

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

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Children need healthy meals to learn. The School District of Manatee County offers healthy meals every school day. Breakfast is free for all students; lunch costs **\$3.40** for secondary (High School and Middle School) and **\$3.10** for elementary level. Your child(ren) may qualify for free or reduced-price meals. Reduced price is **\$0.40** for lunch. This packet includes 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 SNAP, FDPIR, or TANF, are eligible for free meals.
- Foster children that 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 is within the limits on the Federal Income Eligibility Guidelines. Your children may qualify for free or reduced-price meals if your household income falls at or below the limits on this chart.

Income Eligibility Reduced-Price Guidelines—July 1, 2024–June 30, 2025					
Family Size	Annually	Monthly	Twice Per Month	Every Two Weeks	Weekly
1	\$27,861	2,322	1,161	1,072	536
2	37,814	3,152	1,576	1,455	728
3	47,767	3,981	1,991	1,838	919
4	57,720	4,810	2,405	2,220	1,110
5	67,673	5,640	2,820	2,603	1,302
6	77,626	6,469	3,235	2,986	1,493
7	87,579	7,299	3,650	3,369	1,685
8	97,532	8,128	4,064	3,752	1,876
<b>For each additional family member add:</b>					
	9,953	830	415	383	192

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 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 call, or e-mail the Project Heart Department at (941)751-6550, extension 43293.
3. **Do I need to fill out an application for each child?** No. Use one Free and Reduced-Price School Meals 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. Return the completed application to: Food and Nutrition Services, 1812 27<sup>th</sup> Street East, Bradenton, FL 34208.
4. **Should I fill out an application if I received a letter this school year saying my children are already approved for free meals?** In most cases 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 the Food and Nutrition Department at (941)739-5700 immediately.
5. **Can I apply online?** Yes! You are encouraged 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 [www.manateeschoolfood.net](http://www.manateeschoolfood.net) to begin or to learn more about the online application process. Contact the Food and Nutrition Office at (941)739-5700 if you have any questions about the online application.
6. **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 30 days of this school year, through 9/23/24. You must send in a new application unless you received notification that your child is eligible for the new school year. If you do not send in a new application that is approved by the district or you have not been notified that your child is eligible for free meals, your child will be charged the full price for meals.
7. **I get WIC. Can my children get free meals?** Children in households participating in WIC may be eligible for free or reduced-price meals. Please complete an application.
8. **Will the information I give be checked?** Yes. We may also ask you to send written proof of the household income you report.
9. **If I don't qualify now, may I apply later?** Yes, you may apply at any time during the school year. For example, children with a parent or guardian who becomes unemployed may become eligible for free and reduced-price meals if the household income drops below the income limit.
10. **What if I disagree with the district's decision about my application?** You should contact the Food and Nutrition Department. You also may ask for a hearing by calling or writing to: Deputy Superintendent of Business Services and Operations, School District of Manatee County, P.O. Box 9069, Bradenton, FL 34206-9069.
11. **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.
12. **What if my income is not always the same?** List the amount that you normally receive. For example, if you normally make \$1000 each month, but you missed some work last month and only made \$900, put down that you made \$1000 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.
13. **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.
14. **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.
15. **Instructions for Households with Deployed Service Members:** For the purpose of determining household size, deployed service members are considered a part of the household. Families should include the names of the deployed service members on their application. Report only that portion of the deployed service member's income made available to them or on their behalf to the family. The determining official would count the service member as part of the household in establishing a child's eligibility for free and reduced-price meals.
16. **What if there isn't enough space on the application for my family?** List any additional household members on a separate piece of paper and attach it to your application.
17. **My family needs more help. Are there other programs we might apply for?** To find out how to apply for SNAP or other assistance benefits, contact your local assistance office or call (800)955-8771.

If you have other questions or need help, call the Food and Nutrition Office at (941)739-5700.

