, or the application can't be approved.

4. **DO I NEED TO FILL OUT AN APPLICATION IF I GOT A LETTER SAYING MY CHILDREN ARE ALREADY APPROVED FOR FREE MEALS FOR THIS SCHOOL YEAR?** No, you don't need to apply again. Be sure to read the letter carefully and follow the instructions. If any of your children were not listed in the letter, contact your child's school.
5. **CAN I APPLY ONLINE?** Possibly. If you can, it's a good idea to fill out the online application instead of a paper one. It asks for the same information and follows the same rules. To find out if online applications are available, contact your child's school.
6. **MY CHILD'S APPLICATION WAS APPROVED LAST YEAR. DO I NEED TO FILL OUT A NEW ONE?** Yes. Last year's approval only lasts for that school year and a few days into the new one. You need to send in a new application unless the school has already told you that your child is approved for this school year. If you don't send in a new application and you haven't been told that your child qualifies, your child may have to pay full price for meals.
7. **I GET WIC. CAN MY CHILDREN GET FREE MEALS?** Maybe. If your family gets WIC, your children might qualify for free or reduced-price meals. Please send in an application.
8. **WILL THE INFORMATION I GIVE BE CHECKED?** Maybe. Your child's school may ask you to show proof of your household income later.
9. **IF I DON'T QUALIFY NOW, MAY I APPLY LATER?** Yes. You can apply at any time during the school year. For example, if a parent or guardian loses their job and your household income goes down, your child might become eligible for free or reduced-price meals.
10. **WHAT IF I DISAGREE WITH THE SCHOOL'S DECISION ABOUT MY APPLICATION?** Talk to someone at the school first. If you still disagree, you can ask for a hearing. Contact your child's school to find out how.
11. **CAN I APPLY IF SOMEONE IN MY HOUSEHOLD IS NOT A U.S. CITIZEN?** Yes. You, your children, or anyone else in your household 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?** Write down the amount that you usually earn. For example, if you usually make \$1,000 a month but you made only \$900 last month because you missed work, write \$1,000. Include overtime if you get it regularly, but don't include it if you only work overtime sometimes. If you lost a job or your hours or pay went down, use your current income.
13. **WHAT IF SOME PEOPLE IN MY HOUSEHOLD HAVE NO INCOME?** If someone has no income and doesn't get the types of income asked about, please write 0 in that income box. If you leave an income box blank, it will also be counted as zero. So, be careful – if you leave it blank, we will think that you meant zero.
14. **WE ARE IN THE MILITARY. DO WE REPORT OUR INCOME DIFFERENTLY?** Yes, you must include basic pay and cash bonuses as income. Also, include any cash allowances you get for off-base housing, food, or clothing. If your housing is part of the Military Housing Privatization Initiative, don't count that housing allowance as income. Any extra combat pay you get from deployment should not be counted as income.

15. **WHAT IF THERE ISN'T ROOM ON THE APPLICATION FOR EVERYONE IN MY FAMILY?** Write the names of any extra household members on a separate sheet of paper and attach it to your application. You can also ask your child's school to receive a second application if needed.
16. **MY FAMILY NEEDS MORE HELP. ARE THERE OTHER PROGRAMS WE CAN APPLY FOR?** Yes. To find out how to apply for Food Assistance Programs or other assistance benefits, contact your local assistance office at [MI Bridges MDHHS](#).
17. **MY CHILD'S SCHOOL IS PART OF THE MICHIGAN SCHOOL MEALS PROGRAM AND EVERYONE EATS FOR FREE. DO I NEED TO FILL OUT AN APPLICATION?** Schools get important education funding based on how many kids qualify for free and reduced-price meals. You don't have to fill out an application, but it's a good idea to do it anyway.