



Dear Parent/Guardian:

Children need healthy meals to learn! Hillsborough County Student Nutrition Services offers healthy meals every school day. Breakfast is FREE for all students. Elementary lunch costs \$2.25, and Secondary lunch costs \$2.75. **Your child may qualify for free or reduced price meals!** The reduced price lunch cost of 40¢ is waived (provided at no charge) for children approved for reduced price meals. Below are some commonly asked questions with answers to help you with the application process.

1. WHO CAN GET FREE OR REDUCED PRICE MEALS?



- All children in households receiving benefits from **SNAP (food stamps)** or **TANF**, are eligible for free meals, regardless of your income. Households receiving SNAP or TANF benefits may exclude income information and the last four digits of the signer's social security number on their application.
- If you received a **NOTICE OF DIRECT CERTIFICATION**: DO NOT complete an application. Please read the entire letter and follow the instructions carefully. See #6 for more information.
- **Foster children** that are under the legal responsibility of a foster care agency or court are eligible for free meals. Foster children may be included as part of a household application, and are eligible for free meals, even if the household does not qualify.
- 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. See #9 for more information.
- Children may receive free or reduced price meals if your **household income** is within the limits on the Federal Income Eligibility Guidelines. Your children may qualify for free or reduced price meals if your household gross income falls at or below the limits on the chart below:

REDUCED PRICE MEAL SCALE for School Year 2021-2022					
Household Size	Annually	Monthly	Twice Per Month	Every Two Weeks	Weekly
1	23,828	1,986	993	917	459
2	32,227	2,686	1,343	1,240	620
3	40,626	3,386	1,693	1,563	782
4	49,025	4,086	2,043	1,886	943
5	57,424	4,786	2,393	2,209	1,105
6	65,823	5,486	2,743	2,532	1,266
7	74,222	6,186	3,093	2,855	1,428
8	82,621	6,886	3,443	3,178	1,589
For each additional family member, add	+8,399	+700	+350	+324	+162

2. CAN I APPLY ONLINE? Yes! Beginning July 1st each school year, and you are encouraged to do so! Applying online is quick, confidential, and easy! The online application has the same requirements and will ask for the same information as the paper application. To apply online, visit the district website at www.hillsboroughschools.org/mealbenefits, then click "APPLY NOW", and follow the instructions. Contact the **Healthy Meals Express Application Center at 813-840-7066 if you have any questions about the online application process.**
3. IS THE ONLINE APPLICATION AVAILABLE IN MORE THAN ONE LANGUAGE? Yes! It is available in 7 languages - English, Spanish, French, Arabic, Filipino (Tagalog), Vietnamese (Tiếng Việt), and Chinese (Mandarin). FOR REFERENCE ONLY you may view a SAMPLE free and reduced meal application in 49 languages here: www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/translated-applications
4. WHAT IF I DON'T HAVE A COMPUTER TO COMPLETE AN ONLINE APPLICATION? Computers are available for use at no cost at the local public library and at the **Healthy Meals Express Application Center, 9014 Brittany Way, Tampa, Florida, 33619.** Your child's school may also have a computer that can be used to complete an application. Need information where to obtain a paper application? Contact the **Healthy Meals Express Application Center at 813-840-7066.**

5. DO I NEED TO FILL OUT AN APPLICATION FOR EACH CHILD? No. *Use one meal application for all students in your household.* We cannot approve an application that is not complete, so be sure to fill out all required information. If approved, your child's status will remain in effect for the entire school year.
6. 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 received carefully and follow the instructions. If any children in your household were missing from your eligibility notification, contact the **Healthy Meals Express Application Center at 813-840-7066** immediately.
7. 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. If you do not submit a new application that is approved, or you have not received a NOTICE OF DIRECT CERTIFICATION, your child will be charged the full price for meals.
8. WHERE CAN I VERIFY THE STATUS OF MY CHILD'S MEAL ELIGIBILITY? Call the meal status hotline at 1-866-544-5575. Make sure to have your child's 7-digit student ID number handy when calling.
9. HOW DO I KNOW IF MY CHILDREN QUALIFY AS HOMELESS, MIGRANT, OR RUNAWAY? Are your housing arrangements temporary? Does your family relocate on a seasonal basis? Have you taken in a runaway child? If you believe children in your household meet these descriptions, please contact the liaison at the child's school for assistance.
10. I RECEIVE 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.
11. WILL THE INFORMATION I GIVE BE CHECKED? Yes. We may also ask you to send written proof of the household income you report.
12. IF I DON'T QUALIFY NOW, MAY I APPLY LATER? Yes, you may apply at any time during the school year if there is a change in your household income or size, or if you become unemployed.
13. WHAT IF I DISAGREE WITH THE DECISION ABOUT MY APPLICATION? Contact the **Healthy Meals Express Application Center at 813-840-7066**. You may also ask for a hearing by writing to: **General Manager of Student Nutrition Services, 9014 Brittany Way, Tampa, Florida 33619**.
14. 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.
15. WHAT IF MY INCOME IS NOT ALWAYS THE SAME? List the amount that you normally receive. If you normally receive 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.
16. WHAT IF SOME HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS HAVE NO INCOME TO REPORT? If there is no income to report, mark the box that says "None" for each household member. If you enter '0' or leave any fields blank, you are certifying (promising) that there is no income to report.
17. WE ARE IN THE MILITARY. DO WE REPORT OUR INCOME DIFFERENTLY? Your basic pay and cash bonuses must be reported as income. If you receive 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. Deployed service members are considered part of the household. List deployed service members in the Household section, but report only the portion of their income made available to them or on their behalf to the family.
18. WHAT IF THERE ISN'T ENOUGH SPACE ON THE APPLICATION FOR MY FAMILY? Contact the **Healthy Meals Express Application Center at 813-840-7066 for instructions**.
19. I'M A GROUP HOME ADMINISTRATOR. HOW DO I APPLY FOR CHILDREN IN MY CARE? Contact the **Healthy Meals Express Application Center at 813-840-7066 for instructions**.

If you have other questions or need help completing your household application for school meal benefits, contact the **Healthy Meals Express Application Center at 813-840-7066**.

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Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, 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.usda.gov/oascr/how-to-file-a-program-discrimination-complaint>, 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.

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