Sincerely,

Regina Thoma  
Director, Food and Nutrition Services

# PREGUNTAS FRECUENTES SOBRE COMIDAS ESCOLARES DE PRECIO GRATIS Y REDUCIDO

Estimado Padre / Tutor:

Los niños necesitan comidas saludables para poder aprender. El Distrito Escolar del Condado de Manatee ofrece comidas saludables todos los días escolares. El desayuno es gratis para todos los estudiantes; el almuerzo cuesta **\$3.40** para secundaria (High School y Middle School) y **\$3.10** para nivel primaria. Su(s) hijo(s) pueden calificar para recibir comidas gratis o a precio reducido. El precio reducido es de **\$0.40** para el almuerzo. Este paquete incluye una solicitud para beneficios de comidas gratuitas o a precio reducido y un conjunto de instrucciones detalladas. A continuación se presentan algunas preguntas y respuestas comunes que le ayudarán con el proceso de solicitud.

**1. ¿Quién puede recibir comidas gratis o a precio reducido?**

- Los niños en hogares que reciben beneficios de SNAP, FDIPIR o TANF, son elegibles para comidas gratis.
- Los hijos de crianza que están bajo la responsabilidad legal de una agencia de cuidado de crianza o tribunal son elegibles para recibir comidas gratis.
- Los niños que participan en el programa Head Start de su escuela son elegibles para recibir comidas gratis.
- Los niños que cumplen con la definición de desamparados, en fuga o migrantes califican para recibir comidas gratis.
- Los niños pueden recibir comidas gratis o a precio reducido si los ingresos de su familia están dentro de los límites de la Tabla Federal de Ingresos. Sus hijos pueden calificar para recibir comidas gratis o a precio reducido si el ingreso familiar está en o por debajo de los límites de esta tabla.

Tabla de Elegibilidad Según los Ingresos de Precio Reducido-Julio 1, 2024–Junio 30, 2025					
Tamaño de la familia	Anual	Mensual	Dos Veces al Mes	Cada dos Semanas	Semanal
1	\$27,861	2,322	1,161	1,072	536
2	37,814	3,152	1,576	1,455	728
3	47,767	3,981	1,991	1,838	919
4	57,720	4,810	2,405	2,220	1,110
5	67,673	5,640	2,820	2,603	1,302
6	77,626	6,469	3,235	2,986	1,493
7	87,579	7,299	3,650	3,369	1,685
8	97,532	8,128	4,064	3,752	1,876
<b>Por cada persona adicional:</b>					
	9,953	830	397	383	192

