Letter to Households with Frequently Asked Questions
for
Federal Free and Reduced-Price School Meals &
North Dakota's Expanded Income Eligibility Guidance

This document provides information for families with students attending a school in North Dakota offering Federal Child Nutrition Programs such as the National School Lunch Program and/or the School Breakfast Program, as well as information about North Dakota's Expanded Income Eligibility Guidelines for schools. It is effective July 1, 2026.

Dear Family:

Children need healthy meals to learn. (**School District)** offers healthy meals every school day. Breakfast costs $2.50 and lunch costs $3.00. Other programs, such as Title I, rely on income eligibility. If your household income is below the numbers in the chart below, please complete the enclosed income application and retandurn it to the school. To be considered for any other income-based programs the district may offer, please fill out the "Release of Information Form" as well.

Below are some common questions and answers to help you with the application process.

1. **WHO CAN GET FREE MEALS?**
   - All children in households receiving benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR), or the Temporary Assistance Program for Needy Families (TANF) can get free meals regardless of their income. Also, your children can get free or reduced-price meals if your household income is within the limits on the Federal Income Chart.
   - Foster children 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 of 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 the chart below.

Federal Income Chart
For School Year 2026-27

Household Size	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Each Additional Person:
Yearly	$29,526	$40,034	$50,542	$61,050	$71,558	$82,066	$92,574	$103,082	$10,508
Monthly	$2,461	$3,337	$4,212	$5,088	$5,964	$6,839	$7,715	$8,591	$876
2x per Month	$1,231	$1,669	$2,106	$2,544	$2,982	$3,420	$3,858	$4,296	$438
Every 2 Weeks	$1,136	$1,540	$1,944	$2,349	$2,753	$3,157	$3,561	$3,965	$405
Weekly	$568	$770	$972	$1,175	$1,377	$1,579	$1,781	$1,983	$233

   - Children attending schools in North Dakota may receive free meals if your household income is within the limits of the State 225 Expanded Income Guidelines (State 225). Your children may qualify for meals at no cost if your household income falls at or below the limits on the chart below:

State of North Dakota Income Chart
For School Year 2026-27

Household Size	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Each Additional Person:
Yearly	$35,910	$48,690	$61,470	$74,250	$87,030	$99,810	$112,590	$125,370	$12,780
Monthly	$2,993	$4,058	$5,123	$6,188	$7,253	$8,318	$9,383	$10,448	$1,065
2x per Month	$1,496	$2,029	$2,561	$3,094	$3,626	$4,159	$4,691	$5,224	$533
Every 2 Weeks	$1,381	$1,873	$2,364	$2,856	$3,347	$3,839	$4,330	$4,822	$492
Weekly	$691	$936	$1,182	$1,428	$1,674	$1,919	$2,165	$2,411	$246

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 any of these descriptions and haven't been told your children will get free meals, please call or email: **andrea.vigen@k12.nd.us**.

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: **Andrea Vigen, andrea.vigen@k12.nd.us, 701-572-6384** immediately.

4. **SHOULD I FILL OUT AN APPLICATION IF I RECEIVED A LETTER THIS SCHOOL YEAR SAYING MY CHILDREN ARE 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 **Andrea Vigen, andrea.vigen@k12.nd.us, 701-572-6384** 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 **https://www.schoolcafe.com/STJOSEPHSELEMSCHOOL** to begin or learn more about the online application process. Contact **Andrea Vigen, andrea.vigen@k12.nd.us, 701-572-6384** 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 few days of this school year, through **9/30/26**. You must send in a new application unless the school tells you that your child is eligible for the new school year. If you do not send in a new application that is approved by the school or you have not been notified that your child is eligible for free meals, your child's eligibility status will be cleared, and meals will be charged at the full price listed above.

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 fill out an application form.

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 SCHOOL'S DECISION ABOUT MY APPLICATION?** You should talk to school officials. You may also ask for a hearing by calling or writing to **Andrea Vigen, andrea.vigen@k12.nd.us, 701-572-6384.**

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. **WHO SHOULD I INCLUDE AS MEMBERS OF MY HOUSEHOLD?** You must include all people living in your household, related or not (such as grandparents, other relatives, or friends), including yourself and all children living with you.

13. **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.

14. **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 zero. Please be careful when leaving income fields blank, as we will assume you meant to do so.

15. **WE ARE IN THE MILITARY. DO WE REPORT OUR INCOME DIFFERENTLY? YOUR BASIC PAY AND CASH BONUSES MUST BE REPORTED AS INCOME.** Your basic pay and cash bonus must be reported as income. If you get any cash 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

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. Contact **Andrea Vigen, andrea.vigen@k12.nd.us, 701-572-6384** to receive a second application.

17. **MY FAMILY NEEDS MORE HELP. ARE THERE OTHER PROGRAMS WE MIGHT APPLY FOR?** To find out how to apply for State SNAP or other assistance benefits, contact your local assistance office at https://www.hhs.nd.gov/applyforhelp or call 1-844-854-4825.

If you have other questions or need help, call [**phone number]**

Sincerely,

In accordance with federal civil rights law and USDA civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its agencies, offices, employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

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 state or local agency that administers the program or contact USDA through the Telecommunications Relay Service at 711 (voice and TTY). Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at 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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