

STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT FREE AND REDUCED PRICE SCHOOL MEALS

July 1, 2020

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Children need healthy meals to learn. Hawaii's public schools offer healthy meals every school day. Breakfast costs \$1.10; lunch costs \$2.50 for elementary and \$2.75 for secondary students. **Your children may qualify for free meals or for reduced price meals.** Reduced price is \$0.30 for breakfast and \$0.40 for lunch. This is an application for free or reduced price meal benefits, and a set of detailed instructions. Below are some common questions and answers to help you with the application process.

**1. WHO CAN GET FREE OR REDUCED PRICE MEALS?**

- All children in households receiving benefits from Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) are eligible for free meals.
- Foster children who are under the legal responsibility of a foster care agency or court are eligible for free meals.
- Children participating in their school's Head Start program are eligible for free meals.
- Children who meet the definition of homeless, runaway, or migrant are eligible for free meals.
- Children may receive free or reduced price meals if your household's income falls at or below the limits of the Federal Income Eligibility Guidelines (see chart below).

FEDERAL ELIGIBILITY INCOME CHART FOR SCHOOL YEAR 2020-2021

Household Size	Yearly	Monthly	Weekly		Household Size	Yearly	Monthly	Weekly
1	\$ 27,158	\$ 2,264	\$ 523		5	\$ 65,268	\$ 5,439	\$ 1,256
2	\$ 36,686	\$ 3,058	\$ 706		6	\$ 74,796	\$ 6,233	\$ 1,439
3	\$ 46,213	\$ 3,852	\$ 889		7	\$ 84,323	\$ 7,027	\$ 1,622
4	\$ 55,741	\$ 4,646	\$ 1,072		8	\$ 93,851	\$ 7,821	\$ 1,805
For <b>each</b> additional person:						\$ 9,528	\$ 794	\$ 184

- 2. HOW DO I KNOW IF MY CHILDREN QUALIFY AS HOMELESS, MIGRANT, OR RUNAWAY?** Do the members of your household lack a permanent address? Are you staying together in a shelter, hotel, or other temporary housing arrangement? Does your family relocate on a seasonal basis? Are there any children living with you who have chosen to leave their prior family or household? If you believe children in your household meet these descriptions and haven't been told your children will get free meals, please contact your child's school for further assistance.
- 3. DO I NEED TO FILL OUT AN APPLICATION FOR EACH CHILD?** If all children in your household attend a State of Hawaii Department of Education (DOE) public school you need only submit **one** application for the household. However, if some children within your household attend public charter schools or private schools you will need to contact those schools to attain the appropriate meal application form. For example, if there are four children in your household, one attends a public charter school, one attends a private school, one attends a public DOE elementary school, and one attends a public DOE high school, you would need to complete three separate application forms. We do not process applications for public charter schools or private schools. We cannot approve an application that is incomplete, so be sure to fill out all required information. Return the completed application to your child's school or mail it to: School Food Services Branch, 1106 Koko Head Avenue, Honolulu HI 96816.
- 4. SHOULD I FILL OUT AN APPLICATION IF I RECEIVED A LETTER THIS SCHOOL YEAR SAYING MY CHILDREN ARE ALREADY APPROVED FOR FREE MEALS?** No, but please read the letter you got carefully and follow the instructions. If any children in your household were missing from your eligibility notification, contact your child's school immediately.
- 5. 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 last school year and for the first few days of this school year. Any applications approved prior to July 1, 2020 will not be applicable for the 2020-2021 school year. Unless you have received a eligibility notification for school year 2020-2021, you must complete a new application. Failure to complete a new application will result in a change to your child's status and your child will be charged full price for meals.
- 6. I RECEIVE ASSISTANCE FROM THE SPECIAL SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION PROGRAM FOR WOMEN, INFANTS AND CHILDREN (WIC). CAN MY CHILDREN GET FREE MEALS?** Children in households participating in WIC may be eligible for free or reduced price meals. Please submit an application.
- 7. WILL THE INFORMATION I GIVE BE CHECKED?** Yes. We may also ask you to send written proof of the household income you report.
- 8. IF I DON'T QUALIFY NOW, MAY I APPLY LATER?** Yes, you may apply at any time during the school year. For example, should you or someone in your household experience a loss of wages or becomes unemployed you may choose to reapply and your child may be eligible for free and reduced price meals if the household income drops below the income limit.
- 9. WHAT IF I DISAGREE WITH THE DECISION ABOUT MY APPLICATION?** Please contact officials at your child's school. You also may ask for a hearing by calling or writing to: School Food Services Administrator, 1106 Koko Head Avenue, Honolulu, HI 96816.
- 10. MAY I APPLY IF SOMEONE IN MY HOUSEHOLD IS NOT A U.S. CITIZEN?** Yes. You, your children, or other household members do not have to be U.S. citizens to apply for free or reduced price meals.
- 11. 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.
- 12. 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.
- 13. 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.
- 14. WHAT IF THERE ISN'T ENOUGH SPACE ON THE APPLICATION FOR MY FAMILY?** List any additional household members and required information on a separate piece of paper, and attach it to your application.
- 15. MY FAMILY NEEDS MORE HELP. ARE THERE OTHER PROGRAMS WE MIGHT APPLY FOR?** To find out how to apply for Hawaii SNAP or other assistance benefits, contact your local assistance office or call 211.
- 16. CAN I APPLY ONLINE?** Yes! We encourage you to complete an online application instead of a paper application if you are able. The online application has the same requirements and will ask you for the same information as the paper application. Visit [ezmealapp.com](http://ezmealapp.com) to begin or to learn more about the online application process. Contact School Food Services Branch at 808-784-5500 if you have any questions about the online application process.

If you have other questions or need help, please contact your child(ren)'s school.

Yours Truly,

Dr. Christina M. Kishimoto  
Superintendent

## Unpaid Meal Charge Policy

In accordance with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutritional Service (FNS) policy SP 46-2016: Unpaid Meal Charges - Local Meal Charge Policies and Hawaii Senate Bill 423, the following is the Department's policy:

- Students who are unable to pay for their meal at the point of service shall be allowed to incur (meal only) charges for the first 21 days of school;
- The parent/guardian shall be responsible to repay all meal charges that are incurred during the first 21 days of the school year; and
- After the first 21 days, unpaid meal charges should not exceed the cash equivalent of seven days.

Listed below are the total allowable chargeable amounts based on eligibility:

- o **Reduced** price student's meal charge limit is **\$4.90**.
- o Full **Paid** student's (K-8) meal charge limit is **\$25.20**.
- o Full **Paid** student's (9-12) meal charge limit is **\$26.95**.

Additionally, schools shall disallow the charging of a la carte or extra items by any child with a negative balance, regardless of the child's eligibility status.

Households may be reminded of their low lunch account balances by letters placed discreetly in take-home folders and/or phone calls. Parents may also set low balance reminders via EZSchoolPay.com where they can receive an email notification.

Parent/Guardian must pay off all student charges/loans. If a negative balance has been accumulated that is greater than the seven (7) day charge limit, students will not be able to purchase meals or other items until the negative balance is less than 7 days of charges.

**All negative balances must be paid by the end of the school year.**

**Non-Discrimination Statement:** This explains what to do if you believe you have been treated unfairly.

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, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

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 Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, (AD-3027) found online at: <https://www.ascr.usda.gov/filing-program-discrimination-complaint-usda-customer>, 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  
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.