- 2. ¿Cómo sé si mis niños califican como sin hogar, emigrante o fugitivo?** ¿Los miembros de su familia carecen de una dirección permanente? ¿Se quedan juntos en un albergue, hotel, u otro arreglo de vivienda temporal? ¿Tiene reubicar su familia sobre una base estacional? ¿Hay niños que viven con usted que han optado por dejar a su familia o el hogar anterior? Si usted cree que los niños en su hogar cumplen con estas descripciones, y no se les ha dicho que sus hijos recibirán comidas gratis, por favor llame o mande un e-mail a al Departamento de Proyecto Corazón al (941)751-6550, extensión 43293.
- 3. ¿Necesito llenar una solicitud para cada niño?** No. Utilice una solicitud de comidas escolares gratuitas o de precio reducido para todos los estudiantes de su hogar. No podemos aprobar una solicitud que no esté completa, así que asegúrese de completar toda la información requerida. Devuelva la solicitud completa a: Servicios de Alimentos y Nutrición, 1812 27th Street East, Bradenton, FL 34208.
- 4. ¿Debo llenar una solicitud si recibí una carta este año escolar diciendo que mis hijos ya están aprobados para comidas gratis?** En la mayoría de los casos no, pero lea atentamente la carta que recibió y siga las instrucciones. Si algún niño de su hogar no aparece en su notificación de elegibilidad, comuníquese con el Departamento de Alimentos y Nutrición al (941) 739-5700 de inmediato.
- 5. ¿Puedo solicitar en línea?** ¡Sí! Le recomendamos que complete una solicitud en línea en lugar de una solicitud en papel, si puede. La solicitud en línea tiene los mismos requisitos y le pedirá la misma información que la solicitud en papel. Visite [www.manateeschoolfood.net](http://www.manateeschoolfood.net) para comenzar o para obtener más información sobre el proceso de solicitud en línea. Comuníquese con la Oficina de Alimentos y Nutrición al (941)739-5700 si tiene alguna pregunta sobre la solicitud en línea.
- 6. La solicitud de mi hijo fue aprobada el año pasado. ¿Es necesario llenar una nueva?** Sí. La solicitud de su hijo solo es válida para ese año escolar y durante los primeros 30 días de este año escolar, hasta el 23/9/24. Debe enviar una nueva solicitud a menos que haya recibido una notificación de que su hijo es elegible para el nuevo año escolar. Si no envía una nueva solicitud aprobada por el distrito o no se le ha notificado que su hijo es elegible para recibir comidas gratis, se le cobrará el precio total de las comidas.
- 7. Yo recibo WIC. ¿Pueden mis hijos recibir comidas gratis?** Los niños de hogares que participan en WIC pueden ser elegibles para recibir comidas gratuitas o a precio reducido. Por favor complete una solicitud.
- 8. ¿La información que doy será verificada?** Sí. También podemos pedirle que envíe prueba escrita de los ingresos de los hogares que reporta.
- 9. Si yo no califico ahora ¿puedo solicitar más tarde?** Sí, usted puede solicitar en cualquier momento durante el año escolar. Por ejemplo, los niños con un padre o tutor que queda sin empleo pueden ser elegibles para recibir comidas gratis o a precio reducido si el ingreso de los hogares cae por debajo del límite de ingresos.
- 10. ¿Qué pasa si no estoy de acuerdo con la decisión de la escuela sobre mi solicitud?** Debe ponerse en contacto con el Departamento de Alimentación y Nutrición. También puede solicitar una audiencia llamando o escribiendo a: Superintendente Adjunto de Operaciones y Servicios Comerciales, Distrito Escolar del Condado de Manatee, P.O. Caja 9069, Bradenton, Florida 34206-9069.
- 11. ¿Puedo solicitar si alguien en mi casa no es ciudadano americano?** Sí. Usted, sus hijos u otros miembros de la familia no tiene que ser ciudadanos estadounidenses para solicitar comidas gratis o a precio reducido.
- 12. ¿Qué pasa si mi ingreso no es siempre igual?** Anote la cantidad que recibe normalmente. Por ejemplo, si usted normalmente recibe \$1000 al mes pero se ausentó al trabajo el mes pasado y solo recibió \$900, anote que usted recibe \$1000 por mes. Si usted generalmente trabaja horas extras, incluya esa cantidad, pero no lo incluya si sólo trabaja horas extras a veces. Si usted ha perdido su trabajo o sus horas o salario ha sido reducido, use su ingreso actual.
- 13. ¿Qué pasa si algunos miembros del hogar no tienen ingresos que reportar?** Los miembros del hogar puede que no reciban algunos tipos de ingresos que le pedimos que informe en la aplicación o puede que no reciban ingreso alguno. Cada vez que esto suceda, por favor escriba un 0 en el campo. Sin embargo, si cualquier campo de ingreso se deja en vacío o en blanco, esos también serán contados como ceros. Por favor tenga cuidado al dejar de los campos de ingresos en blanco, porque vamos a suponer que intentabas hacerlo.
- 14. Estamos en el ejército. ¿Reportamos nuestros ingresos de manera diferente?** Sus salarios y bonos en efectivo básicos deben ser reportados como ingresos. Si usted obtiene una subvención para una vivienda fuera de la base, alimentos o ropa, también se debe incluir como ingreso. Sin embargo, si su vivienda es parte de la Iniciativa de Privatización de Vivienda Militar, no incluya su subsidio de vivienda como ingreso. Cualquier pago de combate adicional resultante de un despliegue también se excluye de los ingresos.
- 15. Instrucciones para hogares con miembros del servicio desplegados:** A los efectos de determinar el tamaño del hogar, los miembros del servicio desplegados se consideran parte del hogar. Las familias deben incluir los nombres de los miembros del servicio desplegados en su solicitud. Informe solo la parte de los ingresos del miembro del servicio desplegado que se puso a su disposición o en su nombre a la familia. El funcionario determinante contaría al miembro del servicio como parte del hogar al establecer la elegibilidad de un niño para recibir comidas gratuitas o a precio reducido.
- 16. ¿Qué pasa si no hay suficiente espacio en la solicitud de mi familia?** Indique los miembros adicionales de su hogar en un pedazo de papel, y adjúntelo a su solicitud.
- 17. Mi familia necesita más ayuda. ¿Hay otros programas que podamos solicitar?** Para averiguar cómo aplicar para SNAP u otros beneficios de asistencia, póngase en contacto con su oficina de asistencia local o llame al (800)955-8771.

Si tiene otras preguntas o necesita ayuda, llame a la Oficina de Alimentos y Nutrición al (941)739-5700.

Sinceramente,  
Regina Thoma  
Director, Food and Nutrition Services



# HOW TO APPLY FOR FREE AND REDUCED-PRICE SCHOOL MEALS

Please use these instructions to help you fill out the application for free or reduced-price school meals. You only need to submit one application per household, even if your children attend more than one school in the School District of Manatee County. The application must be filled out completely to certify your children for free or reduced-price school meals. Please follow these instructions in order! Each step of the instructions is the same as the steps on your application. If at any time you are not sure what to do next, please contact the Food and Nutrition office at (941)739-5700.

**PLEASE USE A PEN (NOT A PENCIL) WHEN FILLING OUT THE APPLICATION AND DO YOUR BEST TO PRINT CLEARLY.**

## STEP 1: LIST ALL CHILDREN IN SCHOOL IN THE HOUSEHOLD.

Tell us how many children in school live in your household. They do NOT have to be related to you to be a part of your household. If there are more children present than lines on the application, attach a second piece of paper with all required information for the additional children.

**Who should I list here?** When filling out this section, please include ALL members in your household who are:

- Children aged 18 or under AND are supported with the household's income.
  - In your care under a foster arrangement, or qualify as homeless, migrant, runaway, or Head Start.
- A) **List each student's name.** Print each child's name. Use one line of the application for each child. When printing names, write one letter in each box. Stop if you run out of space. If there are more children present than lines on the application, attach a second piece of paper with all required information for the additional children.
- B) **Do you have any foster children?** If any children listed are foster children, mark the "Foster Child" box next to the child's name. If you are ONLY applying for foster children, after finishing STEP 1, go to STEP 4. Foster children who live with you may count as members of your household and should be listed on your application. If you are applying for both foster and non-foster children, go to step 3. Provide the Foster status documentation to the school Registrar.
- C) **Are any children homeless, migrant, runaway, or Head Start?** If you believe any child listed in this section meets this description, mark the corresponding box next to the child's name, complete all steps of the application, and contact the Project Heart Department at (941)751-6550, extension 43293.

## STEP 2: DO ANY HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS (INCLUDING YOU) CURRENTLY PARTICIPATE IN ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS: SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION PROGRAM (SNAP), TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES (TANF), OR FOOD DISTRIBUTION PROGRAM ON INDIAN RESERVATIONS (FDPPIR)?

- A) **IF NO ONE IN YOUR HOUSEHOLD PARTICIPATES IN ANY OF THE ABOVE LISTED PROGRAMS:** Circle 'NO' and proceed to STEP 3 on these instructions and STEP 3 on your application.
- B) **IF ANYONE IN YOUR HOUSEHOLD PARTICIPATES IN ANY OF THE ABOVE LISTED PROGRAMS:** Circle 'YES' and provide the case number. You only need to write one case number. If you participate in one of these programs and do not know your case number, **contact the state agency.** You must provide a case number on your application if you circled "YES". **Skip to STEP 4.**

## STEP 3: REPORT INCOME FOR ALL HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS.

- A) **LIST ALL HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS (including yourself and students listed in Part 1)** who are living with you and share income and expenses, even if they are not related and even if they do not receive income of their own.
- **Do not include** people who live with you but are not supported by your household's income AND do not contribute income to your household.
- B) **REPORT TOTAL INCOME** for each household member listed for each source provided. Report all income in whole dollars. Do not include cents. If they do not receive income from any source, write "0". If you write "0" or leave any income fields blank, you are certifying (promising) that there is no income to report. Mark how often each type of income is received by using the boxes to the right of each field.
- **Report all amounts in GROSS INCOME ONLY.** Gross income is the total income received before taxes; many people think of income as the amount they "take home" and not the total, "gross" amount. Make sure that the income you report on this application has NOT been reduced to pay for taxes, insurance premiums, or any other amounts taken from your pay.
  - **What if I am self-employed?** Report income from that work as a net amount. This is calculated by subtracting the total operating expenses of your business from its gross receipts or revenue.
- C) **REPORT TOTAL HOUSEHOLD SIZE.** Enter the total number of household members in the field "Total Household Size (Children and Adults)." This number MUST be equal to the number of household members listed in STEP 3. If there are any members of your household that you have not listed on the application, go back, and add them. It is very important to list all household members, as the size of your household affects your eligibility for free and reduced-price meals.
- D) **PROVIDE THE LAST FOUR DIGITS OF YOUR SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER.** The household's primary wage earner or another adult household member must provide the last four digits of his/her Social Security Number in the space provided. You are eligible to apply for benefits even if you do not have a Social Security Number. If no adult household members have a Social Security Number, leave this space blank and mark the box to the right labeled "Check if no SSN."

## STEP 4: CONTACT INFORMATION AND ADULT SIGNATURE

**All applications must be signed by an adult member of the household.** By signing the application, that household member is promising that all information has been truthfully and completely reported. **Before completing this section, please also make sure you have read the privacy and civil rights statements at the bottom of these instructions.**

- A) **PROVIDE YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION.** Write your current address in the fields provided if this information is available. If you have no permanent address, this does not make your children ineligible for free or reduced-price school meals. Sharing a phone number, email address, or both is optional, but helps us reach you quickly if we need to contact you.
- B) **PRINT AND SIGN YOUR NAME.** Print your name in the box "Printed name of adult completing the form." And sign your name in the box "Signature of adult completing the form."
- C) **WRITE TODAY'S DATE.** In the space provided, write today's date in the box.

## STEP 5: CONSENT TO RELEASE AND OPTIONAL INFORMATION

- A) **CONSENT TO RELEASE MEAL ELIGIBILITY.** Please check Yes to consent and No to NOT Consent to release the eligibility to other district programs which may qualify your children for other discounts or fee waivers.
- B) **SHARE CHILDREN'S RACIAL AND ETHNIC IDENTITIES (OPTIONAL).** At the bottom of the application, we ask you to share information about your children's race and ethnicity. We are required to ask for information about your children's race and ethnicity. This information is important and helps to make sure we are fully serving our community. Responding to this section is optional and does not affect your children's eligibility for free or reduced-price meals. Your information is kept confidential and may be protected by the Privacy Act of 1974.

### Privacy Act Statement: This explains how we will use the information you give us.

The Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act requires the information on this application. You do not have to give the information, but if you do not, we cannot approve your child for free or reduced price meals. You must include the last four digits of the social security number of the adult household member who signs the application. The last four digits of the social security number is not required when you apply on behalf of a foster child or you list a Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program or Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPPIR) case number or other FDPPIR identifier for your child or when you indicate that the adult household member signing the application does not have a social security number. We will use your information to determine if your child is eligible for free or reduced price meals, and for administration and enforcement of the lunch and breakfast programs. We MAY share your eligibility information with education, health, and nutrition programs to help them evaluate, fund, or determine benefits for their programs, auditors for program reviews, and law enforcement officials to help them look into violations of program rules.

### 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, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, 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, audiotope, 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:

mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights 1400 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov)  
This institution is an equal opportunity provider.